





# REFORMING SCHOOLS

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## STRATEGIES FOR RESTRUCTURING THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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*A Compendium*

August 16, 2006

### The Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley

Based upon the Symposium:

**Fixing Our Schools – An Education Summit**

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Sheraton Universal Hotel, Universal City CA



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THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Southern California Gas Company, a Sempra Energy utility

# REFORMING SCHOOLS

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent years have seen modest progress in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Test scores have improved in some elementary grades and there have been a number of reforms instituted. Voters approved bonds allowed for an unprecedented building program, providing school facilities all over the district, particularly in areas of great need.

Nonetheless, as the 2005-06 *Presidents' Joint Commission on LAUSD Governance* points out: "challenges remain, particularly with student performance at the middle and high school levels, in terms of academic attainment, dropout rates, and violence within some schools and surrounding communities . . . too few LAUSD students complete high school and even fewer graduate having passed the requisite coursework to attend and succeed in college or the workforce."



The Los Angeles Unified School District needs major reform. There are many hardworking and dedicated teachers, administrators and other personnel; but the system often stands in the way of their attaining maximum results. Within the existing framework, it is not clear, that more spending would provide a solution, or that the dollars would even reach the classroom.

Once again, political considerations have brought education in general, and the LAUSD in particular, to the forefront in the public debate. As a result, stakeholders have an extraordinary opportunity to implement needed reforms. There are numerous recommendations being advanced, and the consensus is building around a handful of proposals:

### BIG IDEAS FOR REFORM

- **Accountability and Consequences** – Improved accountability is the most prevalent recommendation. Without a means of keeping track, and of dealing with relative success or failure of students, teachers and campuses, no system will succeed in competently educating LAUSD students. Conduct should have consequences, including rewards for excellence. [on page 16]
- **Charter Schools and Charter Clusters** – For more than a decade, charter schools have been making amazing strides in enhancing school environments, serving communities of greatest need, and improving student outcomes. Charter schools operate independent from the district, and have the freedom to innovate and to address the unique needs and goals of each local community. More than 100 LAUSD campuses are now charters, and many more are in progress. [on page 16]

*Accountability is the number one "big idea."*

*" . . . too few LAUSD students complete high school"*



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- **Small Learning Communities** – Widely embraced, Small Learning Communities include small campuses and communities of 500 or less pupils, within existing campuses. This student-scaled educational model helps to assure personal attention, and that no child is left behind. Principals know their students, and their students’ families. They remain together from grade to grade, and when needed, vigorous intervention is provided. [on page 18]
- **Decentralization – Creation of Smaller Districts** – The public has traditionally been supportive of initiatives to dismantle the LAUSD and replace it with a number of smaller autonomous districts: districts more manageable in size, more transparent, and more accessible to the communities they serve. Legislation and initiatives have traditionally met with stiff resistance from the existing district and from its employee unions. [on page 18]
- **Mayoral Intervention** – A relatively new concept would allow for a Council of Mayors of the 29 cities served by the LAUSD to intervene in district affairs and to exercise certain powers. In such case, the Mayor of Los Angeles, who governs 80% of the district’s population, would have a majority of control. As currently proposed in state legislation, the Council would participate in the selection of, and render advice to the Superintendent, review the budget, and form a “partnership” to take control of three clusters of the district’s poorest performing schools—except for union contracts. The role of Superintendent would be strengthened: to seek waivers, to manage, appoint and dismiss personnel and to manage fiscal operations and contracts—except union contracts. Staff would all report to the Superintendent, and no longer to individual board members; the board would appoint the Inspector General. [on page 20]
- **School Transformation Plan** – Proposed by Green Dot Public Schools, an active charter school operator, the *School Transformation Plan* offers a strategy to create small, high-performing college-preparatory schools in Los Angeles neighborhoods. Under the plan, over a period of ten years, the LAUSD’s 46 comprehensive high schools would be transformed into some 500 autonomous small schools. Programming in Green Dot schools is organized around what are called the *Six Tenets*: 1) small, safe, autonomous and personalized schools, 2) high expectations for all students, 3) local control with extensive professional development and accountability, 4) a higher percentage of dollars directed to the classroom, 5) parent participation, and 6) schools kept open later. [on page 21]
- **Zone of Choice – Belmont Pilot Schools Network** – Reform developed from within the LAUSD, and based upon Boston’s Pilot School Network, this proposal would create five to ten autonomous, college-preparatory small schools to serve 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade students from the Belmont High School attendance area. Scheduled to start in 2007, students will be able to select between the schools based on the unique programs offered by each 500-pupil campus. [on page 22]

- **Weighted Student Formulas & Local School Autonomy** – School principals should be entrepreneurs, and given as much autonomy as possible. One way to achieve this is to attach funding to individual students based on their needs. By allowing the student the freedom to choose which school to attend and to take their funding with them, schools have the incentive to compete for students, and to accommodate those with greatest needs. [on page 23]
- **Contracting for Non-Educational Services** – Schools provide a number of services outside the realm of teaching. In most cases, they would be better served to confine themselves to education and given the freedom to contract outside for other non-core services such as transportation maintenance, security and food service. [on page 31]

## Conclusions

These reform proposals are not mutually exclusive; they contain many common elements. Most could be combined to create an effective new framework for education in Los Angeles. Reformers are generally focused on determining the right size for schools and districts, funding priorities, and the appropriate level for decisionmaking on a wide range of education functions.

Many of the proposals deal with reducing education to the scale of an individual student, avoiding top-down approaches. Students are not all the same, and education cannot be operated as an assembly line. The process of education depends primarily upon the teacher-student relationship: professional educators working with each individual student. Each teacher and student has their own unique qualities; those can become liabilities in an inflexible hierarchical system.

Students need to be treated as individuals rather than part of a group. Funds weighted to meet their unique needs can then travel with them to the campus or cluster of their choice, giving parents and students an array of options and opportunities for success.

Each school site should be empowered to innovate, to compete, and to develop programming reflective of the community it serves. Autonomous schools and small learning communities can provide a personalized and continuous learning experience. These campuses can form into clusters and smaller districts offering an efficient community-based model, where more money reaches the classroom. With fewer schools in a cluster or district, the school board and superintendent can be fully involved with every school, including regular interaction with teachers and with each school principal.

Rightsized schools and clusters encourage accountability to the communities they serve, rather than having to channel through a centralized and distant bureaucracy. With community involvement and oversight, teachers and students can be more readily held to standards of performance and achievement. Flexible formats allow schools to reward excellence as well as operating more efficiently, including contracting out for non-core services.



## II. OVERVIEW

With today's graduates being thrust upon the stage of a *global* economy, their education has never been more important. We share a "flattened" economic world where most goods and services can be efficiently provided by emerging nations, with dramatically reduced labor costs—and in many cases, by a superior workforce.<sup>1</sup> A diploma or degree is not the guarantee of success that it once was, particularly if there are no standards for its award. Without an education, the prospects for youth are gloomy. Reformers generally agree on the importance of making public schools more effective and more credible. Some are willing to settle for incremental improvements, while others insist that radical change is needed.

In the Los Angeles area, one major school district monopolizes the education agenda: the Los Angeles Unified School District. The LAUSD manages over 1,000 campuses and centers, covering an area of 710 square miles and 4.5 million residents. The district manages the affairs of 727,000 K-12 students, over 37,026 teachers and 41,728 non-teacher employees.<sup>2</sup> An additional 158,000 LAUSD students are enrolled in community adult schools, occupational centers, and children's centers.

The current budget is \$13.2 billion, with a general fund of \$5.7 billion. The state contribution is 89.6% of the total, federal sources 2.4%, local 1.9% and in the example, 6.1% is derived from existing balances. Part of the problem is structural; although the school board is accountable to the voters, many of their decisions are governed by state and federal mandates, and the terms of union contracts.

This compendium is based upon contemporary discussions and materials, and upon information presented at the symposium: *Fixing Our Schools: an Education Summit* presented by the Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley in November 2005. The Alliance solicited critiques, best practices and reform strategies. Three panels of experts and stakeholders addressed the issue of performance and reform of the LAUSD.

This ongoing dialogue aims to build consensus and to improve public education for the hundreds of thousands of K-12 students who, because of their economic status and where they live, have no choice other than to attend the LAUSD. In reviewing the various "big ideas" for reform, it is useful to consider whether the current form of LAUSD would be a recommendation if it were not the status quo.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas L. Freidman, *The World is Flat*. New York: Straus and Giroux, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Office of LAUSD School Board Member Jon Lauritzen, 2006.

### III. THE CHILDREN CAN'T WAIT

America can be justly proud of its policy of making K-12 education available, indeed mandatory, for all children. With shifting populations and changing trends, big city school systems have grown ever larger and more diverse. Los Angeles Unified, with over 700,000 students, is the second largest district in the United States.

The LAUSD is unique in its student composition: 73% Hispanic, 11% African American and 7% Asian/Pacific Islander. In 2004-05, the White population continued to decline, dipping to just below 9%. A large percentage—44% of K-12 students, are English Learners, and many are first-generation immigrants. This creates unprecedented challenges for the district.

Currently between one-third and one-half of district students do not complete high school. Without changes, this means that 300,000 of the students currently enrolled will come of age in a world where they are not equipped to go on to college, or even to access entry level occupations. Most will never realize their full potential and will be unable to compete in a global economy.

Another hurdle is the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which sets minimal requirements for earning a diploma in the state. In the LAUSD, 14% of seniors are unable to pass this test, compared to 9% statewide. In spite of this bleak outcome, many argue that the bar must be raised even higher for a California diploma to have value in the “real world.”

The initial *Education Summit* in November 2005 generated an array of proposals from some of the region's foremost education experts and commentators. The session was marked by agreement on the need for more accountability, but by disagreement over who and what should be tracked. To compound the problem, there were dramatic differences in the proffered data, particularly when it came to issues of high school dropout rates, incremental improvements, and the use and availability of funds. Systemic disparities are credited to inefficiency and a bureaucracy that prevents meaningful oversight.

Reformers demand a new system of accountability and an entirely new organizational structure. Previous reviews of the LAUSD suggest that major reform is either unlikely or impossible from within the existing monolithic LAUSD.

There is broad consensus on one point: students dependent on public schools cannot afford to wait.



## IV. DIAGNOSING OUR SCHOOLS

### A. California School: State and Local Spending

A recent survey from the Public Policy Institute of California revealed deep dissatisfaction with California's K-12 school system. Only about one-quarter of those questioned said the goal of K-12 education should be preparation for college; others thought high school should primarily prepare people to enter the workforce or become good citizens.<sup>3</sup>

California and many of its largest districts are spending more on education than the public has been led to believe. Yet, despite this spending, student achievement still lags behind most of the nation. It is impossible to hope for any real accountability when the data are conflicting, confusing and in many cases non-existent. A better system is needed.<sup>4</sup>

State expenditures for K-12 education, adjusted for inflation and population growth, grew almost 99 percent between 1977 and 2003.<sup>5</sup> Although some contend that California is near the bottom of the list, in 2003-04 the state ranked 23rd in the nation with *revenue* to K-12 of \$9,324<sup>6</sup> per-pupil; Los Angeles Unified spent \$8,658<sup>7</sup> in that same year, somewhat below average for big city school systems nationwide. New York City, by contrast, spent \$12,644 and Chicago spent \$8,358.<sup>8</sup> The LAUSD ranks second among California school districts in per-pupil spending at \$8,658.<sup>9</sup>

With more than 300,000 teachers in the state, the NEA ranks California third nationally with a 20.6 to 1 ratio of teachers to students enrolled; number one in average teacher salaries in 2002-03 at 21.7% over the national average, with a 40.2 increase between 1994 and 2004. In 2001-02 California was number 16 nationwide in per capita expenditures for all education and in 2003-04 public school *revenue* per student ADA<sup>10</sup> was at \$9,970.<sup>11</sup>

### B. Low Grades for Los Angeles Schools

A Public Policy Institute of California survey found that Los Angeles County residents were more "disgruntled" than other Californians. Half of those polled in L.A. County gave their local schools a grade of "C" or below, compared with just 37% in Orange and San Diego counties.<sup>12</sup>

"The school district itself is only modestly prepared for some of the challenges that it faces in the years to come . . . the district remains highly insular and suspicious of outsiders" according to a 2006 review, conducted by the Council of

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<sup>3</sup> *Special Survey on Education*, Report. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, April 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Lance T. Izumi, Carl Brodt and Alan Bonsteel, *A Short Primer on Per-Pupil Spending in California*. San Francisco: Center for School Reform at the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> *An Analysis of Government Revenues in California Since the Enactment of Proposition 13*, Report. Newport Beach, CA: The Center for Government Analysis, October 2005.

<sup>6</sup> *Public Education Finances*, 2004, Governments Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Table 11, p.11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Table 17, p.96.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Table 17, p.100.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Table 17, p.96 .

<sup>10</sup> Average Daily Attendance.

<sup>11</sup> *Rankings & Estimates: Rankings of the States 2004 and Estimates of School Statistics 2005*, Report. Atlanta, GA: National Education Association, June 2005.

<sup>12</sup> *Special Survey on Education*.

Great City Schools at the request of the LAUSD.<sup>13</sup> “The district is often self-serving with administrator and teacher unions that bend the system’s operations to their own ends. The district’s instructional and operating areas work in silos that often do not communicate with one another. It lacks any meaningful form of accountability for results. Its operating procedures are often seriously outdated and technologically antiquated. And, its ability to pull together to serve a common mission, while better than it used to be, remains highly fractured.”

The report credited the district with gains in its top two priorities noting student achievement in primary grades, and the school construction program. “Student achievement on the state assessment have improved markedly since 2000, along with indicators on the state’s Academic Performance Index and the federal National Assessment of Educational Progress.

### C. Dropouts and Exit Exams

Although the *California High School Exit Exam* (CAHSEE) only requires that graduating 12<sup>th</sup>-grade high school seniors have an 8<sup>th</sup>-grade math and 10<sup>th</sup>-grade reading proficiency “nearly 20 percent of the Los Angeles Unified School District’s seniors have repeatedly failed the state’s exit exam.”<sup>14</sup> “The district’s seniors should have been in a better position at this point,” said Estela Zarate, director of education policy research at the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, a think

<b>Enrollment by Grade</b> LAUSD 2004-05	
Kindergarten	55,099
Grade 1	58,403
Grade 2	59,380
Grade 3	59,078
Grade 4	60,115
Grade 5	60,582
Grade 6	56,191
Grade 7	51,824
Grade 8	54,494
Grade 9	71,512
Grade 10	51,757
Grade 11	41,144
Grade 12	29,700
Ungraded	32,088
<b>Total</b>	<b>741,367</b>
Source: California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Office (CBEDS, enrsch04 9/13/05)	

tank at the University of Southern California. According to dropout studies she's conducted, Zarate said, the district loses 30 percent to 50 percent of students who begin high school. "That's not very good at all. I would expect the pass rate on the CAHSEE<sup>15</sup> should be higher, especially if the students have completed the course requirements expected to complete high school."<sup>16</sup>

A lawsuit has been filed charging that diplomas should not be denied to students based on the CAHSEE,<sup>17</sup> since schools have let their students down, especially in math, by providing them with unqualified teachers. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell has actually urged districts to increase graduation requirements. He knows that the dropout rate is what he calls “. . . a serious issue, and that's why we have

*“ . . . teacher unions that bend the system’s operations to their own ends”*

<sup>13</sup> *Review of the Organizational Structure and Operations of the Los Angeles Unified School District*, Report, Council of Great City Schools, January 2006.

<sup>14</sup> *Los Angeles Daily News*, April 27, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> California High School Exit Exam, CAHSEE.

<sup>16</sup> *Los Angeles Daily News*, April 27, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> An Alameda County Superior Court judge lifted the exit exam requirement in April 2006. The decision was appealed and sent to the California Supreme Court, which reinstated the test less than two weeks later, granting a stay until the appellate court could hear arguments.



“Schools cannot possibly be objective in obtaining this data about their own institutions.”

focused on high school reform.”

“Whether or not students graduate is the most important thing that happens to them in school,” said Gary Orfield, director of the Harvard Civil Rights Project. “If students don’t make it through high school, they really have no chance in our economy.”<sup>18</sup>

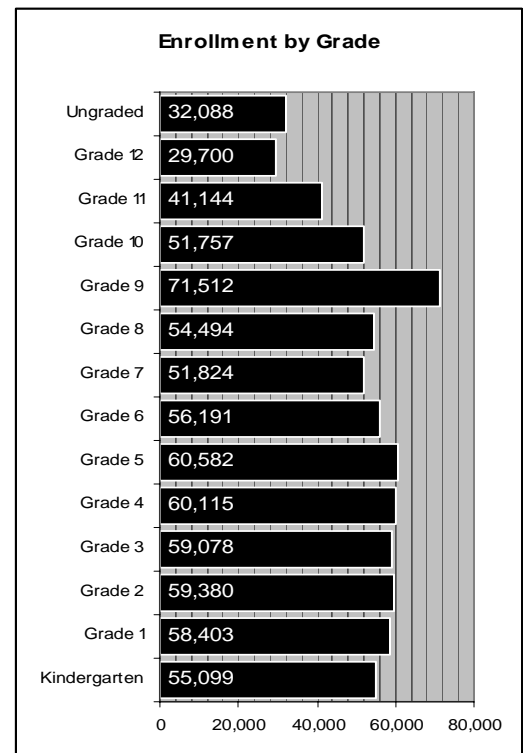
Depending on which data you use and how you interpret it, the dropout rate—those present in the ninth grade and missing in the twelfth grade—might be 22%, 30%, or something over 50%. Of the students who do graduate, most are not prepared for college and lack adequate education to enter the workforce.

While there is considerable controversy over the meaning of the statistics, the drop-off in enrollments between the ninth and twelfth grades is striking as seen in the chart.<sup>19</sup> Using the CPI method<sup>20</sup> graduation rates in the LAUSD at 45%, are last place of the ten largest districts in the state.<sup>21</sup>

#### D. The Available Data are Unreliable and Conflicting

Part of the problem in managing the district comes from unreliable data. The dropout rate, for example, is subject to huge disparities in interpretation; currently ranging from less than 25% to more than 50%. There is no reliable way to track individual students, particularly those who leave school. These inconsistencies make it difficult to find solutions. It is virtually impossible for the average stakeholder to evaluate district performance, or be able to hold anyone accountable. Statewide or system-wide student identification numbers could provide a partial solution to this problem.

Sponsors of the 2005 Harvard Civil Rights Project report: *Confronting the Graduation Rate Crisis in California*<sup>22</sup> urged the state to reexamine its approach to producing dropout and graduation data, and called for schools to redouble their efforts to retain students. “There is a pressing need to gather more data, but the data collection should be carried out by independent organizations with no vested interest in the findings . . . schools cannot possibly be objective in obtaining this data about their own institutions.”



<sup>18</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Source: <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us>

<sup>20</sup> The CPI, Cumulative Promotion Index, method is based on the combined average success of groups of students moving from ninth grade to tenth grade, from tenth grade to the eleventh grade, from eleventh grade to twelfth grade, and from twelfth grade to graduation, at the district and state level. The CPI graduation rate estimate is considered the least susceptible to bias caused by the 9th grade enrollment bulge.

<sup>21</sup> *Confronting the Graduation Rate Crisis in California*, Report. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University 2005.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Los Angeles City Controller Laura Chick sought to have the LAUSD to “invite” her to do an outside audit of the district; an offer they have repeatedly rejected. More recently, the Mayor of Los Angeles along with smaller cities served by the LAUSD requested that the State of California convene a joint legislative panel to examine the district’s dropout rate and test scores; no progress has been made on this initiative either.<sup>23</sup>

The California School Information Services (CSIS) is a statewide student identification system that does provide some of the needed information; however, a more comprehensive longitudinal cross-district information service called California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)<sup>24</sup> will be available in 2008.

In order to meet federal requirements of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), California schools are required to assign individual student identifiers, show adequate yearly progress in academic achievement and track individual student enrollment history and achievement data over time. The CALPADS system will provide the needed statewide assessment data, enrollment data, and other demographic elements.

## V. LAUSD PERFORMANCE

Emphasis on testing and accountability is now more prevalent than ever before. With the *California High School Exit Exam* (CAHSEE) and the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), school districts have been made to comply and report in a number of categories, categories that make their performance much more transparent to stakeholders. Although some loopholes still exist, and experts still do not agree on approaches, there is heightened emphasis on quantifiable results.

### A. Achievements of LAUSD and Employee Unions

LAUSD officials ask that the public recognize the gains being made in public education by the district. District schools are saddled with many unique challenges: a wide range of cultures and native languages, redundant administrators, and micromanagement by the school board. The district deserves credit for recent improvements in certain categories; but these incremental improvements are overshadowed by ground being lost in other areas, and by dismal overall performance. One of the greatest challenges in dealing with this problem is the inability of those in leadership positions to even agree on the underlying facts.

According to union leadership, a majority of the problems in schools are the result of inadequate funding. They believe in more dollars going directly to the classroom, particularly in the form of teacher compensation. Class-size reduction, an increase statewide per-pupil spending, and higher teacher pay are seen as a means of attracting and retaining better teachers.

Recently, unions have come out in support of some reforms, including small learning communities. They are, however, resistant to charter schools, seeking

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<sup>23</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Senate Bill 1453 (Alpert) adds Section 49084, and adds Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 60900) to Part 33 of the Education Code, Enacted September 2002.



limitations and caps on the total number of schools. This may be because many charter schoolteachers are not unionized, and others are affiliated with nontraditional unions.

The size of the LAUSD works to the benefit of the unions allowing them to have one point of contact for nearly 40,000 teachers. They have traditionally opposed any initiatives that would dismantle the district, suggesting that the size of a district does not always matter, and that smaller is not necessarily better.

The district is controlled and managed by the Board of Education, elected from seven districts carved out of the LAUSD. Unlike legislators and city officials, because of the subject matter, and the sprawling nature of the district, school board members have to rely on a relatively narrow group of supporters for their re-election campaigns. The mightiest of these are the teachers and school employee unions. It should come as no great surprise that union contract negotiations end up with union influences on both sides of the table.

Students, on the other hand, do not usually contribute to political campaigns, and an extremely small percentage of parents are politically sophisticated or active. They rarely know the names of the board members, let alone have any idea of what goes on in the day-to-day machinations of the board. The result is lopsided union contracts that can present major obstacles to efficiency and reform.

## **B. Union Contracts Hinder Accountability**

Collective Bargaining within any school district in California is a form of governance, in that it involves the allocation of resources for wages and salaries of employees of the district, as well as determining the terms and conditions of employment. Over the past two decades, the scope of bargaining has been increased by actions of the courts and state agencies so that the original tenets of the collective bargaining law have been greatly expanded. As a result, many decisions about the allocation of resources and the distribution of teachers—including issues of seniority and transfer rights—have become embodied in provisions of collective bargaining agreements, and are decreasingly subject to traditional management prerogatives or governance decisions that may be made by the Board of Education.<sup>25</sup>

A study by the nonprofit *New Teacher Project* found that teacher contracts place seniority over what is best for students, especially by favoring longtime teachers for desired teaching slots over newer teachers who might be better for the job. That is true even if the more senior teacher is needed in another school. Poor and minority students have long borne the brunt of these rules, because experienced teachers often want jobs in the more affluent communities. Though disadvantaged students need more educational support, they tend to end up with the least experienced teachers. The accountability movement is putting the spotlight on these long-standing practices, but unions have adamantly resisted change.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Presidents' Joint Commission on LAUSD Governance*, Report. Los Angeles CA: President, City Council of the City of Los Angeles and President of the School Board of the Los Angeles Unified School District, June 2006, Minority Report 2, p.38.

<sup>26</sup> "ABCs of School Reform," *Los Angeles Times*, Opinions, April 2006.

“Transfer” and “excess” rules undermine effective staffing in urban schools in four ways:<sup>27</sup>

- 1) Urban schools are forced to hire large numbers of teachers they do not want and who may not be a good fit for the job and their school.
- 2) Poor performers are passed around from school to school instead of being terminated.
- 3) New teacher applicants, including the best, are lost to late hiring.
- 4) Novice teachers are treated as expendable regardless of their contribution to their school.

These problems are compounded when overlaid on a mammoth school district like the LAUSD. The legal process for discipline and termination under union restrictions is so burdensome as to be unworkable; it is simpler to just transfer an incompetent teacher. Because of the number of campuses, such teachers can be shuffled around indefinitely without ever being found out or being assigned to the same school twice.

Another study of five large school systems nationwide<sup>28</sup> concluded that union staffing rules made it difficult if not impossible to fire poorly performing teachers. As a result, the poorer teachers would be shuttled around the system, ultimately arriving at the least desirable assignments; usually found at the most difficult and least safe campuses. Union leaders<sup>29</sup> dismissed the report as blaming the union for a societal lack of commitment to children.

The study determined that more than 40% of the hiring decisions were forced upon the receiving schools. LAUSD Superintendent Roy Romer was quoted as saying “we need more flexibility . . . and a different balance.” Legislation is pending<sup>30</sup> that would limit the district’s ability to force teachers on underperforming schools who are unwilling to accept them.<sup>31</sup>

Admittedly, there are many highly motivated and talented people teaching and working in the LAUSD. That raises the question of why the needed changes have not already been made. A 1993 Arthur Anderson Management Review<sup>32</sup> provides some insight:

*Implementation will be extremely difficult. We expect high resistance to change. There has been a history of unsuccessful change programs in the district.* — Arthur Anderson

*“The history of LAUSD is littered with reform plans that were introduced with fanfare, only to be slowly crushed by a bureaucracy that’s hostile to change”*

— Yvonne Chan

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<sup>27</sup> Levin, Jessica, Jennifer Mulhern and Joan Schunk, *Unintended Consequences*, Report. New York: The New Teacher Project, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Jessica Levin, Jennifer Mulhern, Joan Schunk, *Unintended Consequences: The Case for Reforming the Staffing Rules in Urban Teachers Union Contracts*, Report, New York: New Teacher Project 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Reg Weaver National Education Association, *Daily News*, Nov 17 2005.

<sup>30</sup> SB 1655, as amended May 2, 2006, Scott. Teachers: voluntary transfers. Adding Ed.C. §35036.

<sup>31</sup> Janet R. Beales, *Doing More With Less: Competitive Contracting for School Support Services*, Report, Los Angeles CA: Reason Public Policy Institute, September 1994.

<sup>32</sup> *Management Review, Final Report*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Unified School District, Arthur Anderson & Co., June 1993.



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### C. 1971 Joint Legislative Committee on Reorganization Report

In a 1971 *Report to the California Legislature by the Joint Committee on Reorganization of Large Urban School Districts*, a number of alarming findings were made. Thirty-five years later, many of the same problems remain.

The committee determined that the LAUSD was failing to meet society's needs and that the public's confidence in education was shaken by a serious crisis; shaken by the district's "inability to effectively provide quality education."<sup>33</sup> According to the report, the problem cannot be solved by the mere addition of funds channeled through the existing large and highly centralized bureaucratic system, since this has yielded low returns in the past.

The legislative committee concluded that superintendents, principals and teachers "are not held accountable for performance," that responsibility for most school decisions—including curriculum, personnel and resource allocation—should be shifted to virtually autonomous local school districts of between 45,000 and 60,000 students.<sup>34</sup> An important focus of such reorganization, they suggest, would be to restore confidence in our educational system. The modest administrative decentralization proposed by many, will not accomplish this.

### D. 1993 Arthur Anderson Management Review

Twenty-two years later, in June of 1993, Arthur Anderson conducted a Management Review<sup>35</sup> of the LAUSD, noting similar inefficiencies:

- The district does not use objective performance measures to hold the administration accountable.
- The district's progressive disciplinary procedures are extremely cumbersome. This means non-performers cannot be corrected on a timely basis.
- The district performs little long-term planning. This has resulted in slow reaction to major changes in its environment.
- The district's budgeting process is unduly complex and does not encourage accountability.
- The district currently lacks management information systems, which provide timely, consistent and accessible data for operational decisions. This includes accurate personnel counts.
- The district has ineffective processes for assessing the needs of its customers.
- The district has no process in place to achieve continuous improvement in its service level and cost structure.

Researchers found that the district had excessive layers of management, unclear lines of responsibility and too much bureaucratic red tape—observations echoed twelve years later in this forum: *2005 Education Summit*. Another recurrent theme is the district culture, a culture that is unaccountable and unwilling to

*“Responsibility . . . should be shifted to virtually autonomous local school districts of between 45,000 and 60,000 students.”*

<sup>33</sup> *Final Report to the Legislature*, Report, Joint Committee on Reorganization of Large Urban Unified School Districts, Sacramento CA: California State Senate/Assembly, 1971, p 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>35</sup> *Management Review, Final Report, Los Angeles Unified School District*, Report. Los Angeles CA: Arthur Anderson & Co., June 1993.

accept responsibility, leading to unnecessary delays. A culture that fails to address the real needs of the students.

### **E. 1999 Little Hoover Commission Report, State of California**

California's Little Hoover Commission, which is primarily concerned with government efficiency, revisited the LAUSD in 1999, after several previous studies. They found little change in the culture of the institution, and gave a gloomy prognosis for improvement.

The commission stated that it “lacks confidence that the school board can provide safe and nurturing schools and manage the other affairs of the district . . . a higher level of competence is needed to spearhead a thorough and thoughtful reform of the district’s management . . . “

The commission concluded that the LAUSD is “an agency that is poorly organized, staffed and governed. The victims of this incompetence are 700,000 children, and the taxpayers of California. All of them are relying on school officials who time and again have squandered the public’s resources and trust.”

Three areas of reform were addressed:

- The district’s organizational structure dilutes authority and thwarts accountability.
- Personnel practices favor insiders over the best candidate, particularly for senior management positions. After failing, those managers are shielded inappropriately by rules originally intended to protect taxpayers.
- School board members have failed in their role as policy-makers for the district. As an oversight body the board is inconsistent and inadequate, yet board members often intervene in day-to-day management of the district.

“Another generation of children in Los Angeles have been doomed . . . because of persistent incompetence by the Los Angeles Unified School District” according to the commission.

In 1980, an earlier iteration of the commission found that LAUSD stood out among school districts for “failing to economically deal with declining enrollments. While asking the Legislature for additional funds for new schools, the district refused to reduce operating expenses and generate revenue by using existing schools more efficiently.”<sup>36</sup>

The 1980 commission also urged the state, in partnership with Los Angeles civic leaders, “to fully develop structural alternatives, including the breakup of LAUSD into smaller districts and the creation of a separate authority for school facilities.”<sup>37</sup>

### **F. Need for Reform of the LAUSD**

The 1971 *Final Report to the Legislature*<sup>38</sup> is as pertinent today as it was then; it recognized the problems inherent in an oversized school district, and 35-years

*“Another generation of Children in Los Angeles have been doomed”*

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<sup>36</sup> State of California, Little Hoover Commission – *Report on the LAUSD*, November 3, 1999

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Report to the Legislature.*



later the same issues are still being debated. Quoting the 1993 *Management Review*:

*The decision in April 1993 by the United Teachers Los Angeles "House of Representatives" to oppose some aspects of the district's vision, LEARN, in its adopted format, makes it very unclear as to whether the collaboration of one of the key bargaining units will be obtained. Simply stated . . . no collaboration, no change!*

There seems to be very little hope on the part of the public and experts outside the system that substantive reform can ever come from within the LAUSD.

Nominal improvements at LAUSD can to some degree be attributed to the federal mandates of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, and the *California High School Exit Exam*, both of which apply external pressure for objective achievement standards and increased accountability.

In the face of resistance from the district, a number of external forces have begun to affect some community-based changes to the system. Charter schools, brought about by the threat of a voucher initiative, were made possible by state legislation. They have the freedom to innovate and to foster accountability free of the control of the district. Charters are making great strides in Los Angeles, and are likely to hit a "tipping point" in the next several years, where their competition will force major changes in district schools.

## VI. HISTORICAL REFORM PROPOSALS

### A. Legislation

There is no shortage of ideas on ways to reform the LAUSD. Most of the proposals involve calling upon a higher power in the form of the state legislature. There have been several proposals over the years, to dismantle the LAUSD and create two or more smaller districts in its place. Torrance was the last city to successfully secede from LAUSD, but that was in 1948. The Harmer-Green Bill in 1969 would have broken up the district and was passed by the legislature, but it was vetoed by then-Governor Ronald Reagan. In the interim, local jurisdictions were given veto power over detachment initiatives, which made any kind of secession attempt useless.

The seas of reform were quiet for a while; until 1993 when a highly controversial redistricting plan for the LAUSD was adopted. The Los Angeles City Council gerrymandered school board districts located in the San Fernando Valley. In response, to eliminate the veto and give back the ability to place detachments on the ballot, valley assemblywoman Paula Boland successfully amended the state law in 1995. In 2001, the City of Carson, which is serviced by LAUSD, was the first to have its breakaway initiative reach the ballot under new legislation—where it was defeated in a hard-fought campaign. The San Fernando Valley "FREE Initiative"<sup>39</sup> was the most recent community-led attempt to dismantle the LAUSD. It was the victim of a lengthy and highly politicized process, being blocked when the State Board of Education unanimously rejected its placement on the ballot.

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<sup>39</sup> Finally Restoring Excellence in Education

## B. LEARN Initiative

The Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now (LEARN) was established in 1991 by prominent business leaders from around the region. The organization advocated for a decentralization model in the district. LEARN brought together over 600 representatives of business, LAUSD staff, unions, and community groups. In 1993, the school board approved implementation of LEARN's recommendations. The program was voluntary but the district's intention was for all schools to become LEARN schools. School Site Councils were ostensibly given control over personnel, curriculum, and budgetary decisions within the overall LAUSD structure. Unfortunately, the checkbook remained at district headquarters and virtually all of the restrictions of the district, the Education Code and the union collective bargaining agreements remained intact.

At the peak of the program, LEARN schools made up approximately half of the schools in LAUSD. Although these schools did perform somewhat better than non-LEARN schools on standardized tests, there were significant implementation problems and political barriers that were never overcome.

LEARN failed primarily because the LAUSD would never grant budget autonomy to the LEARN schools. The LAUSD board voted unanimously to grant this basic autonomy to all LEARN schools, but the administrative staff never implemented it, and the board never insisted that they do so. Without that autonomy, the LEARN plan could not succeed.<sup>40</sup>

LEARN's elaborate accountability plan failed due to two obstacles:

- (1) The central accountability measure they planned to use – the California Learning Assessment System – fell victim to Sacramento politics and was never fully implemented, and
- (2) The LEARN board decided against publishing detailed standard reports on each of the LEARN schools, presumably because teachers and principals did not want their schools singled out.

Additionally, problems arose between principals and the councils—in some cases because the principals were not adept at working with the councils, and in others because the councils prevented the hiring of strong principals in order to maintain their control over the schools. Furthermore, the central district did not relinquish control of many functions to the school sites.

As it became increasingly apparent that the real power remained with the district, the councils lost the relative power they had been given. Finally, in 1999, after changes in both the superintendent and some school board members, the political will to maintain the LEARN program waned and was finally abandoned.<sup>41</sup>

Yvonne Chan of Vaughn Learning Center sums it up well: "The history of LAUSD is littered with reform plans that were introduced with fanfare, only to be slowly crushed by a bureaucracy that's hostile to change"<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Source: William Ouchi, former Chairman, LEARN

<sup>41</sup> Gary Kirsten, et al., *A Better Way to Budget: An analysis of decentralization in the Los Angeles Unified School District*, Report. Los Angeles CA: UCLA School of Public Affairs, April 25, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Yvonne Chan and Maria Casillas, "Mayors Must Take Control of Schools," *Los Angeles Daily News*, Local View, August 5, 2006.



## **VII. BIG IDEAS: STRATEGIES FOR REFORMING SCHOOLS**

As has been demonstrated, the existing district will spend far more effort and resources defending its record and opposing reform than it will on objective evaluation. Reformers blame resistance on the entrenched special interests, and on the fact the LAUSD maintains an army of defenders of the status quo. Because education is the cornerstone of our society, L.A.'s communities can be expected to persevere in their quest for world class schools, agreeing that dramatic structural reform is required.

### **A. Accountability and Consequences**

A recurrent theme in virtually all reform proposals is the need for greater accountability. It is essential that the school system, whatever form it takes, be accountable to the communities it serves. The organization's business plan must provide for informed decisionmaking. Data need to be accurate, reliable and timely, properly communicated and easily understood. In today's digital world, there is no excuse for not making such information widely available to the public.

Decision makers need to know who their students are and how they are faring. They need to know what assets and resources are at their disposal, and most importantly, they have to be able to assess the performance of teachers and students relative to rigorous standards and benchmarks for achievement.

### **B. Charter Schools and Charter Clusters**

In 1992, the school choice movement was gaining speed and the first voucher initiative was in circulation.<sup>43</sup> This would have etched school reform in the stone of the California Constitution. As an alternative, Senator Gary Hart introduced SB 1448, which established guidelines for the formation of charter schools. The California Teachers Association, and its affiliates, were concerned that the legislation did not mandate union contracts; however, as a statute rather than a constitutional amendment, they felt it would be easier to add this provision later. In spite of union efforts, this has still not occurred.

California charter schools are not subject to most of the laws governing public education or to mandatory unionization. With their added flexibility, charter schools are encouraged to be innovative in their teaching methods, to think outside the box in order to increase learning opportunities for all pupils, and to create new professional opportunities for teachers. In exchange for this autonomy, charter schools are held to a higher standard than regular public schools and can be shut down for not meeting their charter requirements or goals.<sup>44</sup>

Since its inception, the charter schools movement has created a virtual school district covering the State of California, a network of nearly 600 schools and 200,000 students. The largest Public Charter Schools Grant Program was awarded to California for the 2004-07 grant cycle, resulting in approximately 250 new charter schools.<sup>45</sup> Charters are increasing at a rate of 15% per year. Charters created within the LAUSD helped boost those gains, adding 20

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<sup>43</sup> It subsequently qualified and appeared as Proposition 174 on a special 1993 statewide ballot.

<sup>44</sup> Source: California State Senate Republican Caucus, January 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Source: State of California, Department of Education.

campuses in the 2005-06 year, or about 9,000 new students. There are now 100 charter schools within the LAUSD,<sup>46</sup> with more than 37,000 students enrolled.<sup>47</sup>

*The first graduating class at Animo Leadership had a 97% graduation rate; with 62% going on to attend a four-year accredited university.*

—Sandy Blazer, Green Dot Public Schools

Reviews are generally good for established mainstream charter schools after a few years of operation.

### C. Special Provisions Within the LAUSD

There have been repeated efforts by the teachers union and sympathetic school board members to reduce charter funding, impose more restrictions on charters or to cap the number of new campuses.

In one recent case, Parkman Middle School, the campus found itself losing and students to surrounding charter campuses. An effort began to make Parkman into a charter in order to compete. The district, with the support of the teachers union, stepped in to broker a deal offering special programming to the school, to provide some of the advantages of a charter school.

The *Los Angeles Daily News* called this arrangement “Charter Lite.” The paper suggests that extending selected schools some of the autonomy enjoyed by charter schools is a way of heading off the entire charter schools movement.<sup>48</sup>

Charter schools feel they are shortchanged when it comes to funding. One example is when special education funding fails to reach the school. “Not only does the district take as much as 37 percent from us, but they provide zero services in return,” said Yvonne Chan, principal at the 1,500-student Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Pacoima. Joe Lucente, former president of Fenton Avenue Charter School in Lake View Terrace, told the *Daily News* that his school provided and paid for its own special education services, but still was billed \$220,000 by the LAUSD for the same services.<sup>49</sup>

The ubiquitous charter schools are quite popular with students, parents and teachers, in many cases offering better compensation than traditional schools. There are, however, cases where charters have been mismanaged or failed altogether. Charter school boosters are anxious to see such schools closed.

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<sup>46</sup> Source: California Charter Schools Association, March 2006.

<sup>47</sup> *Daily News*, April 9, 2006.

<sup>48</sup> “Charter Lite” *Daily News*, Opinion, March 22, 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Lisa Snell, “LAUSD Plunders Funds for Charter Schools,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, Opinion, Reason Public Policy Institute, July 14, 2004.



## D. Small Learning Communities

Reducing school size improves student learning. Smaller schools tend to have lower dropout rates, better attendance, fewer incidents of violence, and more student participation in extracurricular activities.<sup>50</sup>

*Small Learning Communities* (SLCs) are schools made up of not more than 500 students. SLCs are typically not headed by a true principal. The term SLC refers to *houses* or *colleges* within a larger *school*. The larger school is headed by a principal, and the houses within each have a director. That director may sometimes be called a principal but in fact is not a principal—but reports to a principal.

This system is thus fundamentally different from the Pilot Schools approach in Boston and L.A., and the autonomy approach in NYC, Chicago, Houston, Seattle, and elsewhere. In those cases, the small school is headed by a principal who enjoys the five autonomies over budget, staffing, schedule, curriculum, and governance.<sup>51</sup>

In SLCs directors and principals work in a collaborative environment with teachers, staff and a fixed group of students. At this level, students can all be included in the school community and nobody is left behind or lost in the crowd. The principal functions as chief executive officer, and because of its size, the schools are more manageable than a traditional large campus of 2,000-5,000.

An individual small-school student has the opportunity to attend the same campus, and have the same teachers, principal and classmates throughout their entire high school experience. This gives their parents and family members a chance to develop one-on-one relationships with faculty and to become involved with the students' learning process. Indeed, most small schools mandate parental involvement as part of the student's commitment.

Research continues to indicate that teachers in small autonomous schools and small learning communities have increased opportunities to know their students well, to individualize instruction, and to help students see the value of learning. In these settings, students are more connected to school, meet higher academic standards, and are more accountable for their own learning.

When students feel connected to school, they are less likely to exhibit disruptive behavior and emotional distress, are more motivated and engaged, and have better attendance rates. Teachers also indicate that in smaller learning communities they are more satisfied with their own work, because the adults are able to develop a professional atmosphere that works for them and their students.<sup>52</sup>

## E. Rightsizing School Districts – Breakup of LAUSD

The most dramatic reform proposal would involve dismantling the existing LAUSD, converting it into a number of smaller, more community-oriented

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<sup>50</sup> *Improving Low-Performing High Schools: Ideas and Promising Programs for High Schools*, Report. Washington DC: American Federation of Teachers.

<sup>51</sup> Ouchi.

<sup>52</sup> Kathleen Cotton, *New Small Learning Communities: Findings from Recent Literature*. Portland OR: Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, December 2001; *Belmont Zone of Choice: An In-District Secondary Innovation of Portfolio Schools*, Paper, Los Angeles: The Belmont Educational Collaborative, 2006.

districts. This option has a large following among those who have lost confidence in the district, who have seen in-district reforms, such as LEARN come and go for decades, and who mistrust the relationship between the district and the public employee unions. A clear majority of residents surveyed in the San Fernando Valley in 2001 favored breakup.<sup>53</sup> There is considerable support in the remainder of the district as well, particularly among the independent cities.

Those supporting the breakup of the LAUSD believe it would increase accountability, foster parent involvement, reduce waste and inefficiency, increase the dollars going to classrooms and ultimately raise student achievement levels.

As envisioned, the new, smaller districts would be completely autonomous and would have a maximum size in a range not to exceed 50,000 students. Proponents expect this would allow the kinds of reforms and programs that are impossible within the bureaucracy of the massive LAUSD.

Two bills submitted to the 2005-06 state legislature<sup>54</sup> would create such districts, employing a nine-member commission to oversee the reorganization. Any district in California with more than 500,000<sup>55</sup> pupils would have to be sliced up into smaller districts of not more than 50,000 pupils each. The new districts would all have to comply with strict criteria as to equity, accountability and access.

“The Los Angeles Unified School District is sinking from its own bureaucratic weight,”<sup>56</sup> according to Robert Hertzberg, former Speaker of the California State Assembly. “The problem lies in the massive bureaucracy of L.A. Unified . . . the district needs to be broken up into smaller ones, with parents, teachers and principals in charge.”<sup>57</sup>

A 2003 Los Angeles Times editorial reasons that “unless the . . . board puts children's concerns ahead of grown-ups', the only hope for achieving top-quality public education in Los Angeles may be to break up the district.”

The Los Angeles Daily News supports “breaking up the nation’s second-largest school district into manageable pieces” arguing “the public wants a change in the culture of the LAUSD, to see teachers and principals energized and creative, rewarded for success and held accountable for failure.”<sup>58</sup>

Yvonne Chan, nationally celebrated charter school pioneer, is a veteran in dealing with the LAUSD: “We do have many good principals, teachers and administrators. These individuals are passionate about children, and yet they are trapped in . . . a bloated and politicized school system . . . one that dictates each detail of school life, from the core curriculum to the lunchroom menu. Parents want to be actively involved, but they cannot break into the bureaucratic decision-making process.”

Chan believes that they can solve the problem “through local control. It can be done by establishing independent ‘charter school districts’ serving from a few hundred to 20,000 students—perhaps 30 of which could make up what is now

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<sup>53</sup> *San Fernando Valley Quality of Life Survey*, Report. Claremont CA: Rose Institute of State & Local Government, 2003; 69% of the same sample group indicated a strong willingness to pay to improve public schools.

<sup>54</sup> SB 1326 (Runner) and AB 2071 (Richman).

<sup>55</sup> Only the LAUSD falls into this category.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Hertzberg, “A Smaller Better L.A. Unified,” *Daily News*, Opinion, April 27, 2006

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> “Saving the LAUSD,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, Opinions, April 2006.

*The notion of autonomous charter clusters or mini-districts centered around one or two high schools also has a strong appeal.*



L.A. Unified. Decision-making and fiscal resources stay with the local communities.”<sup>59</sup>

Autonomous charter clusters or mini-districts centered around one or two high schools are beginning to emerge, creating a model for a coordinated learning experience from kindergarten through high school graduation. These community-based clusters may provide an incremental alternative to breaking up the district.

## F. City Jurisdiction – Mayoral Intervention

A relatively new proposal on the education scene is one in which the Mayor of the City of Los Angeles, or a *Council of Mayors* from the LAUSD service area, would take some amount of control over the LAUSD. Originally, cities, such as Los Angeles,<sup>60</sup> had complete or partial control over their school districts. Since the 1930s, most city-controlled districts have been replaced with dedicated school boards and unified school districts.<sup>61</sup> Since the early 1990s, some of those same cities have begun taking back their schools. Cities with current mayoral control include: New York (2002), Philadelphia (2001), Detroit (1999), Cleveland (1998), Chicago (1995), Boston (1992).

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has proposed a reorganization to better govern the Los Angeles Unified School District. Some of the elements initially discussed include:

- Complete mayoral takeover, including appointment of school board and superintendent, making the superintendent into an education “czar”
- Partial takeover, with the mayor appointing some school board members, or taking responsibility for certain key functions
- Expansion of the school board with a mix of elected and appointed members
- Change of school board members to full time, with higher pay
- Election of the superintendent, who is currently appointed by the board
- Division of the LAUSD into several smaller districts
- Experimenting with a voucher system and more charter schools by having sub-districts within the district<sup>62</sup>

Recognizing that the LAUSD actually serves 29 cities, the Mayor has proposed a *Council of Mayors* to govern based upon the district’s population. Although, under the formula, he would have 80% control, he has suggested the smaller cities might have veto power in all but budget matters.

The most recent iteration of the mayor’s proposal, Assembly Bill 1381 (Nuñez) would give the Mayor of Los Angeles, the superintendent, the school board, and a *Council of Mayors* joint power over the school district. The council would participate in the selection of, and render advice to the superintendent, review the budget, and would form a “partnership” to take control of three clusters of the district’s poorest performing schools—except for union contracts.

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<sup>59</sup> Yvonne Chan, (Principal, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center), “A Blob that Eats Kids: Replace L.A.’s Bloated School District with Local Control,” *Los Angeles Times*, Commentary, March 7, 2003.

<sup>60</sup> Formerly “Los Angeles City Schools.”

<sup>61</sup> Unified School Districts: districts that include K-12, elementary, middle and high schools.

<sup>62</sup> *Daily News*, April 7, 2006.

The role of superintendent would be strengthened: to seek waivers, to manage, appoint and dismiss personnel and to manage fiscal operations and contracts—except for union contracts. Staff would all report to the superintendent, and no longer to individual board members. The board would appoint the inspector general.

In this leadership role, the Mayor has proposed a series of reforms:

- Expanded school day and year; students to wear uniforms and engage in community service; a Safe Passage Network to and from school sites
- Enhanced parent involvement with a dedicated resource center, coordinator and an annual survey of parents
- More local autonomy, including more dollars to the school sites, control over budgets, school accountability report cards and independent audits
- Less bureaucracy using savings to boost teacher pay, providing incentives to teach in high-need schools
- Professional development, and the reinvention of vocational education.
- Increased emphasis on creation of small learning communities: schools of 500 or less; schools as community centers and expanded charters with accountability

### **G. School Transformation Plan – Autonomous Small Learning Communities**

The *School Transformation Plan* is a strategy proposed by Green Dot Public Schools, a leading public school operator in Los Angeles, and Bain & Company, management consulting firm; in which LAUSD can transform all of its large, overcrowded, failing high schools into small learning community schools. The plan consists of three components: 1) the plan introduces the core attributes of high-performing schools, known as the *Six Tenets*; 2) the plan provides an innovative process, called School Transformation, for converting large, individual high schools into clusters of high-performing Six Tenets schools; and 3) it identifies strategies that the district should follow, and key execution implications that must be addressed when rolling out School Transformations to all of its schools.

Under the plan, over a period of ten years, the LAUSD's 46 comprehensive high schools would be transformed into some 500 autonomous small schools. Programming is organized around what is called the *Six Tenets*:<sup>63</sup>

1. **Small, safe, autonomous and personalized schools** – Schools should be small—approximately 500-525 students—to ensure that students do not fall through the cracks, also allowing students to receive personalized attention. Students are held accountable for all of their actions and with a 21:1 or less student-to-teacher ratio, teachers can develop personal relationships with each student and his/her family. Smaller schools are safer and decrease the security risks inherent in urban schools. The schools operate in clusters that share services and facilities.

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<sup>63</sup> *The School Transformation Plan: A Strategy to Create Small, High-Performing College-Preparatory Schools in Every Neighborhood of Los Angeles*, Paper. Los Angeles CA: Green Dot Public Schools, Bain & Company, April 2006



2. **High expectations for all students** - All stakeholders must have an unwavering belief in the potential of every student and an understanding that every student will succeed with the proper support. All students should take a rigorous A-G college preparatory curriculum. Graduates would at least have the option to attend college if they choose. Extensive student intervention and support programs must be offered.
3. **Local control with extensive professional development and accountability** – Principals and teachers are empowered to make all decisions related to budgeting, hiring and curriculum using recommendations and best practices provided by the central district. Extensive professional development and an effective system of accountability are instituted.
4. **Higher percentage of dollars directed to the classroom** – More money is channeled directly into the classroom by incorporating best practices and redesigning the school district to support the *Six Tenets* school model. Each school could receive upwards of ninety-cents on the dollar of public education funds expended.
5. **Parent participation** – Families should be expected to participate in their children’s educational experience. All families are required to provide a set number of parent participation hours. Schools should offer a variety of flexible programs to allow parents and family members to be involved.
6. **Schools kept open later** – Facilities need to be made available for community use to develop social connections and a sense of ownership. They should be open until at least 5 p.m. daily to provide students with safe, enriching after-school programs and to enable community groups offering quality services to the neighborhood to use the facilities.

LAUSD would need to make substantial organizational changes in order to implement transformation. It is currently “a very centralized organization” where school sites are “given mandates from the central district on most key decisions.” LAUSD needs to transform itself into a “decentralized service-based organization that relentlessly prioritizes the needs of students above all others.”<sup>64</sup>

#### H. Zone of Choice – Belmont Pilot Schools Network

A dramatic new reform initiative is being pioneered by the Belmont Education Collaborative and comes from within the LAUSD: the *Zone of Choice - Belmont Pilot Schools Network*. The small school choice concept is based upon Boston’s Pilot School Network. It provides for breaking the 5,000-student Belmont campus into five to ten autonomous college-preparatory small schools to serve ninth through twelfth grades. Scheduled to start in 2007, the program would allow students in the Belmont High School service area to select among multiple campuses, each with a different program focus, ranging from performing arts to business and finance.

A *choice* system permits students to select their schools, encouraging schools to be different in interesting and meaningful ways: small, focused and autonomous schools with diverse offerings that educate all students to high levels. School

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

boards need to become managers of portfolios of schools, instead of operating schools as they do now. Boards need to ensure that all students have access to a variety of quality educational options.<sup>65</sup>

The collaborative reviewed historical data on several area schools, and found that graduation rates at small specialized schools reached 82%, while the rate at large comprehensive high schools was closer to 40%. Completion rates for A-G college preparatory curriculum was as high as 74% in the smaller schools, compared to a range of 4% to 16% in the large schools.<sup>66</sup>

### I. Weighted Student Formulas – Making Schools Compete

In the *Weighted Student Formula* (WSF) approach, students have a classification and a funding amount that travels with them. A set of needs-based weights is calculated for each child, and that is how much the student brings to whatever public school he/she chooses to attend. The needs-based funding differential between students can be as much as 10 to 1. (See *Weighted Student Formula*, page 40)

According to an April 2005, study by the National Education Association WSF is becoming increasingly popular among urban school districts that want to improve the equitable distribution of limited resources.

Both WSF and school-based management are part of the broader reform concept known as *decentralization*. Rather than a top-down district system, each school principal is responsible for the majority of their own school-based budget, managed at the school site.<sup>67</sup>

WSF shows promise in helping large urban school districts provide funding equity to schools while providing opportunity and flexibility to students. It focuses attention on the individual student and not on the *average* student. Thus, resources are allocated to a school, based on the individual student characteristics of the school's student population.

“Rather than moving for a break-up of the Los Angeles Unified School District, which is likely to be politically unfeasible and legally challenging” says Lisa Snell of the Reason Public Policy Institute, “the mayor can marshal the power of his office to move LAUSD to a weighted student formula financing system, which would lead to more accountability and decentralization than a break-up of LAUSD.” WSF allows “schools to compete for students and principals to control their budgets and tailor their schools to the needs of their specific school populations.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Belmont Zone of Choice: An In-District Secondary Innovation of Portfolio Schools*, Paper. Los Angeles CA: The Belmont Educational Collaborative, Forward by Thomas Vander Ark, Director, Educational Programs, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

<sup>66</sup> Source: Belmont Education Collaborative, 1998-2002 data.

<sup>67</sup> *Weighted Student Formula: What Is It, and How Does It Impact Educational Programs in Large Urban Districts*, Report. Washington DC: National Education Association, April 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Lisa Snell and Adrian T. Moore, *Suggestions for the Mayor*, Public Policy Brief No. 35, Report. Los Angeles CA: Reason Public Policy Institute, March 2005, p.10.



## J. Local School Autonomy – Educators as Entrepreneurs

UCLA's William Ouchi has done extensive research in two important areas: Weighted Student Formulas and local school autonomy. The local autonomy model, which has proven itself in a number of jurisdictions, such as Boston, Chicago and Edmonton, Canada can actually co-exist within a larger district like the LAUSD. The difference is that each school principal makes virtually all of the decisions—this includes budget decisions. Because families have choices among these public schools, they are the beneficiaries of healthy competition for pupils. (See Local Autonomy, page 39)

*Seven Keys to Success:*<sup>69</sup>

1. Every principal is an entrepreneur.
2. Every school controls its own budget.
3. Everyone is accountable for student performance and for budgets.
4. Everyone delegates *authority* to those below.
5. There is a burning focus on student achievement.
6. Every school is a community of learners.
7. Families have real choices among a variety of unique schools.

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<sup>69</sup> William G. Ouchi, *Making Schools Work*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003, p.14.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS: EDUCATION SUMMIT PANEL

Accountability is at the core of nearly every school reform proposal. Without reliable data, stakeholders cannot monitor, or even understand the district's practices, budget or performance. Lessons can be learned from the corporate world, particularly in how standards are set and how achievement is measured.

### A. Systemic Reforms

- Create autonomous or semi-autonomous smaller school districts.
- The size of districts and schools need to be reduced to a human/student scale, closer to communities.
- Make the public school system accountable.
- Reduce or eliminate bureaucracy by strengthening oversight; limit administration overhead to less than 5%.
- Use performance-based budgeting: set goals and objectives and measure performance.
- Make the public school system competitive.
- Budget so that not less than 65% of funding goes to the classroom.
- Encourage teachers and staff, giving them opportunities for entrepreneurial behavior through financial incentives.
- Establish criteria to attract, promote and reward excellent teachers, including emphasizing professional development.
- Allow principals to make all key decisions at their schools, while giving teachers a voice in leadership.
- Have the school district focus on the education business, and where appropriate contract out for non-core functions such as payroll, transportation, food service and security.
- Embrace innovative and creative ideas, including best practices from around the United States.
- Act immediately! The need for reform has been debated for decades, with most of the more serious problems still unresolved.

### B. Teaching and Curricula Recommendations

- Make teacher quality and ability major priorities with more emphasis on reading, writing, arithmetic and science.
- Eliminate social promotion altogether.
- Assure every student passes core classes with a mark of C or better; otherwise require a mandatory intervention program.
- Provide A-G college preparatory curriculum, for every student, and create linkages to the community college system.
- Develop an aggressive career technology program, providing multiple options for students and parents.
- Put administrators back in the classroom.



- Revive and emphasize career and technical education, and provide alternatives for earning a diploma; this will assure that the curriculum is relevant and help to prevent dropouts.

### **C. Principles in Establishing a *Culture of Education***

- Cultivate an appreciation of knowledge, self-discipline and respect for others as a means of improving self-respect; make character count.
- Make clear what is expected from students, from the school system, and what can be done to make a significant difference in levels of achievement.
- Engage social networks, families and communities with interests in schools and in the educational process.
- Promote an interest and enthusiasm for education by making it relevant to students' and families' daily lives.
- Empower parents and teachers; give them a meaningful voice in their schools.
- Instill the value of education as a means of joining the middle-class and beyond.
- Develop innovative programming and intervene to reduce high dropout rates.
- Insure students' ability in meeting global competition by redesigning and rebuilding public education.
- Establish communications, including charter schools, student representatives, school board members and the economic community for ongoing dialogue.
- Make a commitment to *fundamental* reform of the Los Angeles Unified School District, and to turning its schools around.

### **D. Local School Environments**

- Safety in the schools is critical; violence is unacceptable, and safe passages are needed.
- Provide ways for residents and parents to help their local school sites through contributions and volunteerism; demonstrate to taxpayers that their funds are being expended efficiently.
- Develop greater access to business, philanthropic and corporate donors to raise funds for site-based programs such as mentoring and *beyond-the-bell* activities—especially at low-performing schools.
- Provide necessary healthcare and dental care in the schools; students who are sick or in pain will not learn.
- Involve parents and students in the process, building their commitment to the educational process in specific and actionable ways.
- Make schools the center of each community.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS: COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

In its 2005 report, the Council of Great City Schools made a series of recommendations for improving and reforming the Los Angeles Unified School District:<sup>70</sup>

- Redeploy both instructional and non-instructional staff from the central office location to the local districts. The responsibilities of a smaller central office would then be more strategic and less transactional in nature.
- Develop and implement an overall framework for evaluating performance and cost effectiveness of all major educational and operational programs.
- Place local district superintendents and senior staff members in the central office on performance contracts tied explicitly to the attainment of district wide goals. All local district superintendents should be evaluated on their regions' movement toward their goals.
- Revisit all regional and school plans to ensure that they align with district wide goals, and that all goals are measurable, explicit, and have timelines for progress.
- Evaluate school principals explicitly on their progress toward attainment of their achievement goals, but grant them additional latitude to hire and fire school-based personnel.
- Give parents an explicit role in the evaluation of school staff.
- Move aggressively to replace the district's antiquated and fragmented business systems with the Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP) system.

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<sup>70</sup> *Review of the Organizational Structure.*



## X. RECOMMENDATIONS: PRESIDENTS' JOINT COMMISSION ON LAUSD GOVERNANCE

In 2005, the president of the Los Angeles City Council and the president of the LAUSD created the *Presidents' Joint Commission on LAUSD Governance*. The objective of the commission over its one-year term was to explore issues on school district governance; to improve academic achievement, better engage parents, more efficiently use resources, and make the district more accountable. In a series of 30 meetings, the commission studied the district's history and past reform efforts, school finance, student achievement, dropout rates, educational equity, parental and community engagement, school safety, accountability and collective bargaining, as well as reviewing alternative governance models and organizational structures throughout the United States.

The commission issued its final report in June of 2006<sup>71</sup> and made the following recommendations for reform:

- **Decentralize the District** – Decentralize certain functions of the LAUSD to improve accountability, equity, community engagement, and student achievement. Create a new organizational structure for the district where authority and accountability of school leaders is much greater. Provide significant school-level control over budgets, personnel, curriculum, and other functions. Allocate funding directly to the school, with needs-based weighted student formula.
- **Organize Schools into Clusters** – Organize all district schools into *clusters*, or *families* of schools, with a community high school or schools, and its feeder middle and elementary schools to improve coordination and collaboration. Eliminate the current sub-district structure.
- **Change the Role of the Central Office** – Change from a command and control system to one that supports decentralization and improves efficiency and achievement. In exchange for schools' greater authority, develop systems to hold them more accountable for performance.
- **Focus the Role of the School Board** – Streamline the school board to more narrowly focus on policy. As primary governing body for the district, the board should continue to hire and fire the superintendent, approve the district budget, decide on school site selections, track and improve parental engagement, conduct annual parent satisfaction surveys and performance reviews, sharing results with all stakeholders.
- **Establish Full Time School Board with Concomitant Compensation and New Ethics Rules and Term Limits** – School board positions should be full-time occupations, with compensation increased to reflect full-time work loads. Change campaign finance rules to mirror those of the Los Angeles City Council, and limit board members to three four-year terms.
- **Depoliticize Collective Bargaining** – Collective bargaining should be conducted by an independent panel, with the intent of implementing reforms and decentralizing authority.

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<sup>71</sup> *Presidents' Joint Commission*

- **Welcome Municipal Involvement in LAUSD** – Increase collaboration with the county and cities served by LAUSD: involvement in broad education policy, district’s budget process, some involvement superintendent selection, creation of a joint advisory commission on the conditions of children, youth, and families within the LAUSD, confer on site selection and land use issues, and establish a planning advisory board.
- **Improve School and Community Safety** – Local municipal officials must play a critical role in ensuring safety of schools and surrounding communities, and that the Los Angeles School Police Department (LASPD) police chief report directly to the LAUSD superintendent. LASPD representative needs to participate in the Los Angeles Police Department’s COMPSTAT meeting, and partner with law enforcement in other LAUSD areas and cities.



## **XI. RECOMMENDATIONS: REFORM CONCEPTS**

### **A. Decentralization – Community-Based Schools**

Public education systems are bureaucracies; and bureaucracies, with their codified rules and standardized procedures, are increasingly seen as problematic in environments like schools where circumstances change often, where clients' needs are difficult to predict precisely, and where the tasks being performed are not standardized." Bureaucracies discourage creativity and innovation and encourage a focus on rule-based compliance.<sup>72</sup>

Decentralizing decisionmaking as close as possible to the organizational level where key services are performed has been viewed, inside and outside of education, as a way to increase efficiency and spur adoption of more effective means of reaching performance goals.<sup>73</sup> The forces of technology and globalization will persist in changing the nature of business organizations, which continue to evolve away "from command-and-control leadership styles to decentralized management and employee empowerment across all levels of the organization."<sup>74</sup>

Proponents believe that decentralization automatically creates schools that are more efficient. They contend that if schools are more efficient, they will provide students with improved educational opportunities. "Some preliminary studies of decentralization's overall impact . . . do appear favorable, but questions about research methodology remain" according to the National Education Association. "There are some initial positive findings within the currently available research suggesting that decentralization . . . may work well for certain types of districts."<sup>75</sup>

### **B. Making School Relevant – Individualized Curriculum**

Students at risk of dropping out would be more inclined to stay in school and work harder if they could see a direct link between the courses and preparation for careers and college, according to a James Irvine Foundation poll of 619 high school freshmen and sophomores.<sup>76</sup>

While the idea of school relevance seems simple, in practice, it is a great challenge. The two major schools of thought are split over whether all students should be forced into an A-G college preparatory curriculum, or whether college should simply be another option.

The second scenario would allow students to gravitate toward practical disciplines, vocations, and courses in vocational arts. This approach is viewed as a potential lifeline, particularly for students prone to dropping out—those who have difficulty relating to a pure academic curriculum.

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<sup>72</sup> Bruce A. Bimber, *School Decentralization: Lessons from the Study of Bureaucracy*. Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, MR-157-GGF/LE, 1993, p. 26.

<sup>73</sup> Janet S. Hansen and Marguerite Roza, *Centralized Decisionmaking for Schools: New Promise for an Old Idea*. Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, 2005, p.2.

<sup>74</sup> Lynn A. Karoly and Constantijn W. A. Panis, *The 21st Century at Work: Forces Shaping the Future Workforce and Workplace in the United States*. Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, MG-164-DOL, 2004, p. 187.

<sup>75</sup> *Weighted Student Formula: What Is It, and How Does It Impact Educational Programs in Large Urban Districts*, Report. Washington DC: National Education Association, April 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Source: The James Irvine Foundation.

The hybrid alternative would combine the two approaches, providing a basis for college while also offering relevant vocational electives as options and alternatives.

### C. Competitive Contracting for Non-Core Services

As schools are being asked to take on greater responsibilities for the education of children, the challenge will become how best to marshal existing resources to make every dollar go further. Saving money without compromising services ought to be a chief concern of administrators. Contracting for services is a practical solution that can help administrators make the most of limited resources.<sup>77</sup>

Although introducing competition into a system that has long been protected from such challenges is not easy, the rewards are usually well worth the effort. Cost savings from competitive contracting have been well documented.<sup>78</sup> Properly designed and monitored, contracts between the public schools and private providers can help school administrators do more with less.

The key question is not "how much" money is spent, but "how well" that money is spent. By contracting with private companies for busing, maintenance, and food service, schools can do more with less. Reducing costs, increasing revenues, and tapping new reserves of capital investment and expertise, can help school administrators focus on their core responsibility: educating children. Non-instructional and support activities make up a sizeable portion of public school budgets.<sup>79</sup>

Consider:

- Only about half of all public-school employees are teachers. Out of 4.6 million school staff employed in 1991 by the nation's public schools, just 2.4 million were teachers.
- Between 1960 and 1984, the number of non-classroom instructional personnel in America's public-school classrooms grew by 400 percent, nearly seven times the rate of growth of classroom teachers.
- Public schools operate with five times more non-instructional personnel per student than parochial schools.
- In a KPMG Peat Marwick survey of school districts in Washington and Oregon, over 60 percent of the districts reported lower costs through contracting than in-house provision. Another 15 percent of respondents indicated costs were the same.<sup>80</sup>

Even if the costs remained constant, improvement in operations would result from the freeing up of personnel, relieved from the responsibility of managing the delivery of non-core services. The job description for a school principal would be more narrowly focused on the education process, rather than the oversight of facilities and other services.

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<sup>77</sup> *More With Less.*

<sup>78</sup> *Management Review.*

<sup>79</sup> *More With Less.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*



*"It's all about politics and power, not kids . . ."*

#### **D. Joint Powers Among LAUSD Cities**

Frustrated with slow response to dismal student performance in the vast Los Angeles Unified system, officials in six southeast cities have launched an effort to form a local agency that would let them have direct control over their schools.

The cities of South Gate, Bell, Huntington Park, Cudahy, Maywood and Vernon, want to form a joint-powers authority to select their own superintendent, gain some control over funding and have a greater say over the LAUSD curriculum. Spokesperson Binti Harvey said South Gate city officials are responding to a graduation rate of 42 percent, with only 11 percent of those moving on to higher education.

LAUSD Board President Marlene Canter responded, "It's all about politics and power, not kids . . ." <sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Los Angeles Daily News*, 05-16-06.

## **XII. REFORM OF THE EXISTING LAUSD STRUCTURE**

The more determined reformers argue that the LAUSD has had its chance at improvement; that nothing short of a complete breakup and reconstruction of the district will work. Nevertheless, quite a number of incremental reforms have been proposed over the years that would reform the system from the inside out. Below are selected recommendations from the 1993 Management Review by Arthur Anderson & Co.<sup>82</sup>

### **1993 Arthur Anderson Management Review**

Recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of the LAUSD:

- Empower Administration through increased delegation of authority by the Board.
- Hold the Administration accountable to objective performance measures.
- Streamline procedures to correct non-performers.
- Initiate long-term planning.
- Create a more relevant budgeting process.
- Prioritize completion of management information systems.
- Establish a process for obtaining customer feedback.
- Commit to a process for continually improving customer service and driving down costs.
- Consolidate certain business functions.
- Reduce management layers.
- Decentralize decision-making closer to the schools.
- Move student support, budgeting and educational support functions closer to the schools.
- Introduce greater competition and accountability by allowing the schools to use outside vendors rather than the district vendors.
- Break down long-standing cultural barriers.
- Consolidate similar functions.
- Streamline management layers.
- "Reinvent" extremely complex work processes.
- Invest in automation.
- Explore outsourcing some activities to third party vendors.
- Eliminate "red tape."
- Refocus towards greater customer service.
- Investigate the impact of "bumping rights" and the elimination of positions.
- Calculate Employee entitlements to accrued benefits, sick pay and other severance costs.
- Enhance the district's information system to allow for accurate analysis of positions.

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<sup>82</sup> *Management Review.*



The Anderson report echoes prior findings, and when looking at the current district demonstrates that very little has changed. Objective accountability and increased efficiency are essential to improvement. Long term planning and real world budgeting would require running the district more like a business, which in many ways it is. Objective achievement standards and benchmarks would improve programming. Perhaps most critical is the development of enhanced data and information systems, without which there is no way of assuring progress.

The Anderson report also recommends decentralizing, reducing the bureaucracy and red tape and moving as much decision-making as possible to the school site. The schools should become more efficient, competitive, and entrepreneurial; outsourcing of non-core services such as transportation, maintenance and food service, allowing more focus and additional resources to support the educational program.

Perhaps the most important element in the entire reform debate needs to be rethinking and renegotiating collective bargaining agreements, bumping rights and employee entitlements. Many existing provisions stand in the way of systemic reform and impede the educational process by putting employee rights, privileges and benefits ahead of all else, including the educational interests of students.



### **XIII. EDUCATION SUMMIT – PANEL ABSTRACTS**

The following are abstracts of statements and presentations made by leaders of the education and civic communities on November 15, 2005 at the Sheraton Universal Hotel, Universal City California.

#### **A. Bruce D. Ackerman**

*President and CEO of the Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley*

Employers and consumers in the area are the ultimate customer for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Employers have to draw from a pool of residents who may or may not have the skills necessary to support themselves and to contribute to the regional economy. This is a major problem when, in some cases, workers are unable to even fill out job applications.

#### **B. David W. Fleming**

*Chairman of the Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley*

*Mr. Fleming moderated the day's proceedings and offered insights:*

Assembled today are leaders of business, education, government and the media, seeking solutions to eradicate the problems.

China is one country that will be a major competitor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; they have made tremendous progress, and are poised to be an economic giant. Part of their secret is that 65% of all Chinese High School students now go on to college. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, more than half the students attending in the ninth grade do not go on to graduate; those that do succeed often are not qualified and lack basic skills in literacy and math. Because of the poor performance of the LAUSD, far too many students are ill prepared to face the economic challenges of the future.

We have to dissect, redesign and rebuild public education in the region to provide success instead of mediocrity and failure—to successfully meet tomorrow's economic challenges.

Public education is more than a right, it's a duty owed to every new generation by the generations that came before them. We must make certain that every child is given the opportunity and the encouragement to learn. This requires a system of public education that makes excellence and success the norm, not the exception.

- Students must be prepared to meet global competition.
- High dropout rates have to be reduced to a nominal level.
- Public education must be redesigned and rebuilt to insure success.
- Students must be given the tools to join the middle class and beyond.

I was on the board of LEARN for ten years. Over the years, we made many suggestions that they all agreed with—they would nod and shake their heads—but nothing ever happened. The district is so huge that nobody can control it. We should form a sort of “Continental Congress” and come up with some “Articles of Confederation”—something that would replace the LAUSD. We could create a commission similar to what we did for charter reform in the City of Los Angeles.

The LAUSD will never reform itself.



### C. Antonio Villaraigosa

*Mayor of the City of Los Angeles*

*Mayor Villaraigosa alluded to the fact that he had challenges as a youth, that the public school system gave him a second chance; he went on to become Speaker of the California State Assembly, as well as mayor of the second largest city in the United States:*

The guarantee of a free public education for all is the key ingredient in America's prosperity.

There is a definite connection between the kind of investment that is made, and the kind of schools we have. When I went to school, we could take art and music. We were in the top three in per-pupil spending. In this state, where the Governor tried to take four billion dollars from education, we are 35<sup>th</sup> in per-pupil spending.

The *No Child Left Behind* initiative is \$27 billion underfunded. It has some of the requirements that come with accountability, but it doesn't have a safety net. As a result, kids are being pushed out.

Money is an important issue in the improvement of public education, but it isn't the *only* issue. It is unacceptable that we have 50% of our kids dropping out. The LAUSD challenges this percentage, but don't appear to be able to prove what is correct; they don't keep their numbers. No matter whose numbers you use, we do know that too many of our kids are dropping out.

Los Angeles is the "poverty capital" of the United States of America. I'm told there are 10,000 homeless students in the LAUSD. Too many kids are homeless; they lack proper healthcare or dental care. It isn't possible to learn when you are sick or in pain.

Reform proposals have gotten a lot of lip service, but in the end, after all the valiant efforts of thousands of concerned citizens, the impenetrable LAUSD monolith still stands. I don't believe you can be against breakup of the school district, charter schools, the small school movement, mayoral control, vouchers, or even to assigning experienced teachers to low performing schools, and still say you're "for reform." What you are for is the status quo.

There are powerful interests who want to defend the status quo and challenge me because I am questioning how we can continue to survive as a great city with a school district that is failing our kids. If the LAUSD were a corporation, they would be out of business today. They have lost money, market share and seen the quality of their product drop to all-time lows.

There are experts who argue that it is all about money, and not about governance; we disagree. Efficiency and accountability are essential. We need to engage in a comprehensive reform effort. It is not enough to just cut around the edges; the reform needs to be fundamental structural reform. The City of Los Angeles is prepared to be a full collaborative partner, recognizing that there are many great challenges; but the stakes are high enough to justify the effort.

The business community absolutely has to be at the table; parents are essential; teachers are critical; and principals are the lynchpin for reform in local schools. Without all of them, we cannot succeed

It is time to clear a path that demonstrates we are:

- Committed to *fundamental* reform of the Los Angeles Unified School District
- Committed to turning our schools around
- Prepared to develop and embrace innovative and creative ideas
- Determined to cut bureaucracy
- Willing to empower parents and teachers—to give them a meaningful voice in their schools

These are some of the reforms that I intend to implement:

- Safety in the Schools – Violence, especially racial violence, is unacceptable
- Safe Passages – Many kids are terrified to travel back and forth to school. The school district makes them leave at 3:00 p.m. and they are afraid to walk home. We need to access business, philanthropic and corporate donors to raise more money for these programs, especially at low-performing schools.
- Strategic Partnerships – After-school programs have had great success, as have mentoring programs.
- Healthcare and Dental Care in the Schools – Being healthy is not tangential to education; students who are sick or in pain will not learn.
- Accountability – Without accountability, all of the other programmatic reforms are in jeopardy. An organization cannot function if it is unable to track progress and conserve resources.

All those who represent the status quo and the bureaucracy will fight it; but this has to happen. The only way we can win is to build a consensus for reform, one that starts with the business community, with parents, with enlightened teachers and progressive administrators—those who understand what it takes. Together, we can make this happen.

#### **D. Mayoral Control**

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa current plan (November 2005) for Mayoral control of the LAUSD, key elements:

- Legislation would be approved summer 2006; an election would be held in May 2007, and a change in governance would occur by July 1, 2007.
- The LAUSD board would be reconstituted as an Assembly.
- The mayor would appoint a district chief executive. Other management would include a chief instructional officer and a chief facilities executive.
- Four general managers would each oversee 15-20 local superintendents who, in turn, would each supervise a district with 8,000 to 10,000 students in 10 to 20 schools.
- Many schools would be given new leadership teams, new designs and possibly new names.
- A tax increase would be likely; "Los Angeles taxpayers have proven that they are willing to tax themselves if they believe that the money will be well spent."
- A Los Angeles Educational Fund would have a target of \$200 million for its first five years and work to find grants and other new funding sources.



- LAUSD would be "rebranded," possibly with "Los Angeles Department of Education, Youth and Families" as the new name.
- Student uniforms would be required.
- Mandatory curriculum would be developed for kindergarten through 12th grade and include arts, music, physical education, foreign languages and career education.
- The school day could be expanded to 5 p.m. and include enrichment activities.
- Move toward a 10 1/2-month school year.
- Limit a school to 500 students at most, doubling the number of schools to 1,480.
- Add more charter schools and raise \$50 million to establish additional seats.
- Require parents to sign contracts describing parent and school responsibilities.
- Schools would develop and manage their own site-based budgets.
- Develop a "career ladder" for teachers.
- Sell LAUSD's headquarters at 333 South Beaudry Ave. Relocate central staff to schools or district offices or downsize.
- Develop a new salary schedule for teachers with major pay raises based on movement into more challenging roles rather than on seniority and degrees earned.

#### **E. William G. Ouchi**

*Professor, UCLA Anderson School of Management*

*Dr. Ouchi provided analysis of the LAUSD and a presentation on practices to make existing public school systems function better by decentralizing management and control. Dr. Ouchi advocates for placing most of the control for school budget and management at each school site:*

In 1932, there were 25 million students in the United States, spread over 127,000 school districts. Now in 2005, we have 50 million students and 16,000 school districts. The average district increased in size by 1500% in that time period.

In this system, decision-making autonomy is not possible, and they are forced to rely upon one-size-fits-all solutions. They have not changed the fundamental way they do business since 1932. They have no real reason to change. They have a franchise monopoly; they continue to receive a constant flow of students and funds whether they succeed or fail.

We designed a study to find out whether the issue of autonomy is as important in public schools as it is in large businesses. We studied 223 schools in three traditional large districts: New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. These were compared with Edmonton, Seattle and Houston, the only three districts, which at that time had adopted autonomy for all schools. When I started in 2000 there were only three in North America and only two in the United States. Today there are ten districts that have followed this local autonomy path, including small-scale programs in Boston, with 19 schools; in New York City with 45 schools; and in

Chicago with 85 schools. The entire school system in the State of Hawaii has joined the movement.

I paid a visit the Archdiocese of New York City. I called the superintendent to get some basic information. I asked, “in order to serve the 120,000 students in your schools, how many administrative staff do you have.” I was told to “Hang on, I’ll go count them.” It turns out there are 22 staff, including secretaries and clerks. At that time, the New York City public schools had 1.2 million students,<sup>83</sup> ten times as many as the Archdiocese. With 25,500 non-teachers and administrators, they were carrying an administrative burden 1,159 times that of the Archdiocese. A vast majority of these administrators don’t work out of the central office, but are assigned to a regional office or even local school—not accountable to the school or supervised by the principal, but managed directly by the central office.

#### **F. Local Autonomy – Educators as Entrepreneurs**

The Edmonton Model first emerged over 30 years ago when Mike Strembitsky, a 35-year old hog farmer, took over the Edmonton School District as superintendent. The district, largely blue collar, was drowning in bureaucracy and mismanagement, leaving home school as the only alternative for most. Strembitsky implemented a set of basic reform elements that I refer to as the *Seven Keys to Success*:

1. Every principal is an entrepreneur.
2. Every school controls its own budget.
3. Everyone is accountable for student performance and for budgets.
4. Everyone delegates *authority* to those below.
5. There is a burning focus on student achievement.
6. Every school is a community of learners.
7. Families have real choices among a variety of unique schools.<sup>84</sup>

The “Edmonton Solution” resolved most of the conflicts between principals and the central bureaucracy. Principals are given budgeting control and authority, and delegate as much of this authority as possible to the classrooms. Each school receives a pro rata fund and makes their own local decisions. They have local autonomy, but with strict accountability. Feedback is constant with questionnaires circulated to stakeholders, parents, students, teachers and principals. Teachers are able to evaluate adequacy of funding and programming, opportunities to affect decisions, even how they rate the leadership provided by the principal. Principals are accountable to the district for student performance, budget performance and stakeholder satisfaction. Principals rate service from central office staff, leadership provided by the superintendent, and degree of confidence in the school board. The results are published for all to see.

Unions were wary, going on strike when Mike first took over. They now support autonomy, but they still strike for other reasons. Edmonton has recaptured eight market-share points from the Catholic Schools, which are also funded by the government. There are no private schools left in Edmonton. Public school has

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<sup>83</sup> The number rose to 1.4 million by 2005.

<sup>84</sup> Public schools



become so popular, it has put all of the non-religious private schools out of business. This year all the charter schools voluntarily gave up their charters and rejoined the conventional public school system. This provides them with the same basic benefits; they now have more access to professional development opportunities and improved financial security.

**Seattle** – In 1962, K-6 public elementary schools in Seattle had nearly 100,000 students. By 1989-1990, this number had fallen to 39,087. Thirty-five percent of school children in Seattle had migrated to private schools; others had moved across the city line to escape the Seattle Public Schools. In 1995, the district hired retired Army General John Stanford to become the new superintendent, and gave him broad authority to implement reforms. They went off to meet with Mike Strembitsky in Edmonton, hoping to emulate his *weighted student formula* template. Seattle's students gained six points in reading and eight points in math scores<sup>85</sup> from 1996 to 2001.

John Hay Elementary on Queen Anne Hill in Seattle is situated in an upper middle class, neighborhood. Before changing to autonomy, the principal controlled \$25,000 per year; the principal now controls \$2 million per year. Judging it as an inefficient use of time, they threw out the traditional schedule. There were problems of language challenges and conflicts among the students. They were determined that by third grade everyone had to be reading. Literacy groups were established in K-3, in groups of seven or fewer, utilizing the librarian, and seven tutors—all in groups of five to seven students. They gave mathematics the same kind of attention.

In Boston, we interviewed two principals of autonomy schools, called *Pilot Schools*. Both entered into an agreement with the teachers bargaining unit, both without any extra money. They have a *total student load* of 53. We also interviewed two principals of autonomy zone schools in New York City; both high schools were at a total student load of 75—every other high school in New York was at 160—and they have no extra money. In Chicago, we interviewed two autonomy principals, who had similar results.

The message is: if you leave it to the professionals, they will make decisions to allocate resources most efficiently.

### G. Weighted Student Formulas

In the *weighted student formula* approach, students have a classification and a funding amount that travels with them. An upper middle class right-handed blond child with two parents at home, native English speaker, with no learning disabilities, is the least expensive child to educate.

- A set of weights is calculated for each child, ranging from 1.0 up to 9.2.
- Each school takes the weight of each student and multiplies it times \$2,600; that is how much the student brings to that school.
- A base allocation is made to each school: elementary \$300,000, middle school \$400,000, and senior high \$500,000, regardless of number of students they have enrolled. This fixed amount assures their ability to continue to operate.

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<sup>85</sup> Iowa Test of Basic Skills

- The student funding is determined by the weighted student formula, which, by design, encourages enrollment of students with greater needs.
- At the lowest funding level is the student who will flourish in a large class as well as in a small class; this student has a weight of 1.0, or  $1.0 \times \$2,600$ , and takes that money with her to any public school she wants to attend.
- Likewise, the “maximum child:” a low-income English learner, with severe learning disabilities, gets \$24,000 per year that they take with them to a school of their choice.
- The student calls to tell them she is coming next year. If the school is over-subscribed, it runs a lottery. She doesn’t have to go to a central office and seek permission—a process that is very intimidating, especially for immigrant families.

Adequate funding is channeled to inner city schools to employ the necessary staff and specialists. High-weighted children, even homeless children stay, and so do the better teachers. Every teacher teaches with whatever approach they feel is most effective.



## H. Panel One – Moderator: William EB Siart

Chairman, ExEd LLC

### I. David Abel

*Founder, New Schools Better Neighborhoods*

California faces the unenviable task of building hundreds of new schools to relieve overcrowded classrooms and serve a growing student population. To accomplish this mission, New Schools Better Neighborhoods promotes the concept of designing smaller school facilities that can build upon and accommodate existing community land and facilities. This saves the time, money, land, and other resources used to duplicate functions elsewhere.

Four LAUSD school construction bonds have been approved in the last several years, totaling \$13.5 billion. With the match from state bonds, this amounts to over \$20 billion in commitments to build and remodel schools in the 700-plus square miles of the LAUSD.

We need to rethink and rebuild our inner city communities. It has been frustrating to see how the resources are being used. The focus has been on building seats to “get the kids off the bus.” Little thought has gone into anything but the traditional warehouse model: “build seats!”

### J. New Schools, Better Neighborhoods

At NSBN we are dedicated to building learning environments that are focal points of neighborhoods, using these vast resources in ways that incorporate parks and libraries into *small learning communities*. Neighborhood centered, these anchor schools need to engage students, teachers and administrators in a community learning exercise.

1. Seek new joint-use and multi-purpose facility opportunities.
2. Include early childhood education and family resource components.
3. Support and implement a 21st Century vision of community-centered schools.
4. Smaller schools
5. Full-service schools
6. After-school opportunities
7. Focus on high-need areas

You do not get reform done without money, and there is no greater source of money than the school facilities program. That’s the scheme of New Schools Better Neighborhoods, which has a portfolio of pre-development funded projects around Los Angeles to prove you can do it better.

The LAUSD is a centralized system that fights innovation.

## K. Caprice Young

*President and CEO, California Charter Schools Association, Former President LAUSD School Board*

## L. Charter Schools

First and foremost, charter schools are public schools. They are the result of a bipartisan measure adopted by the state legislature in 1992.

- Teachers and concerned community leaders create a charter school.
- The process starts with a simple plan called a *Charter Petition*. The petition explains how the school will be run and what the students will learn.
- The charter is created by the public and approved by a public body; 85% of California charter schools are approved by the local board of education, 15% by county and state education bodies.
- Charter schools are held accountable to public school standards.
- Everyone who starts a charter school is responsible for teaching to the same standards of every other public school; they take the same tests.
- If charter schools are not successful in educating the students, the authorizing agency can close the school; we encourage this, because all schools have to be held accountable for achievement.
- By law, charters must accept any student who wants to attend. If space is not available, they have to conduct a lottery; they are not permitted to pick and choose.

The combination of freedom and accountability is what makes charters successful. In exchange for accountability, charter schools gain freedom—not total freedom, as they are still required to comply with other laws—but they are able to choose their principals and teachers. They have the autonomy to determine who to hire, to control their own school budget, to determine hours and school calendar, as well as to establish curriculum; this allows them to concentrate on certain subjects, such as math, science, literature or performing arts.

There are currently more than 574 charter schools operating in California, serving about 212,000 students. There are more than 700,000 students nationwide attending 3,000 charter schools nationwide. The number of students attending charter schools is increasing at a rate of about 15 percent per year in the United States.

In 2003, the California charter school movement grew by five percent, in 2004 by ten percent and in 2005 by eighteen percent. One-third of the charter schools in the state are unionized.

Public charter schools offer an important and timely public school option to address the challenges facing our traditional education system. Charter schools are an exciting and high-potential alternative for the following reasons:

- Most efforts to reform high-need public schools in California have failed. Charter schools provide parents the opportunity to offer real input in their child's education.



- Charter schools give educators freedom to try new strategies to inspire student achievement.
- Charter schools, less encumbered by the bureaucratic barriers that face other public schools, have the potential to spark system-wide change.

The charter school movement is no less than the civil rights and social justice movement for this generation, as families and teachers take back their public education system.

### **M. Sandy Blazer**

*Chief Academic Officer, Green Dot Public Schools*

Created in 1999 Green Dot Public Schools is driving substantive reform in secondary education throughout Los Angeles. We currently operates five schools in the Los Angeles area: Animo Leadership Charter High School, Animo Inglewood Charter High School, Oscar De La Hoya Animo High School, Animo South Los Angeles Charter High School, and Animo Venice Charter High School. Green Dot Public Schools is currently working on the transformation of Jefferson High School into a charter.

At one time, I was principal of a 600-students campus and was able to know all my students by name; I also knew their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Moving on to middle school, there were 1500 students and 50 teachers; I could no longer get to every single class every single day, nor be as familiar with the students. The situation turned even worse when I went on to a conventional high school.

When I came to Green Dot I found campuses where the kids are not being missed.

Basic tenets:

- Charter school campuses
- No individual school larger than 525 students
- Make the schools safe
- College prep curriculum, for every student
- Principals make all key decisions acting as CEOs/CFOs of their schools
- Include parents in the process

I personally wanted every classroom to be one where I would put my own child. In our schools, 93% of the dollars that come to us go into the classroom.

Where I taught previously, the faculty showed up one day before the school year started for the students. At Green Dot, we provide ten days of staff development prior to the school year; it is very focused on student achievement and the data that we've collected from our students. We have one "late-start day" each week to provide for further development.

One of the keys is parental involvement; our program calls for parents to work 35 hours per year in the schools.

Some of these ideas sound simple, but when you have small learning communities, a school no larger than 525 kids, here is what happens:

- The CAO can be in every classroom every week.

- Principals know every student by name, every parent, every grandparent aunt and uncle – nobody slips through the cracks.
- The first graduating class at Animo Leadership had a 97% graduation rate; we counted those who started in ninth and finished in twelfth grade.
- Students attending a four-year accredited university reached 62%.
- All five of the Green Dot schools on the API (Academic Performance Index) are ten out of ten.

Roosevelt, where Mayor Villaraigosa went to high school, scored 539 out of a possible 1000 on the API; our school Oscar de la Hoya, also in east LA, is at 697. Animo Leadership has a 91% free- or reduced-price lunch population; they are the same kids.

There is a place for charters. Any good business would look at others to see what is successful.

#### **N. Brian Bauer**

*Executive Director, Granada Hills Charter High School*

Granada Hills Charter High School is a conversion charter, meaning we converted it from an existing *comprehensive* high school.<sup>86</sup> When we created our charter petition, 132 of 132 teachers signed it. The teachers unanimously wanted to convert to a charter school

We have three tenets:

1. Be efficiency involved
2. Maximize resources
3. Have the ability to dream

We have 3,800 students, 170 teachers, and 100 classified employees. Our student body is 40% white, 30% Latino, 20% Asian, and 7% African American. Over 45 languages are spoken on campus. We have a budget of \$26 million, and the majority of it comes straight to us through the state.

Our goal is to close the achievement gap. Our API score has risen to 795 – a 42 point jump from the 2004-2005 school year. The biggest movement has been among African American and socio-economically disadvantaged students; their grades doubled when compared to pre-charter performance.

We do it all with the same infrastructure we had as a district school. We added three positions: Executive Director, full time Chief Business Officer, and a Facilities Consultant. We were able to lower the teacher load from 42 students to one, to 32 students to one, by purchasing additional teaching positions.

When we started in January 2003, I held up a 400 page LAUSD directory and said it had to be consolidated into one page, as to support for the school.

We have added intervention for ninth graders, and a winter session for students who fail during the first semester; they are required to attend an extra week before they begin the second term. Students who score poorly on one of the four

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<sup>86</sup> A structural model for grades 9-12 that incorporates a system of instructional and course support for students in a wide variety of content areas.



California standards test are required to attend an after-school session one day per week and/or Saturday. We have over 1200 students involved in the *beyond-the-bell* program. It is not optional; it is required.

Where other schools are cutting support staff, we have added, discipline deans and attendance deans; guidance counselors, college counselors, nurses, and a psychiatric social worker on staff. Instructional leadership opportunities include professional development and an instructional agenda. Department chairs and instructional specialists set these.

Through economies, we have been able to fund a \$1.2 million renovation of the athletic field and track, creating the largest "classroom" on our campus. That would not have been possible without the charter.

In 2004-2005, we added five portable classrooms to lower class size. The project was completed in six months at a cost \$250,000. The last time this was done, pre-charter, it took a year and a half and cost \$100,000 per classroom.

We are now working to develop a childcare program for staff, and at the same time create an educational venue for students interested in childcare careers. The center will also serve as a continuation school for students where a traditional high school setting is not appropriate. We have already purchased our first piece of real estate across the street from our campus, and are looking to expand beyond our original 42-acre campus. This has all been done with school funds that come directly to us.

A student data system has been added that tracks real-time attendance and grades, among other things, allowing parents to know whether or not, their children are in class. An automated cafeteria system has lead to an increase in free and reduced lunch population, which jumped from 17% to 32%. Students no longer have to carry tickets. The coding is embedded in their ID cards.

LAUSD had a red team that went out to failing schools, but they did not have a green team for the good schools. Our way is not the only way, but what we are doing at Granada needs to be replicated.

## O. Panel Two – Moderator: Larry Elder

*Commentator, KABC-AM Radio*

### P. Robert Collins

*LAUSD Chief Instructional Officer, Instructional Services*

I'm here to defend the Los Angeles Unified School District. There are significant issues that that we have to resolve in this school district in order to move it forward. There are things that have to happen in order for us to reach the heights that we want to reach.

My first commitment is to restore confidence in our public schools by the public, a commitment shared by Superintendent Roy Romer.

Facts of interest, over the last five years:

Cleveland High School is a California Distinguished School

Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies is a California Distinguished School

In the San Fernando Valley last year, two-thirds of the schools were eligible to be California Distinguished Schools

The LAUSD in 1999, the red bar (referring to a graph provided) represents the number of schools (53%) scoring<sup>87</sup> in the lowest band. It reflects a district with significant problems. As you look over the course of the years, you can see the red band has almost disappeared in 2005 (1%).

Tremendous change has taken place, and even greater change has taken place in the San Fernando Valley. Most of the schools in the valley have moved far down into the green<sup>88</sup> category. This turnaround has been driven basically by elementary schools. A strong phonics-based program in the valley, particularly in grades one through three, has driven this tremendous change.

When we hear the statistics and data, we have a lot of problems, but have to keep in mind that we have teachers and administrators who are doing some very exceptional things. I am proud of my charter school partners. In fact, in District One, when Chime came about—last year, the top charter school in the State of California—it was LAUSD and Chime who entered it for joint partnership three years ago. We shared professional development with that school.

High Tech High—the first charter school placed right on a high school campus.

This is hard work, not easy work. There are no silver bullets in the crowd.

When you celebrate Montague Charter School as an exceptional example of a school and what charters can do . . . I agree. But I also celebrate the four elementary schools Latham, Fair, Cohasset, Bassett, that surround Montague, with twice the number of students, on a year-round schedule, all English learners, outscoring that school on the California Standards test; the same with Vaughn and the same with Fenton.

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<sup>87</sup> School API scores of 499 or lower of a possible 1,000

<sup>88</sup> School API scores of 700-799



We have done excellent work in elementary . . . we have not done that in middle schools and it needs to be a focus of this district.

- Teacher quality and teacher ability has to be a major priority.
- We cannot get enough math and science teachers out of the universities into schools.
- We have to be able to provide multiple options and choice for parents within specified zones.

Those options include:

- Charter schools
- Small schools and small learning communities
- A variety of other opportunities for families at a secondary level
- A character education program has been put in place, and is being implemented
- The A-G college curriculum has been made a default curriculum for every student

These can put tremendous challenges on teachers, principals and administrators. I believe, by putting resources behind it we can move that system.

Everyone likes to use the dropout rate figure of 50%. It's not 50%; unfortunately, it's 33.1%. They are both terrible. This year when the data come out, it's been reduced to 22%—still too high. But it is moving in the right direction.

As for gains through school construction, you won't begin to see those gains until next year.

El Camino has 4,000 students, Cleveland has 4,000, and Jefferson has 5,000. We have huge problems—mostly at the secondary level. That's where our major challenge exists.

**Elder:** If charters schools are handling their own administration on-site, is LAUSD reducing the number of administrators downtown, and if not, why not?

**Collins:** I don't know if we have reduced any administrators downtown. The most important element in the school district is the classroom and how that school is run. We have to be able to insure that every school has the resources necessary to implement a quality instructional program, including, teachers, counselors and administrators. To the extent we have to reduce the central office—local districts—whatever it may be to insure that, that is what should occur.

**Elder:** Do every one of those administrators (non-teachers) have "important" jobs?

**Collins:** The question is not whether the job is important, but can we afford the jobs that are there. If a bureaucrat is hindering the process, then that job needs to be re-aligned and re-assigned. We have created a level of bureaucracy that did not exist 20 years ago: the entire structure—that includes the local district directors—is a new structure. They are doing a very vital oversight job. We need to:

- Re-align and re-assign redundant administrators.
- Maintain vital oversight.

- Put administrators back in the classroom.
- Lower class size.
- Eliminate bureaucracy.
- Compensate principals properly.
- Provide resources at the school site.

We've had LEARN Councils and School-Based Management; if we can turn over many of those responsibilities and depend on the principals to do the jobs that we would like them to do—and even put those administrators back in the classroom—so that we can lower class size, we can eliminate a lot of that bureaucracy. Every one of those people are doing important things.

On the other hand, if we compensate that principal properly and make sure they have the resources they need at the school site, do we need those directors and administrators? Those are questions that we need to ask ourselves.

**Elder:** Many teachers promote kids who are not reading and writing at grade level; shouldn't we end the practice of social promotion?

**Collins:** Yes, that is particularly a middle school question; and when they get to the ninth grade, they are held accountable. We are proposing some new pieces to the board, to address that issue. The research and the data for retention—while it makes the adults feel good—really hasn't changed student achievement.

- Eliminate social promotion.
- Every youngster passes the core classes with a mark of C or better.
- If they don't do well in core classes, require mandatory intervention program, after school, inter-session, summer school, etc.
- Turn around K-12 and create linkages to our community college system.
- Develop of a very aggressive career technology program.
- Put into place, an expanded network of alternative programs and option schools.
- Develop alternatives for earning a diploma.

Comprehensive schools may not meet all the needs of all the students. LAUSD currently serves about 5,000 students in high school options programs—providing alternate ways to earn a diploma. Career technology programs can include: computers, media systems, engineering systems, robotic systems, machinist systems, all of which demands these higher-level schools;

Everything comes down to who's in the classroom. If we don't start paying our teachers reasonably, making schools safe, and giving classroom teachers administrative support, we won't get the bright young minds to come into the teaching profession. We won't get the people who desperately need to come into the system. They are not going to fight the bureaucracy, and don't want to fight for decent wages every year.

**Elder:** Give us some specific ideas.

**Collins:**

- Set up a communications system where we can continue this conversation, including our charter schools, including student



representation, and our school board members, around what we are doing in the San Fernando Valley.

- People who are criticizing public education, need to be at the table with us to discuss the solutions from the inside out.
- Train more teachers for reading writing and arithmetic.
- The district and City of Los Angeles need to talk about the quality and character of our young people.
- Establish parameters of behavioral responsibility.
- Make decisions; and we all need to carry that message, what we expect from our young people, what we expect from our school system, and what we can do together to make a significant difference in the levels of achievement.

The quality of your community depends on the quality of your public schools.

### Q. AJ Duffy

*President, United Teachers of Los Angeles*

For every one charter that Caprice Young puts out that does well, we can come up with three or four public schools that do just as well . . . or better. Local control is a myth. You can still have local control, but not completely. Our greatest gains have been in grades K through three.

With the emphasis on uniform testing, our teachers now are teaching to the test, focusing on small bits of information for short periods of time, to generate a score that some “clown” in Sacramento or Washington, can hold it up and say: “You see! They aren’t performing.”

I went back to New York and Boston to look at these small schools and was very impressed. Do I think that comprehensive high schools are gone? No.

What I enjoy listening to is young people, particularly brown and black children, who are so articulate about their educational program. They talk about the personalized education they received after a teacher’s caseload of 200 was reduced to 30 or 60; that same teacher could literally pay attention to them—and all teachers *want* to pay that kind of attention.

The bureaucracy is public education’s worst enemy. It’s my job over the next three years to hammer away at this bureaucracy as much as I possibly can, to make sure that the system understands that it will collapse under its own weight, not unlike the Communist system has collapsed under its own weight—unless it starts looking within to determine how—this bureaucracy must be destroyed; and then rebuilt at a reasonable level, so that the maximum amount of money goes to the school centers.

If we assume that local control is absolutely critical, I would disagree with those who say the principal has to be in charge; it has to be collaboration. I have worked in collaboration between myself, the school district, the mayor’s office and the business community to put out some ideas that I think will help public education.

One of the biggest things that drives up the dropout rate is the relevance of an educational program to our young people. Until we realize that, until we bring back vocational education, which is now “career and technical education,” we will

continue to see the dropout rate rise no matter what else we do; we have to give them relevance.

- One reform that we know absolutely works, and that we should work together on is class size reduction in K through 12.
- The focus on test scores as a means by which we determine whether an education program is productive or not, is wrong.
- We need accountability, but test scores alone are not the way.
- Curriculum must be relevant in order to keep students in school.
- Career and technical education must be revived and emphasized.

**Elder:** Mr. Duffy, you said the school focus on test scores was crazy, yet you seem to acknowledge the need for accountability; what specifically would you suggest as the best way to measure the success of our public high school students?

**Duffy:** It used to be the three Rs, now you have to look for educational relevance. Where are the plumbers, electricians, graphic designers and brick masons, going to come from? Are we going to outsource them? We have to provide students with knowledge, skills and abilities so that they can become productive members of society.

**Elder:** If a principal is not in charge of the local school, who ultimately is responsible for that school's success or failure?

**Duffy:** The principal is the instructional leader—clearly. Unless we have collaboration among the staff with the principal—no matter what you do—you're not going to do a good job. One principal and a couple of assistant principals cannot make the education program work. If that one person is someone who is less than collegial, they can create an environment at a school that will not work. You create an adversarial situation between an administrator and a classroom teacher, and that is detrimental.

You are asking *us* what *we* are going to do about illegal immigration. We take the brunt of what is going wrong. Please stop placing more and more responsibility on the teachers' plate. It is not the job of the classroom teacher to be the immigration cop.

**Elder:** How can you plan to increase teacher salaries in an anti-tax climate?

**Duffy:** The tax structure needs to be changed. We are the only industrial country in the world that doesn't have full and comprehensive national education budget, and that has hurt us. Property taxes are the primary source of revenue and that is inherently unfair.

Money does count; money does matter. Unless we start putting more money into per-pupil spending, our kids are going to be hurt. In a state that is the fifth largest economy in the world, we are—depending on whose data you take—either 38<sup>th</sup> or 44<sup>th</sup> in per-pupil spending. I believe that the LAUSD spending per-pupil is somewhere around \$7,000 per year. New York is over \$12,000 per year.

We have to decide, as a society, that its time to regard our teachers and those who work with our young people, and pay them a reasonable salary. I'm not talking about merit pay because it's never worked, and it never will. I'm talking



about a decent salary, a safe campus, and support for the work that we do in the classroom.

The bureaucracy has to be cut back. In 1994-1995 the bureaucracy was 5.4% of the budget of the LAUSD. In 2003, it had grown to 8.1%. Administration should not exceed 5% of the budget. We could have banked over one billion dollars.

People put their money where they can get the biggest bang for their buck, and that is public education. No matter how many charters come up; no matter how well they do; they will continue to draw money from the general fund, and then we truly will have two public school systems—one for the haves, and one for the have-nots.

I think charter schools are voucher schools dressed up in a pretty dress. Eventually the charter school movement could destroy the public school system. I would like to see a cap—a reasonable cap on the amount of money that goes to charters. Recommendations:

- Increase statewide per-pupil spending.
- Cut back on bureaucracy; limit administration to less than 5%.
- Change the tax structure to provide more support for education.
- Establish a national education budget.
- Place a cap on the amount of money that can go to charter schools.
- Do not make teachers responsible for immigration enforcement.
- More partnerships between the UTLA, the City of Los Angeles and the LAUSD
- Open up adjunct campuses around overcrowded schools.
- Autonomous or semi-autonomous small school districts, within the school district
- Create a school district that has relevance to its students.
- Recognize gains that have been made in public education.

Gains are considerable and they are real; the press and politicians need to stop using us for their sound bite issues; stop kicking us around; stop coming to us when they need an issue to run on.

Education has to be relevant to the students and the communities that those schools are in.

### **R. Jon Lauritzen**

*Member, School Board, LAUSD*

I want to make the case for an elected school board:

We want to partner with the mayor of Los Angeles and accept all of the input. He doesn't have the time to administer LA Unified. I don't have time to administer my own district, and it's only one-third of the San Fernando Valley. I have 110 schools that I have to visit. As a board, we have to make policy for this "gigantic" district of 750,000 students. We have to oversee every dime that is spent, including the \$13 billion construction budget for new schools and renovations. In Los Angeles, our resources are not adequate to give the technology and infrastructure in the classroom that the students need.

Those issues could be dealt with by an appointed board member, but the thing that Board Member Julie Korenstein and I have to do—which is absolutely important—is to be out there in the in the district. An elected school board member is responsible to that community. An appointed member has no interest in a particular community, is not familiar with safety issues and environmental issues.

Our board has to be responsible, not only for the charter schools, but the magnet schools, the opportunity schools, and for the pre-K education. As we put together these small learning communities, we can partner with business: Kaiser on nurse training, the Times and Daily News on journalism, as well as aerospace with Boeing and NASA.

**Elder:** LA Unified employs one teacher for every non-teacher: 37,644 teachers, 40,766 non-teachers. The Catholic Archdiocese employees 4,261 teachers and has 30 non-teachers—a ratio of 100 to 1. Aren't we overspending and not getting the kind of efficiencies that we want?

**Lauritzen:** Are we overspending and not getting the kind of efficiencies that we want? There is no doubt about it; we have tremendous staff. Is every one doing an important job? Absolutely—they are.

**Elder:** According to former US Secretary of Education Richard Riley, 28% of high school math teachers and 55% of physics teachers have neither majored nor minored in their subjects. Doesn't that suggest we need to do away with lock-step pay, and pay teachers based upon supply and demand of their subject matter?

**Lauritzen:** I am one of them; I was given some crash courses and then taught middle-school math for 18 years. Ultimately I did get a math minor. Those fields are in critical supply nation-wide. We are posting some pay bonuses for teachers who will teach in those areas. We also are working on legislation that will allow retired physics or math teachers to come back and teach one or two classes.

The teaching pay is grossly undervalued. We are way behind in terms of what teachers ought to be paid. The highest paid people in our district are the attorneys and other professionals, not the teachers in the classroom—and this is what we need to reverse.

**Elder:** Isn't it true that private school teachers make less per capita than public school teachers?

**Lauritzen:** They do; and in many cases they don't have the same qualifications; they don't have the same requirements that the public school teachers have. There are very few areas where we are not fully staffed; math and science and special education are the three areas where we are behind.

**Elder:** Many teachers promote kids who are not reading and writing at grade level; shouldn't we end the practice of social promotion?

**Lauritzen:** We need to emphasize that middle school and high school students have to take their own responsibilities, as well as making sure that we are there for them. One of the reasons that our charter schools are successful is because the students and parents are taking on that responsibility.

As for illegal immigration, whether children are legal or illegal is not our responsibility. How they got here is not the issue; getting them educated is the

*“Is every one doing an important job? Absolutely—they are.”*



issue. We may have to provide more education in native language, more English transition courses, and make our schools more relevant.

Recommendations;

- Emphasize responsibility among middle and high school students.
- Provide more support for students.
- Increase native language education and English language transition.
- Need resources to staff new schools being built.
- Seek state support; insist on a budget to operate first class, world class schools.
- Businesses need to become a part of their local schools, make them relevant to enterprise.

### **S. Don Mullinax**

*Former Inspector General, LAUSD*

There are 37,000 teachers and 40,000 non-teachers in the LAUSD. A statement was made that they all have *important* jobs. How do we know that, when there is no accountability? Forty thousand people support a school system where good performance, poor performance and no performance are all three treated the same. There is lack of accountability and personal responsibility at the highest level.

I worked for the LAUSD for six years. I had four different board presidents and served with fourteen different board members; there were six different COOs, four different CFOs. How can you make continuous change in an organization like that?

They've made some great progress; test scores went up in certain levels and the facilities team was put together, very professional, but at what cost?

My job was to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse, so that more money could go into the classroom; but it still takes four months to get a services contract out the door. If I want to hire someone to help me, or buy something, I identify the product, and four months later the contract is done.

The budget is not tied to performance.

Recommendations:

- Performance-based budgeting would go a long way to improve the district.
- Find out what employees are doing; find out who hired them.
- Tie their performance to their budget.
- Correct the support structure, the infrastructure and bureaucracy.
- Measure performance.
- Set goals and objectives.
- Hold people accountable; make a person responsible.

I offered to attach a financial accountability element to my own office as a pilot program; the district did not want to do it.

The district has an unfunded debt of \$6 billion in its health insurance, \$600 million in workers compensation and healthcare. That cannot continue; they have to tighten control.

Recommendations:

- Consider outsourcing payroll, transportation, food service, police and security.
- Have the school district stick to the education business.
- Improve management practices.
- The school board needs to focus on policies, not micro-management.
- Study best practices from around the United States.
- If a large central office is to remain, the office staff should be held accountable for their performance, and tie it to their budget.
- Local autonomy is great, but it comes at a risk. Sound financial management experience is essential.

### **T. Larry Elder**

*Commentator, KABC-AM Radio*

Fundamental values for our public schools:

- Respect for authority
- Interest in education
- Enthusiasm for education

Business people want employees who can read and write at grade level, who show up on time. To what degree is it a problem with the school system, and to what degree is it a problem with society—with the attitudes of parents—that needs to be dealt with?

### **U. Robert M. Hertzberg – Summary**

*Attorney, Speaker Emeritus, California State Assembly*

Since the early 1950s there has been a significant shift in public schools. There is the growth that private organizations would fundamentally reorganize if they had to absorb. We need an outline of principles for making the public school system competitive.

We need to look at the relationship between staff and teachers, looking at the example of accountability in Canada, with their successful program:

- Make the public school system competitive.
- Make the public school system accountable.

Of the 45 brand new schools being built by the LAUSD, 75% are over 1,000 students and about one-third are over 2,000. Why are we building on an outmoded model when we know that smaller schools work better? Almost everybody seems to agree that small learning communities of 500 or less are more effective in every respect.

More classrooms solve the short-term issue of adding more seats; but what is it doing to the society as a whole in the long term. We know the number of violent



crimes: vandalism, larceny, physical fights, thefts, robberies and weapons, from LAUSD records.

They have compared small schools with large schools of 1,000 or more. The large schools had: 1000% more weapons incidents, 3,200 more robberies, 1,994 more physical fights, 378 more thefts, 274 more vandalism incidents, 825% more violent crimes; and now we're building another 34 schools who's formats violate this very principle.

The system has fundamentally failed. The LAUSD does not have the institutional ability to respond. There are some good people trying to figure it out, but the bottom line is that it hasn't worked.

Green Dot Charter Schools are good examples of what *does* work: 97% of the kids graduate and 62% go to a four-year college.

We are judged as a whole; we are a *system* in terms of our delivery of education, and our responsibility to the next generation. We must have a sense of urgency; we cannot wait.

There are those on the inside who wrap themselves in the mantle of reform; they suck the energy out of the reformers; they promote the same-old status quo in a different wrapping; and we end up with the same old results.

What we are facing is a structural problem; it doesn't work. I agree with AJ Duffy's assessment that it is "collapsing under its own weight." It just is—it's that simple.

I believe in protecting workers and in paying people fairly. There has got to be a better way to balance the need to educate our kids, while insuring that teachers have a proper voice and are paid equitably.

We need to look at best practices. Why are certain entities are doing great? What do we do with it this information—how do we make it work—how do we apply it?

You can't expect to run a system this big and this bureaucratically centralized; it will produce bad results, even with the best people. It is institutionally flawed. The district needs to set milestones, like any good manager does. We have to have goals, objectives, timelines, and milestones—outlined with great specificity—and have follow-up processes that hold the decision-makers accountable for dates and timelines.

At the end of the day, it's always, always, always about kids.

## V. Additional Comments – Stakeholder Recommendations

- The discussion should include other LAUSD cities.
- Swift action is needed.
- One resource missing in the debate is the students; they need to be a part of the suggestion process and communication process.
- Parent involvement needs to be defined.
- The parents need to be educated and make a commitment along with the students.
- Schools need to be the center of the community.
- People who pay taxes have to get benefit and feel like they're getting something for their money—they want to spend it in their own community—that would be at the school site.
- Teachers should be encouraged and given opportunities for entrepreneurial behavior.
- Size Doesn't Always Matter—there is good and bad in big and little—and should not be a sole driving reason for change.
- Three issues are important to reform: 1) Great leadership, 2) Clearly articulated goals, and 3) Accountability in the system.
- Class-sizes must be reduced across the board.
- Need to engage in the conversation of what makes an excellent teacher
- Pool our resources in getting those teachers into the classroom, and bringing them right into the leadership positions that are so hard to get to as a classroom teacher in LAUSD.
- “Culture” might be the silver bullet we are looking for.









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