

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL **DATE:** JUNE 26, 2000

FROM: CHRIS HOLDEN, CHAIR
CHARTER REFORM TASK FORCE

RE: FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHARTER REFORM
TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

- (A) Place three measures to amend the Pasadena City Charter on the November 7, 2000 ballot, to accomplish the following:
- (1) To increase the size of the Board of Education from five to seven members;
 - (2) To provide for the election of members of the Board of Education by geographic districts, to be effective upon the enactment of enabling legislation by the State. The City Council shall establish by ordinance a Redistricting Commission to recommend the configuration of election districts for the area served by PUSD. The Redistricting Commission shall be composed of nine members, as follows:
 - (a) Two members of the Pasadena City Council;
 - (b) Two persons appointed by the Board of Education who are not current members of the Board;
 - (c) Two residents of Altadena and other unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County served by the Pasadena Unified School District to be appointed by the County Supervisor representing such areas;
 - (d) One resident of the City of Sierra Madre to be appointed by the City Council of the City of Sierra Madre;
 - (e) Two residents of the area served by the Pasadena Unified School District to be appointed by the Pasadena City Council who are not current members of the Pasadena City Council.
 - (3) To require that no later than the end of September of each year, the President of the Board of Education shall address the public on the state of the Pasadena Unified School District to articulate the goals and objectives of the District for the coming school year and to report on the progress of the District in achieving its goals and objectives, including implementation of the School Accountability and Reform Plan.

- (B) Approve the Task Force's proposal for adopting and implementing the School Accountability and Reform Plan ("Reform Plan"), as follows:
- (1) Adopt the findings and recommendations of the School Accountability and Reform Plan incorporated in the attached Task Force's Final Report and Recommendations.
 - (2) Call upon the President of the Board of Education to include in the proposed annual State of the Public Schools Address a reporting on the implementation of the School Accountability and Reform Plan;
 - (3) Recommend that the Board of Education hold at least one joint meeting per year with each of the governing bodies within the School District territory with the understanding that the School Accountability and Reform Plan would be one of the key items at said joint meetings.
 - (4) Recommend that within six months of the City Council's adoption of the School Accountability and Reform Plan, the Board of Education provide an accounting in a publicly noticed meeting on the implementation of the Plan.
 - (5) Direct that one year following the City Council's adoption of the School Accountability and Reform Plan, the Charter Reform Task Force on School District Governance be reconvened to meet on an annual basis to review the implementation of the Reform Plan, and to report its conclusions to the community in a public forum. As part of this annual Task Force review, it is requested the City Council provide a budget for a brief review period and a public forum meeting.
 - (6) Establish a transition plan to the seven-member Board as outlined in the Implementation and Transition recommendations (pages 81-82) of the Task Force's Final Report.
- (C) It is further recommended that the City Attorney be directed to prepare and return to Council with formal resolutions: (1) calling a special municipal election within the PUSD territory to be consolidated with the State General Election on November 7, 2000; (2) requesting County services for the consolidation and administration of said election; and (3) setting priorities for filing written arguments and directing that the City Attorney prepare impartial analyses for the three Charter amendment measures.

BACKGROUND:

The Task Force was empowered to explore Charter changes and to more broadly explore reforms in the operations of the schools beyond the Charter. The Pasadena City Charter authorizes the City to shape the election system and other aspects of the Board of Education, but State law and Board policy govern the day-to-day operation of the schools.

The recommendations of the Task Force, therefore, include proposed changes to the City Charter and suggested policies that could be adopted by the Board of Education or other governmental units.

The selection process for Task Force members was meant to signify the broad involvement of stakeholders in the PUSD. The City Council made two appointments of incumbent Councilmembers and appointed four members of the public. The PUSD Board of Education made two appointments, one current and one former Board member. The City of Sierra Madre chose its Mayor to serve on the panel. County Supervisor Mike Antonovich appointed two prominent and active members of the Altadena community. The City Council made four appointments of members of the public.

The budget of the Task Force was \$247,000. Of this amount, the City of Pasadena contributed \$217,000, the City of Sierra Madre contributed \$5,000, and Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich contributed \$25,000 of discretionary office funds for the Task Force.

Task Force Process

The Task Force's first meeting was held on September 21, 1999. The Task Force hired Dr. Raphael Sonenshein as Staff Consultant in October. His first task was to interview all Task Force members and develop a report concerning potential problems in the governance and operation of the Pasadena Unified School District.

In November, the Task Force approved a workplan. The workplan called for a speakers' series, public forums, informational and discussion sessions on key issues, and the development of recommendations for public review.

During the month of December, the Task Force heard from leading experts on education reform, including Professor Roderick Kiewiet of Caltech and Thomas Toch of the Brookings Institution.

Between January and the end of March, the Task Force received and discussed staff reports on specific topics. All meetings were held in public.

In March, the Task Force divided into *ad hoc* subcommittees to generate possible recommendations for solving the problems identified in the Task Force process. These recommendations were brought to the full Task Force where they were reshaped based on a set of criteria into a set of draft recommendations.


On May 3, 2000, the Task Force presented its draft recommendations to the community at a public briefing. Between May 3, 2000 and mid-June, the Task Force heard public comment on its recommendations. Three public forums were held in the community specifically to receive public comments on the Task Force's recommendations. During this time, the Task Force continued to meet, in public, to address additional issues and to incorporate, as appropriate, revisions that emerged from the public comment period.

On June 14, 2000, the Task Force voted on its final set of recommendations for presentation to the Pasadena City Council, which are incorporated in the attached Final Report and Recommendations of the Task Force.

FISCAL IMPACT

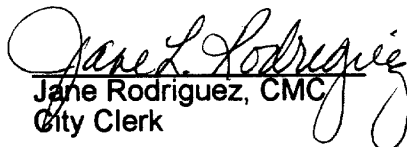
Generally, the cost to consolidate a Pasadena election with a County-administered election is approximately \$60,000, plus \$5,000 for each measure on the ballot. Because this election would involve the whole PUSD territory, this cost will be increased. The Registrar of Voters Office is in the process of computing what the estimated increased cost would be, and it is hoped this figure will be available by Monday's Council meeting. If the Council decides to place the proposed Charter amendments on the ballot, staff will return to Council in July with the formal resolutions calling the election and a funding recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,



Chris Holden, Chair
Charter Reform Task Force
on School District Governance

Prepared by:



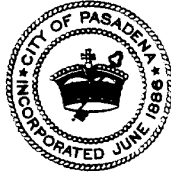
Jane Rodriguez, CMC
City Clerk

Why Not the Best?

**THE FINAL REPORT
AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE CITY OF PASADENA
CHARTER REFORM
TASK FORCE ON
SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE**



June 20, 2000



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

June 20, 2000

To the Honorable Members of the City Council
and Members of the PUSD Community,

It is with great pleasure that we transmit to the Pasadena City Council the final report and recommendations of the City of Pasadena Charter Reform Task Force on School District Governance. The City Council appointed this Task Force in August 1999, and charged us to review the governance of the PUSD Board of Education and to suggest ways, both through Charter amendment and policy changes, to increase the accessibility, responsiveness and accountability of the Board. The Task Force brought together key stakeholders, including the Cities of Pasadena and Sierra Madre, County Supervisor Mike Antonovich and the community of Altadena, and the Board of Education.

The Task Force followed a process that drew from the best thinking on education reform, here and throughout the state and nation, and incorporated a wide array of community input. We heard from outstanding education experts, but we heard even more often from parents, teachers, City officials, School Board members, School District administrators, and from students. We circulated a draft of this report to the community, and sent a copy to every teacher in the PUSD. We conducted three Open Houses to receive public comment on the report. We conducted a student-led forum to hear unfiltered comment from students. We held two heavily-attended meetings in the Latino community, conducted entirely in Spanish with Task Force members wearing headsets for translation.

But most of all, we thought and deliberated about all the material we received. Our work was assisted by Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, the Task Force consultant, who brought together an exceptional research team, and who developed the material on which the findings and recommendations are based. The Task Force itself weighed and approved the findings, and developed the recommendations, carefully evaluating their impact on cost and on the twin goals of empowering and challenging the Board of Education. Most of all, we directed our attention to student achievement, which was our foremost goal from the first day of our work until today.

The Task Force members had heard many potential problems in the governance of the PUSD before this process began. It was our explicit intention to examine these potential problems, and to narrow the discussion to those potential problems that could be shown to be actual problems in need of correction. We were not on a fishing expedition, nor did we seek to turn hearsay into calls for policy or structural change. Out of this careful process, seven problems emerged that are discussed in detail in the following report.

Members of the City Council
and Members of the PUSD Community
June 20, 2000
Page Two

Among the most important findings are that the District has a low level of fully credentialed teachers unevenly distributed throughout the District; that the District's plan of public engagement has been largely unsuccessful; that there is a very high level of property crime in the schools and an undeveloped data system for tracking school crime; that there has not been a management audit, and a report on financial management has not been followed up; that the District has one of the lowest ratios of teachers to administrators among districts in California; that physical facilities, especially bathrooms, are in great need of a coordinated maintenance program; and that the Board of Education has not exercised the appropriate level of oversight of District operations. These findings are, in our view, quite serious, and if unaddressed, will prevent the District from achieving its full potential as embodied in the title of the report, Why Not the Best? Therefore, the Task Force's report concludes with a section on implementation, in order to assure that good ideas become reality.


Even though this process was structured to identify real governance problems from the raw material of potential problems, and therefore inevitably focuses on what is wrong and in need of correction, the report also identifies some important strengths of the PUSD. The report indicates that the District has significantly improved its once deeply flawed system of financial management; that the District has enjoyed remarkable success in attracting outside grant funds; that teacher salaries have improved dramatically within this calendar year; and that the Board of Education has made a good start in setting goals for the Superintendent and in formalizing the Superintendent's job evaluation. Progress is being made, and the Task Force believes that the community should note and support the District efforts that are mentioned in this report.

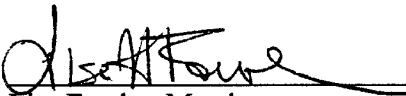
The Task Force has proposed some tough measures to improve the governance of the PUSD. We believe that it is critical that these measures be implemented within a reasonable time frame. But we also believe that the whole community needs to stand by the schools while these governance changes are being made. It is the responsibility of the Board to govern the schools, but it is our responsibility to support the schools. This community has a magnificent tradition of public education, and it is that tradition that drives our intense commitment to being the best. No one should underestimate the underlying unity of purpose that drives this community's debate over the schools, as demonstrated in the community's support of Measure Y. The resources this community can bring to the table give us all hope that, while these measures are being implemented, the community will draw together in the interests of the children.


Members of the City Council
and Members of the PUSD Community
June 26, 2000
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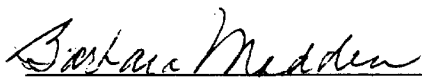
We thank you for the opportunity to serve, and stand ready to help make these ideas a reality.

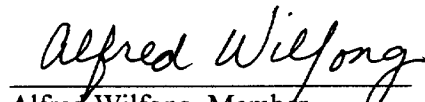
Respectfully submitted,

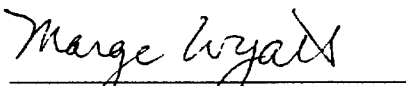

Chris Holden, Chair



Lisa Fowler, Member


Esteban Lizardo, Member


Barbara Madden, Member


Alfred Wilfong, Member

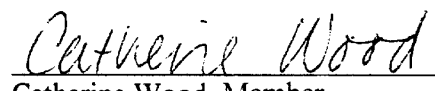

Marge Wyatt, Member


Bart Doyle, Vice Chair


Steve Haderlein, Member


Ken Lovell, Member


Nancy Parachini, Member


Catherine Wood, Member

**City of Pasadena Charter Reform Task Force on
School District Governance**

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Chris Holden, Chair
Bart Doyle, Vice Chair
Steve Haderlein
Lisa Fowler
Marge Wyatt
Ken Lovell
Barbara Madden
Nancy Parachini
Alfred Wilfong
Esteban Lizardo
Catherine Wood

Council representative
Sierra Madre representative
Council representative
School Board appointment
School Board appointment
Supervisor Antonovich appointment
Supervisor Antonovich appointment
Public Member Appointed by Council
Public Member Appointed by Council
Public Member Appointed by Council
Public Member Appointed by Council

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PROCESS

"The Task Force is charged with reviewing the governance of the Board of Education and such other means of increasing the accessibility, responsiveness, and accountability of the Board of Education as the Task Force may determine." (Pasadena City Council resolution, August 2, 1999)

The Mission of the Task Force

The Charter Reform Task Force on School District Governance was established by a resolution of the Pasadena City Council on August 2, 1999. The Council's charge to the Task Force read, in part:

The Task Force is charged with reviewing the governance of the Board of Education including but not limited to the number, method of election, terms and composition of the Board of Education and such other means of increasing the accessibility, responsiveness, and accountability of the Board of Education as the Task Force may determine, as well as examining and defining the relationship between the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools and the City of Pasadena.

It is acknowledged that some of the recommendations of the Task Force may address matters within the jurisdiction of the City Council such as proposed Charter amendments, while other recommendations may address matters within the jurisdiction of the Board of Education (Resolution #7786, August 2, 1999).

The mission of this Task Force has been to explore the governance of the Pasadena Unified School District. The District includes the cities of Pasadena and Sierra Madre, the community of Altadena, and other unincorporated County territory. There are more than 23,000 students in the PUSD, attending 31 schools.

In seeking to find ways to strengthen the governance of the School District, the Task Force was empowered to explore Charter changes and to more broadly explore reforms in the operations of the schools beyond the Charter. The Pasadena City Charter authorizes the City to shape the election system and other aspects of the Board of Education, but State law and Board policy govern the day-to-day operation of the schools. The recommendations of the Task Force therefore include proposed changes to the City Charter and suggested policies that could be adopted by the Board of Education or other governmental units.

The selection process for Task Force members was meant to signify the broad involvement of stakeholders in the PUSD. The City Council made two appointments of incumbent Councilmembers and appointed four members of the public. The PUSD Board of Education made two appointments, one current and one former Board member. The City of Sierra Madre chose its Mayor to serve on the panel. County Supervisor Mike Antonovich appointed two members of the Altadena community.

The work of the Task Force received its major funding from the Pasadena City Council, which appropriated \$247,000. Additional funds were received from the City of Sierra Madre, which contributed \$5,000. Supervisor Antonovich allocated \$25,000 of his discretionary office funds for the Task Force.

Timeline

Beginnings

The Task Force's first meeting was held on September 21, 1999.

Problem Definition Report

The Task Force directed Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, Staff Consultant, to interview all Task Force members and develop a report concerning potential problems in the governance and operation of the PUSD.

Development of Workplan

In November, the Task Force approved a workplan. The workplan called for a speakers' series, public forums, informational and discussion sessions on key issues, and the development of recommendations for public review.

Speakers' Series

During the month of December, the Task Force heard from leading experts on education reform, including Professor Roderick Kiewiet of Caltech and Thomas Toch of the Brookings Institution.

Issue Meetings

Between January and the end of March, the Task Force received and discussed staff reports on specific topics. All meetings were held in public.

Ad Hoc Subcommittees on Recommendations

In March, the Task Force divided into *ad hoc* subcommittees to generate possible recommendations for solving the problems identified in the Task Force process. These recommendations were brought to the full Task Force where they were reshaped based on a set of criteria into a set of draft recommendations.

Community Input

On May 3, 2000, the Task Force presented its draft recommendations to the community at a public briefing. Between May 3, 2000 and mid-June, the Task Force heard public comment on its recommendations. Three public forums were held in the community specifically to receive public comments on the Task Force's recommendations. During this time, the Task Force continued to meet, in public, to address additional issues and to incorporate, as appropriate, revisions that emerged from the public comment period. On June 14, 2000, the Task Force voted on its final set of recommendations for presentation to the Pasadena City Council.

Projected Ballot

The Task Force will present its final report and recommendations to the City Council on June 26, 2000. Task Force recommendations pertaining to ballot measures will be targeted for the November 7, 2000 election.

Some Definitions:

In this report, the words “Board”, “District”, “community”, and “Council” appear frequently.

- The “Board” refers to the Board of Education, the elected governing body of the PUSD.
- “District” refers to the staff of the PUSD, headed by the Superintendent of Schools and operated by administrators, principals, teachers, and other school employees.
- “Community” refers to those who have a stake in the PUSD, a very broad group comprised of parents, students, other residents of the PUSD, and of course Board members and District staff.
- “Council” refers to the Pasadena City Council, which formed this Task Force.

What are the Perceived Problems?

One of the Task Force's first objectives was to identify the perceived problems in the governance of the Pasadena Unified School District. The Task Force's consultant, Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, was directed to interview Task Force members in order to gather the range of problems that may exist in School District governance. As a result of those interviews, Dr. Sonenshein prepared a report on preliminary problem definition.

Following the completion of the initial report on problem definition, Dr. Sonenshein interviewed the Superintendent of Schools and all the members of the Board of Education. In addition, the City Council discussed issues in School District governance at its meeting of November 8, 1999. The problem definition as discussed by the Task Force ultimately incorporated conversations with Task Force members, the Superintendent, the School Board, the City Council, and other stakeholders.

The potential problems that emerged included policy issues that have aroused community concern, including:

- Levels of student achievement
- School safety
- Need for neighborhood schools and the excessive use of busing, particularly in Northwest Pasadena
- Need for more after-school programs
- School maintenance
- Need for more arts programs and other electives
- Need for more teachers, smaller classes, technical training, and flexible options for night students

In addition to these policy issues, a number of governance issues were also highlighted. These included:

- The relationship between the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools
- The relationship between the District and members of the public
- The perceived need for outside review of the District's management, including financial management and personnel policy
- The size of the Board of Education
- The method of election of Board members

What are the Real Problems?

Following the conclusion of the initial research, the Task Force focused on determining which of these potential problems were, in fact, real problems amenable to solution. The Task Force directed staff to undertake a series of research projects to explore the extent to which perceived problems were real and solvable. This process led to a series of staff reports and Task Force meetings, from January through March, 2000. The topics covered included:

- Student Achievement
- Engaging and Involving the Public
- School Safety
- District Operations
- Charter Schools
- Neighborhood Schools
- Board of Education
- Financial Management

The Task Force also looked at a variety of methods of selecting Board members, including sessions on:

- Voting Methods
- Elections

Research Methods

The research for this report was conducted under the direction of Dr. Raphael Sonenshein. Dr. Sonenshein recruited a team of five experienced researchers to assist in gathering and weighing evidence on the key issues.

The research approach was intended to identify objective sources of information, rather than relying on “hearsay” evidence. As a result, the staff emphasized publicly-accessible sources of data, including those records maintained by the District, the County, and the State. Such objective data facilitate independent reviews of the Task Force research.

Task Force researchers gathered material from District officials and others knowledgeable about each issue, reviewed documents at the District, County, and State level, and searched for databases that could provide comparative perspective to other districts. A significant portion of the statistical data that appear in the report are derived from State and County databases that are available to members of the public through various websites.

Memo to the Community: The California Department of Education maintains a searchable database of many educational statistics. Point your Internet browser to <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>. From the pull down menu, you can choose a number of topics from Academic Performance Index to Staffing to Dropout Rates. The database can produce reports for any county, district or school of your choosing. You can print the results and make your own comparisons based upon data provided to the State by all school districts.

STAR 9 test data are highly accessible to the public. Members of the community can very easily gather information about districts and even about individual schools within districts that is more detailed than the material included in this report, by going to www.ed-data.k12.ca.us The numbers should be used with caution. Small differences between districts and schools may fall within the margin of error.

Task Force Recommendations

The problems that were identified and analyzed in the Task Force process were grouped around three broad concerns: *accountability, effectiveness and responsiveness of the PUSD*. These three issues guided the work of the Task Force. The goal of the Task Force was to devise recommendations that improved the accountability, effectiveness, and responsiveness of the Board of Education. The Task Force considered it important to *empower* the Board of Education, as the representative of the people's will, but also to *challenge* the Board to move in new directions. The Task Force's mission went beyond policy recommendations, to *structural changes* that would bring about improved governance.

Once the Task Force had received and discussed the research reports identifying real problems in the District, the Task Force broke up into *ad hoc* committees to develop specific recommendations to address these problems. Each committee then brought its ideas back to the whole Task Force.

During the process of developing recommendations, the Task Force considered a wide range of proposals, including potential Charter amendments and policy recommendations either for an advisory ballot measure or to be transmitted to the appropriate governmental bodies. The Task Force sought to consider every idea that could possibly help, even though the Task Force members were determined to develop a shorter list of final recommendations that had the greatest chance of making a difference.

The Task Force approved a set of criteria for potential recommendations. With these criteria in mind, the Task Force carefully selected the draft recommendations listed in the following sections for reform of the governance of the PUSD.

Criteria for Selecting Recommendations (list adopted by the Task Force, March 25, 2000)

In general, the Task Force should seek a set of recommendations that are relatively few in number; internally consistent; address the main issues addressed by the Task Force process; and are tightly focused. More specifically, the most advisable final recommendations:

- Can be placed on the ballot either as a Charter amendment or as a policy recommendation. With some wording revision, could go on the ballot in a concise form that the voters will understand and support.
- Can be treated as a subject for further study, without presupposing the results of the study. Those recommendations that do not require further study belong in the category of policy recommendations.
- Can be generally phrased as a policy or governing issue to be decided at the level of the Board of Education, rather than an administrative or detailed decision.
- Empower the Board of Education in its policy and governing roles; in most cases, do not make specific decisions for the Board.
- Are addressed to the Board, not to the District.
- Can be realistically and effectively implemented by the Board of Education.
- Can be presented in concise form to the community for its input in May and June.
- Offer realistic promise of helping to address one or more of the main goals of the Task Force: accountability, effectiveness, and responsiveness.
- Address a problem that has been identified and explored during the Task Force process.
- Have been tried elsewhere with some measure of success.
- Do not create unfunded mandates. If budget expenditures are required to meet a recommendation, source of funding should be identified.
- Are internally consistent, e.g., if top-heavy administration of the District is an issue, recommendations should avoid adding administrative responsibilities.

The remainder of the Task Force report is divided into three parts. The first part comprises a body of recommendations for policy changes, mostly by the Board of Education. The second part focuses not on specific policy approaches, but on structural issues. As a result, these recommendations require changes to the Pasadena City Charter subject to the vote of the people. The third part of the report addresses implementation of the report, and the transition to new structures of Board governance.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"Well-governed districts feature a school board that holds the superintendent accountable for specifying and reaching educational goals; that exercises policy authority; but does not micromanage the daily affairs of the district; and that maintains strong and effective communication links with the public. These districts also feature a superintendent who sets clear educational goals, holds district staff accountable for their performance; and provides public accessibility and communication." National Advisory Committee on Public School District Governance, Getting There From Here, 1997.

**THE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY
AND REFORM PLAN**

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Findings:

F1) Achievement levels as measured by standardized tests vary widely within the PUSD, from very high levels at some schools to very low scores at others.

F2) While the PUSD compares unfavorably in student achievement to neighboring school districts, its student achievement levels compare favorably with a number of school districts with student populations "comparable" in socioeconomic terms. Many members of the community have been alienated by the tendency of Board and District officials to point to this second comparison as the key to evaluating student achievement in the PUSD. This approach suggests limited expectations for PUSD students. The community has indicated a strong preference for raw data on student achievement, even if the news is not always positive.

F3) The PUSD has had difficulty retaining experienced, credentialed teachers.

F4) The proportion of regular credentialed teachers is not evenly distributed throughout the schools of the PUSD.

The single most important criterion for the success of a school district is student achievement. All other issues, such as school safety, facilities management, and financial structure, revolve around their impact on student achievement.

The debate over student achievement in the PUSD has been polarized between critics who label the District a failure and defenders who argue that the District has been successful. How well is the PUSD doing?

Measuring the Performance of the District

There are many possible measures of student achievement, but the STAR 9 examination has become the only available method to draw comparisons among districts and schools in California. For that reason, the Task Force explored STAR 9 test scores. The data are reported for all students; No LEP (which means no Limited English Proficiency) and LEP (Limited English Proficiency).

The scores are reported in percentiles. A score of 45, for example, means that 45% of students nationwide did less well than Pasadena's students, and 55% did better. The highest scores among PUSD classes came in math, reading and language in the K-8 years. As in California broadly, the scores for grades 9-11 were relatively low.

**STAR Test Results
Pasadena Unified 1999
National Percentile Ranking**

Grade	Reading			Math			Language			Spelling			Science			Social Science		
	All	NO LEP	LEP	All	NO LEP	LEP	All	NO LEP	LEP	All	NO LEP	LEP	All	NO LEP	LEP	All	NO LEP	LEP
2	40	49	26	54	58	47	41	50	27	43	51	30						
3	39	49	21	53	59	39	42	52	25	44	53	28						
4	34	45	17	40	48	27	41	50	26	32	44	14						
5	31	42	14	39	48	24	36	46	20	33	42	16						
6	39	47	18	48	55	29	43	50	23	35	43	15						
7	34	40	13	42	47	26	42	49	18	35	42	13						
8	37	45	15	40	46	22	39	47	18	31	37	14						
9	26	32	11	38	42	26	38	44	21				33	37	23	35	40	24
10	26	32		35	38	25	33	39	14				35	39	22	30	34	15
11	29	34	11	34	37	23	38	43	20				30	33	18	46	50	31

Within the PUSD, there were major differences among student populations. The District has provided useful disaggregated data on this subject. A District analysis of math scores showed that while students in Sierra Madre averaged in the 70th percentile, in the Northwest Pasadena area where most of the students live, the averages were in the 30's.

The scores at Don Benito Fundamental School were very high. In a number of other schools, the scores were much lower. Another District report showed that there were major differences in race, language, and class. Total 1999 reading scores for Hispanic and African-American students were 27% and 34%, respectively; for whites and Asians, the scores were 59% and 60%, respectively. For Economically Disadvantaged students, the score was 27%; for LEP students, 22%; for Gifted and Talented (GATE) students, the score was 79%.

Those who argue that PUSD is failing often compare student achievement to neighboring districts such as Glendale, La Cañada, and South Pasadena. Indeed, these districts registered much higher scores across the board than Pasadena. We should, however, consider the warning issued by the Education Data Partnership:

An important fact to remember is that neighboring districts may have a similar or familiar "feel." But the basic characteristics can be different in significant ways – to say nothing of the special circumstances and the decisions that result in different outcomes. A simplistic comparison... may be tempting. But it is neither meaningful nor fair because other characteristics, such as socioeconomic or ethnic makeup, may have a strong impact on the total picture.

That neighboring districts are succeeding does not prove that Pasadena is failing. Research has shown that the educational level of parents is the single greatest predictor of student achievement. A school district that has a large proportion of students whose parents are college-educated, with few students with Limited English proficiency or who are Economically Disadvantaged, begins with a significant edge.

In La Cañada, only 4.2% of the students have Limited English Proficiency; 0.7% qualify for Free or Reduced Meals; and 0.3% for Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC). In South Pasadena, the student population is only 8.1% LEP, 11.0% Reduced or Free Meals, and 2.7% AFDC. Pasadena's schools have much higher proportions of LEP (29.1%) and Economically Disadvantaged students (65.6% Free/Reduced Meals and 27.6% AFDC).

Another way to examine student achievement is to compare PUSD test scores to those of "comparable districts". The State provides a measure of comparable districts, which includes such student population factors as minority percentage, AFDC, Free or Reduced Meals, and Limited English Proficiency. The table below was released by the State in late April, 2000, and includes updated demographic information from a large number of districts. An earlier list was retracted by the State because of flaws in the reporting of socioeconomic status by numerous districts.

The scores are reported in raw numbers in the first column. These ratings are divided into blocks from 1 to 10, with 10 referring to the districts with the highest relative scores. While PUSD's absolute test scores are low ("1999 Statewide Rank"), the District does much better in comparison to districts defined by the State as demographically comparable ("1999 Similar Schools Rank").

California Department of Education
Office of Policy and Evaluation

1999 Academic Performance Index (API) Report
List of Schools
Updated on April 24, 2000 (Final adjusted numbers)

Elementary Schools	1999 API	1999 Statewide Rank	Similar Schools Rank
Allendale Elementary	680	7	10
Altadena Elementary	544	4	8
Burbank Elementary	606	5	7
Cleveland Elementary	511	3	7
Coombs (Norma) Alternative	643	6	6
Don Benito Fundamental	836	10	10
Edison Elementary	541	3	8
Field Elementary	568	4	9
Franklin Elementary	569	4	10
Hamilton Elementary	654	6	10
Jackson Elementary	596	5	10
Jefferson Elementary	545	4	9
Linda Vista Elementary	620	5	8
Loma Alta Elementary	486	2	6
Longfellow Elementary	525	3	7
Madison Elementary	499	3	9
Noyes Elementary	658	6	9
Roosevelt Elementary	577	4	10
San Rafael Elementary	532	3	7
Sierra Madre Elementary	635	6	6
Webster Elementary	600	5	10
Willard Elementary	600	5	10
Middle Schools			
Eliot Middle	606	5	10
Washington Middle	476	2	9
Wilson Middle	558	4	9
High Schools			
Blair High	554	3	10
Marshall Fundamental	589	4	10
Muir High	495	2	9
Pasadena High	553	3	10

The comparability measures can cut both ways. Some demographically comparable, but bigger districts are making significant progress. While the ethnic mix differs among San Diego, Sacramento and Pasadena, the socioeconomic profile looks comparable. All three districts have over 60% of students eligible for free or reduced meals and over 28% LEP.

STAR 9 test scores in San Diego and Sacramento are significantly higher than in Pasadena in most grades and in most subjects. Among LEP and non-LEP students, Sacramento scores exceeded Pasadena's in every subject and almost every grade, with a big margin of difference in spelling among LEP students. In San Diego, scores of LEP students were only slightly higher than in Pasadena, but among non-LEP students, San Diego was far ahead of Pasadena. At the very least, these districts should be further studied for their possible relevance to Pasadena's task. The data also suggest how murky it is to make decisions about student achievement based on "comparable districts."

The decision about what is a "comparable" district has implications and consequences for the whole mission of the PUSD. Student population begins as an explanation; it should not become an excuse. Nor should the comparative districts approach supercede the importance of the raw test scores, implying a differential level of expectations.

The view that all children must be challenged to succeed at the very highest level was presented forcefully at a Task Force community meeting held at the Villa Parke Center. The entire meeting was conducted in Spanish. Approximately 200 parents attended, and the dominant theme of their comments was that they wanted the schools to expect more from their children and to set their sights very high. They insisted that they didn't want anyone to give up on their children or to expect them to be satisfied with low expectations.

The comparability measure may mask the extent of the problems in student achievement and may make it difficult to move beyond complacency to solutions. Just as researchers are finding that parental education levels are critical to student success, they are also challenging assumptions about who can achieve. The Education Trust, for example, has investigated the conditions that raise achievement levels for Economically Disadvantaged and Limited English Proficiency students. Throughout the nation, government, universities, and private organizations are exchanging information about emerging techniques to help all students reach their educational potential.

The debate about comparability of school districts has created a substantial amount of ill-will and distrust between the community and the leaders of the PUSD school system. It is small comfort to residents in the PUSD that the District's low absolute scores compare well to districts with "comparable" demographics, especially when those districts have fewer community resources than the community of the PUSD.

Research on school achievement suggests that comparing PUSD achievement levels to the most affluent and resource-rich student populations in neighboring districts is not the most illuminating approach. But Task Force research also indicates that the Board and District staff have gone too far in the other direction. Rather than seeking to learn from any district that does a better job, there has been a tendency to try to find a combination of comparisons that will elevate the perception of success within the community. This approach has badly backfired.

The message that many parents say they receive is that the District has a fixed, low expectation for their children. No matter how many times Board members or District staff respond that this charge is untrue, the use of the demographic comparability measure in public discussion feeds the discontent.

There is a hunger for frank talk within the PUSD community, even if the news is not always positive. Presenting raw data on student achievement, rather than how well PUSD does in relation to “comparable” districts, would represent a ringing affirmation that the commitment to educate all children is real, and will resonate within the community.

Such an approach will also allow the District to take the lead in challenging the State and others to expand the range of measures of student achievement beyond the flawed standardized tests on which so much is based today. It will foster a broader discussion of success, by encouraging greater measurement of student outcomes after they leave the PUSD.

For an example of the kind of blunt approach that is required, consider the following statement by the Sacramento Superintendent of Schools:

"Today, fewer than four out of every ten students in our district meet proficiency standards in the core academic subjects, standards which are themselves too low. Some schools are doing well, but, in most of our schools, the vast majority of our students are underachieving. The consequences of the current state of affairs are unpleasant all around – for the students, our school system, our community. On the other hand, the implications of dramatic and sustained improvements in student performance are just as pleasant for all of us. But bringing about these improvements requires bold, decisive action, and a re-examination of everything we do in light of its contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning."

Teachers and Student Achievement

The connection between a well-prepared and well-trained teaching staff and student achievement has been clearly established. While the PUSD has had and still has many excellent teachers, the District has in recent years had difficulty attracting and retaining experienced teachers. By comparison to similarly sized schools in Los Angeles County, the PUSD has one of the lowest percentages of teachers with full credentials.

Teacher Credentials and Experience for Districts with Over 1,000 Teachers in Los Angeles County FY 1998-99 (ordered by % of Fully Credentialed Teachers) ¹						
District Name	Total Teachers	Number Full Credentialed	Percent Fully Credentialed	Number Emergency Credentialed	Percent Emergency Credentialed	Average Years of Teaching Experience
Torrance	1,122	1,019	90.8	114	10.2	12.2
ABC	1,096	972	88.7	118	10.8	13.8
Glendale	1,315	1,124	85.5	185	14.1	11.9
Hacienda	1,068	835	78.2	222	20.8	15.4
Pomona	1,371	1,071	78.1	292	21.3	15.2
Montebello	1,308	988	75.5	322	24.6	15.6
Long Beach	3,760	2,765	73.5	821	21.8	11.5
Los Angeles	33,847	24,758	73.1	7,218	21.3	11.8
Pasadena	1,074	717	66.8	379	35.3	11.5
Compton	1,232	545	44.2	624	50.6	10.6

(1) Source: State Dept. of Education Website Database. Percentages will not equal and may even exceed 100% because Waiver and Intern Teachers are not shown and some teachers hold more than one type of credential.

It is critical to understand why PUSD has difficulty retaining fully credentialed teachers. One place that has been suggested as a start is the pay scale. The tables below compare PUSD pay scales to Los Angeles County Districts with over 1,000 teachers and also to neighboring districts. The LAUSD, Long Beach Unified, and the PUSD have just announced significant raises for first year fully credentialed teachers. This increase is partially funded by a State incentive program designed to attract more people to teaching. As a result, the PUSD starting salary for certificated teachers has become very competitive in Los Angeles County and among neighboring school districts.

Please note: The statistics presented in this report regarding teacher salaries have been verified as of June 19, 2000. These numbers change frequently, as districts undertake and complete the collective bargaining process, or utilize State programs to supplement funding for teacher salaries. The rank ordering of districts is likely to change throughout the year.

**Los Angeles County School Districts with Over 1,000 Teachers Ranked By
FY 1999-00 Credentialed Teacher Salary (1) or Experience**

Ranked Highest to Lowest		Ranked Highest to Lowest		Ranked Highest to Lowest		Ranked Highest to Lowest	
District Name	Begin Salary BA with No experience	District Name	5 Years Experience BA/30-36 hours	District Name	Teacher Maximum Schedule	District Name	Average Years of Teaching Experience
Los Angeles	37,006 (2)	Montebello	42,570	Montebello	64,920	Montebello	15.6
Long Beach	37,000 (2)	ABC	41,281	ABC	64,470	Hacienda	15.4
Pasadena (3)	36,550 (2)	Pomona	40,778	Torrance	63,030	Pomona	15.2
ABC	33,017	Long Beach	40,661	Long Beach	61,540	ABC	13.8
Glendale (4)	32,653	Hacienda	40,058	Compton	60,359	Torrance	12.2
Montebello	32,170	Pasadena (3)	39,730	Pomona	60,100	Glendale	11.9
Torrance	32,160	Los Angeles	38,678	Pasadena (3)	60,030	Los Angeles	11.8
Compton	32,000	Glendale (4)	38,209	Glendale (4)	58,673	Pasadena	11.5
Hacienda	31,824	Torrance	37,700	Los Angeles	57,803	Long Beach	11.5
Pomona	31,176	Compton	37,608	Hacienda	57,633	Compton	10.6

- (1) Source: Los Angeles County Dept. of Education Preliminary Salary Survey for 1999-00 and updated by telephone interview 6/19/00. Salaries reflect the last effective annualized rates excluding supplements for advanced degrees, longevity, merit, location or other differentials.
- (2) These districts have taken advantage of AB 1117. For districts that certify they are in compliance, the State pays an incentive that allows districts to offer a dramatically higher starting salary for first year credentialed teachers.
- (3) Based upon PUSD Certificated Salary Schedule eff. July 1, 1999 (negotiated March 2000).
- (4) Prior year salaries, pending collective bargaining.

**School Districts Near PUSD Ranked By
FY 1999-00 Credentialed Teacher Salary (1) or Experience**

Ranked Highest to Lowest		Ranked Highest to Lowest		Ranked Highest to Lowest		Ranked Highest to Lowest	
District Name	Begin Salary BA with No experience	District Name	5 Years Experience BA/30-36 hours	District Name	Teacher Maximum Schedule	District Name	Average Years of Teaching Experience
Pasadena (2)	36,550	Arcadia	43,897	Arcadia	65,606	So. Pasadena	15.7
Arcadia	36,181	Monrovia	42,102	La Canada	62,600	Arcadia	15.6
Azusa	35,881	Azusa	41,397	Monrovia	61,981	La Canada	15.4
Monrovia	35,234	So. Pasadena	40,964	Azusa	60,611	Monrovia	14.1
La Canada	33,200	Pasadena (2)	39,730	Pasadena (2)	60,030	Azusa	12.0
So. Pasadena	28,991	La Canada	(3)	So. Pasadena	59,866	Pasadena (2)	11.5

- (1) Source: Los Angeles County Dept. of Education Preliminary Salary Survey for 1999-00 and updated by telephone interview 6/19/00. Salaries reflect the last effective annualized rates excluding supplements for advanced degrees, longevity, merit, location or other differentials.
- (2) Based upon PUSD Certificated Salary Schedule eff. July 1, 1999 (negotiated March 2000).
- (3) La Cañada has no comparable mid-range salary.

The PUSD pay scale becomes less attractive in the early middle years of teaching careers (years 3 to 4), and it may be difficult for teachers to resist recruitment offers from other districts offering higher salaries. This may help account for the PUSD's lower average years of teaching experience. District staff have indicated that because of the way that benefits are calculated, PUSD teacher salaries are lower than they might otherwise appear. On the other hand, the differences in pay are not so dramatic as to account by themselves for the District's difficulties in this area. Recent contract agreements certainly have made the PUSD's starting pay for fully credentialed teachers competitive.

Research urgently needs to be conducted to uncover the factors that are limiting PUSD's ability to recruit and retain fully credentialed teachers. Research should draw on surveys and interviews with teachers and should explore such conditions, including the possible need for greater autonomy and support, as well as concerns about school safety and maintenance. (Recently, Los Angeles Unified School District teachers called for a new provision of their contract to allow teachers to file a grievance if their classrooms are unsafe or poorly maintained.) Initial research indicates that professional development programs in the District have been very helpful to many teachers. More research needs to be done to see how far these programs reach, and how they can be enhanced.

While the answers are not currently evident, the critical importance of finding those answers is clear. On May 19, 2000, the Task Force sent its draft report and public comment form to each of the 1,600 regular and substitute teachers in the PUSD. In the short period that followed, the Task Force has received more than 130 teacher responses, and it is expected more will continue to arrive. This feedback process is a useful start toward an understanding of how PUSD teachers view their working conditions.

In addition to the difficulty of attracting and retaining teachers, there is an uneven distribution of fully credentialed teachers among the District's schools. The table below shows that some schools have nearly all credentialed teachers, while in other schools nearly half of all teachers have emergency credentials. While many of the emergency credentialed teachers do an excellent job, the goal of the District should be to have the maximum proportion of credentialed teachers and to have them more evenly distributed throughout the District. The answer, in the view of the Task Force, is not to remove teacher choice of school, which is a critical factor in teacher retention, but to increase the incentives and opportunities for teachers to teach at various schools.

(use: Subject: Staffing)

Classroom Teacher Credential and Experience Report
 by District by School for the year 1998-99
 1964881 - PASADENA UNIFIED

School	# of Teachers	Full		Univ. Intern.		Dist. Intern.		Emergency		Waiver		Avg. Yrs. Teaching	Avg. Yrs. in District	# First Yr. Teachers	# Second Yr. Teachers
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%				
DISTRICT OFFICE	15	10	66.7	0	0	0	0	4	26.7	2	13.3	12	9.7	3	0
BLAIR HIGH	52	37	71.2	1	1.9	0	0	15	28.8	0	0	16.9	14.1	5	3
MARSHALL FUNDAMENTAL	73	53	72.6	0	0	1	1.4	23	31.5	1	1.4	11.8	9.4	8	11
COOMBS (NORMA) ALTERNATIVE	20	11	55	2	10	0	0	8	40	0	0	11.9	7.7	5	1
MUIR HIGH	67	50	74.6	0	0	0	0	19	28.4	2	3	15.5	12.6	6	4
ROSE CITY HIGH (CONT.)	10	6	60	0	0	0	0	4	40	0	0	15.9	11.3	0	2
PASADENA HIGH	85	56	65.9	0	0	0	0	30	35.3	2	2.4	11.3	8.1	7	7
ALLENDALE ELEMENTARY	17	12	70.6	0	0	0	0	5	29.4	0	0	9.5	8.2	0	2
ALTADENA ELEMENTARY	30	23	76.7	1	3.3	1	3.3	9	30	0	0	10.4	8.9	8	1
BURBANK ELEMENTARY	28	20	71.4	0	0	1	3.6	9	32.1	3	10.7	11.1	10.1	7	4
CLEVELAND ELEMENTARY	22	14	63.6	1	4.5	0	0	11	50	0	0	11.3	8.4	1	1
DON BENITO FUNDAMENTAL	33	29	87.9	0	0	0	0	4	12.1	1	3	17.1	12.9	1	1
EDISON ELEMENTARY	18	12	66.7	0	0	1	5.6	10	55.6	0	0	9.3	7.3	3	2
FIELD ELEMENTARY	35	24	68.6	2	5.7	0	0	13	37.1	0	0	11.6	9.1	3	5
FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY	18	8	44.4	1	5.6	0	0	10	55.6	1	5.6	5.4	3	3	4
HAMILTON ELEMENTARY	30	20	66.7	1	3.3	0	0	11	36.7	0	0	6	5.2	6	3
JACKSON ELEMENTARY	30	16	53.3	1	3.3	0	0	16	53.3	1	3.3	10.6	7.7	2	6
JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY	40	29	72.5	0	0	0	0	13	32.5	0	0	10.7	7.6	5	4
LINDA VISTA ELEMENTARY	22	15	68.2	3	13.6	0	0	4	18.2	0	0	9.8	7.2	8	2
LOMA ALTA ELEMENTARY	23	8	34.8	2	8.7	1	4.3	12	52.2	1	4.3	10	8.3	6	1
LONGFELLOW ELEMENTARY	44	30	68.2	1	2.3	2	4.5	14	31.8	1	2.3	10.2	8.6	7	8
MADISON ELEMENTARY	34	20	58.8	0	0	0	0	14	41.2	1	2.9	9.5	6.8	5	4
NOYES ELEMENTARY	22	15	68.2	0	0	0	0	10	45.5	0	0	11.8	9.4	3	1
ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY	25	16	64	0	0	0	0	9	36	1	4	11.2	7.5	2	3
SAN RAFAEL ELEMENTARY	21	15	71.4	3	14.3	1	4.8	5	23.8	0	0	9.7	6.6	1	4
SIERRA MADRE ELEMENTARY	35	27	77.1	1	2.9	0	0	10	28.6	0	0	10.7	8.5	4	3
WASHINGTON MIDDLE	68	36	52.9	5	7.4	0	0	28	41.2	1	1.5	8.7	7.1	8	21
WEBSTER ELEMENTARY	34	24	70.6	1	2.9	0	0	16	47.1	0	0	10.9	7.3	3	4
WILLARD ELEMENTARY	33	22	66.7	3	9.1	0	0	9	27.3	0	0	10.6	9.2	8	1
ELIOT MIDDLE	40	29	72.5	0	0	0	0	13	32.5	0	0	13.6	11.3	6	3
WILSON MIDDLE	50	30	60	0	0	0	0	21	42	3	6	12.3	10.7	7	9
- PASADENA UNIFIED Total	1,074	717	66.8	29	2.7	9	0.8	379	35.3	21	2	11.5	9	141	125
County Total	75,571	58,194	77	791	1	1,447	1.9	15,397	20.4	1,097	1.5	12.4	10.5	7,992	7,224
State Total	284,030	248,588	87.5	2,523	0.9	2,327	0.8	34,196	12	3,695	1.3	12.9	10.4	24,849	23,637

Note: Teacher credential data may not have been submitted or a teacher may hold one or more types of credential. As a result, percentages on this report may not add up to 100%.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Board must ensure that the District is fully dedicated to educating all the children to their highest potential.

R1) High academic expectations for all students are critical. As an indication of its commitment to educating all the children, the Board should deemphasize measures of student performance based on demographic “comparability.”

R2) The Board should contract for a periodic independent academic audit, assessing the District on the basis of success factors that have emerged in educational research:

High, clear and consistent standards for all students, at all levels;
Rigorous and challenging classes for all students;
Best and most highly trained teachers with professional development;
Decision-making authority shifted to principals, teachers and parents at the individual school site level;
Standards linked to consequences for teachers, schools, and students.

The academic audit provides a critical baseline for the design and operation of all academic programs. It provides an exceptional opportunity to examine curriculum and resources and how they support each other. Most of all, it provides a vehicle to link all aspects of the District’s efforts to their impact on student achievement. The academic audit should be undertaken as soon as possible, in order to assist the new Superintendent in developing with the Board an action plan for student achievement. It should be updated on a regular basis, and repeated every 3-5 years.

R3) The Board, the District and the community should agree on the current state of student achievement; goals for future student achievement; and methods to measure and attain those goals. All programs, priorities and tasks should be reevaluated in terms of how they contribute to student achievement. All programs, including those funded by external grants, and especially those that impact curriculum, should be regularly evaluated for their contributions to the academic program. To this end, the Board should create a Commission on Academic Performance, with a diverse membership, to explore the connection among curriculum, programs and achievement. The Commission should include teachers, parents, administrators, and others. The commission would be responsible for advising the Board on all programs, including curriculum, with respect to student achievement, and would use the academic audit as a baseline and as a tool for follow-up.

R4) The Board should explore additional measures of student achievement, such as qualitative assessment, attendance measures, dropout rates, and one-year post-graduation outcomes, as recommended by the District’s Accountability Task Force. Such measures should be designed to assess the widest possible range of achievement. Recommendations for changes and additions to the Academic Performance Index (API) should be made to the Governor and State Legislature, if appropriate.

R5) The Board should issue an annual report card to the community, posted on the District website per State law, showing progress on meeting student achievement goals. These reports should be available in Spanish and in other languages as needed.

R6) Student ability and potential need to be better identified and to be capitalized upon throughout the student's academic career. Parents should receive more frequent assessments of the progress of their children. The Board should evaluate the criteria for screening children for the Gifted and Talented (GATE) Program to assure that talented children the underrepresented schools are not overlooked.

R7) The Board should explore methods to retain teachers, including continuing to raise salaries to a level comparable to other districts, providing greater benefits, and continuing to find ways to provide greater autonomy and support for teachers. Particular attention should be given to entry level teacher salaries in the first 3-4 years. The goal should be to create the highest possible sense of professionalism for teachers. The Board should continue to invest in professional development, increase the number of coaches, assist teachers in managing students with behavioral challenges, and continue to work toward smaller class sizes.

R8) A survey of teachers seeking measures to improve teacher retention should be conducted. Further analysis can be conducted of teacher responses to the draft Task Force report. Teachers who leave the District should be requested to complete an exit interview.

R9) The Board should explore ways to create greater equity in the distribution of resources within the District, particularly the distribution of teachers with full credentials. Incentive systems should be established to provide support for teachers who teach in schools that are underserved.

R10) The Board should lead the District and the community to learn from other districts in California and nationwide that have been successful in raising achievement for all students.

R11) The Board should encourage an increase in the number of Decision Making Schools by providing training and support to school staff and parents.

R12) The Board should seek to expand parent education, with the goal of offering it at every school and grade level. If funds are not available within the budget, additional funds should be sought.

R13) The Board should direct the District staff to keep data correlating preschool attendance patterns and subsequent reading readiness in kindergarten. The Board has endorsed universal pre-K and should continue to promote it.

For Further Study:

What are the factors that have led to Don Benito's success? Which factors, if any, can be more widely distributed throughout the District's schools?

In consultation with teachers and their representatives, the Board should explore ways to tie teacher raises and bonuses to results. The Board should examine models under which merit bonuses are awarded to all the teachers at a school, based on that school's improvement; programs that reward teachers for skill enhancement directly related to student achievement; and other innovative ways to recognize outstanding achievement by teachers and their students.

ENGAGING AND INVOLVING THE PUBLIC

Findings:

F5) Members of the community and District employees have called for greater communication on the part of the District and greater involvement in decisions that affect the quality of education and the work environment.

F6) With some exceptions, most notably the successful campaign for Measure Y, the District strategy to engage and involve the public has been unsuccessful. As a result, mistrust and miscommunication have developed between the community and the leadership of the PUSD. Public information from the District largely emphasizes positive information and has lost significant credibility with the public.

F7) Public outreach has largely been directed by the District staff, without the leadership of the Board. The public outreach approach utilized by the District has neglected two-way communication between District and community and replaced it with a top-down, one-way approach that emphasizes public relations and discourages criticism.

F8) Community questions about the effectiveness of the education program are often answered by the Board or by District staff by reference to programs, whether or not those programs have been evaluated for their contribution to the academic efforts of the District. Every problem raised seems to have a program or project that is presented as solving it, but little consistent determination of whether the program actually works.

F9) Members of the community often complain that there has been insufficient follow through by the Board and the District on public concerns about communication and information.

F10) Communications technology to connect the public to the Board and the District, such as the District telephone and e-mail systems, and the District website, are poorly designed and/or are extremely difficult for the public to use.

F11) Board meetings are not effective forums for obtaining public input into District decisions.

One of the main perceived problems presented to the Task Force is that the Board of Education and the District are out of touch with the community. An examination of this potential problem by the Task Force found that the perceived problem is a real one. The PUSD has a serious problem in its dealings with the public, and its very credibility with the community has been severely strained as a result.

Task Force research found that there was a period during which the District was positively engaged with the community, especially in the several years following the successful Summit held by the District in 1992. The Summit process, which involved large numbers of community residents, established goals and objectives for the PUSD, and created a system to monitor the achievement of those goals.

By 1995, however, the District's commitment to the Summit process had begun to fade, and the District created a new process to set goals and to report to the community. This new process replaced two-way communication between the community and the District with a top-down approach heavily focused on public relations.

As the 1997 monitoring report indicated, "This Report recognizes that the Summit has evolved. An important function of this report is to express the state of the Summit in the language of four years ago when in fact, the priorities of the District have changed. Goals of the District are expressed in new terms..." The goals themselves largely revolved around new external grant programs. The 1997 progress report stressed accomplishments, and deemphasized Summit action items that remained incomplete.

The process of setting goals was thereby moved from a District-community engagement process into a District-directed process oriented toward external funding sources. As the 1997 report indicated: "...this report is designed to serve as a bridge from the language of the Summit in 1993 to the way PUSD is talking about itself in a period of intense growth and change..."

This report marked a focus on a public relations approach, centered around getting out a message of missions accomplished, rather than the Summit model of missions accomplished compared to missions uncompleted. Two-way dynamic communication, as exemplified in the Summit process, was being replaced with a one-way, top-down model of communication. No clear role for the Board of Education was evident in this process, either in the more promising Summit era or in the post-Summit era.

Meanwhile, the community desire for greater communication and impact continued to be presented to the District. The District sponsored a public meeting in December 1998 ("What's Happening in Our Schools?") that drew more than 500 people. As in 1992, the District succeeded in generating a high degree of public involvement in a community event. As in 1992, the community participants strongly urged improved communications and parental involvement.

In January 1999, the District released a 1998 Customer Satisfaction Survey of the community (parents, staff, K-12 students, teachers). The survey was a useful initiative that, if fully analyzed and followed through, could have generated valuable information for the District and the community.

The survey showed a broad range of positive feelings about individual schools, principals, teachers, and about other aspects of the District. But a significant proportion of staff and students responding to the survey indicated that they wanted to have a greater role and input in District decision making. (Only 10% of parents responded to the survey.) Among high school students, 55% were dissatisfied with "the way that you have in school decisions that affect you." Forty percent of middle school students expressed dissatisfaction on this issue. These concerns were re-emphasized during the Task Force's student-led forum.

Among school staff, 52% were dissatisfied with "influence over district level decisions that affect your job." Among central staff, 51% were dissatisfied with "fairness of promotion of staff in the district"; 53% were dissatisfied with "parental involvement in the district".

In July 1999, the District completed a Communications Plan (*Schools Where Students Learn*) produced by a consultant group, A+ Communications. The Plan was presented by the District as a response to the public's continuing call, most recently expressed in the 1998 meeting, for a communications strategy. But the approach proposed appeared to be substantially different from what the public was seeking. The plan was built around one-way communication, to get a message out to the public framed around the District's successes by:

- (1) identifying important messages for families, student, staff and the community; (2) developing an overall theme message; and (3) brainstorming a list of strategies for delivering the messages to the community and families.... The messages which appear in this plan provide "the gist" of what we want people to know. There will be additional effort by a group of creative thinkers and writers to hone the messages so that listeners and readers are captivated by simple words that are easy to remember and powerful to believe. (pp. 1-2)

Now, nearly a decade after the Summit, high hopes have been replaced by a difficult, distant relationship between the District and the community. The disjoint between the District's approach to communication and the public's desire for a different sort of relationship continues to block the active engagement of the Summit era. This disjoint between the District and the community has undermined the success of the District's outreach effort.

Process and Results

A great strength of the PUSD is its ability to obtain and leverage funding from federal and state agencies and from private foundations. The list of sources includes, among others, the Ford Foundation, the State Department of Education, and the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP). These funding partnerships have become central to how the District responds to questions about District performance.

Questions about results -- about the effectiveness of classroom instruction in enhancing student achievement -- are most often answered with data on projects or programs. Every problem that people raise seems to have a program or project that is intended to solve the problem. District documents and presentations tend to be heavy on lists of projects and programs, without accompanying material evaluating the impact of these programs.

When people criticize or complain they often hear, "We are already taking care of it." Or, "We have a program that addresses the problem." But there is no way for members of the public to know if the program is actually working and this makes it difficult for parents to hold the District accountable.

It is natural for the Board and the District to be proud of the outside funds they have won; it is an enviable record. But most parents are not experts in the language of grant-funded programs, with their acronyms and often vague objectives. This must create a particularly difficult challenge for parents with language barriers.

Focus on Providing Positive Information

Any good communicator in the public arena leads with good news. An optimistic outlook is an essential characteristic of leadership. But optimism must be tempered by a realistic assessment of assets and liabilities, or the credibility of the message will be lost.

The Board and the District have evolved an approach to communicating with the public that is based on the belief that the public does not yet know the good news about the District. There is some justice to this position. A certain amount of setting the record straight is undoubtedly called for.

The Board and the District have, however, made positive news such a central focus of their communications strategy that the credibility of their message has been eroded. The general framework of the strategy is to use communications to get the word out, rather than establishing a two-way communications channel with the public.

Follow Through

One of the most persistent complaints about the District's outreach program is lack of follow through: promised actions leading to actual results. In the District's defense, it is a major task both to inventory the needs of the community, and then to make sure that each task is carried through. It is particularly difficult in light of limited resources and the ongoing demands of the educational enterprise. And, despite the difficulty of the task, the District has certainly managed to implement a number of the action items that the public has called for over the years.

From the public's standpoint, however, a number of items that are critically important to the public have not been followed through by the District, and the Board has neither requested nor demanded follow through. On multiple occasions, members of the public have made it clear that they want a better two-way communications strategy, that they want greater outreach to multicultural communities, and that parents want a greater sense of access to the school system. It has been frustrating to many in the community that such items languish, and even more disturbing when education leaders unilaterally redefine the District's goals in a manner that reduces the prominence of these community desires or downplays community sentiment on these issues through the District's analysis of the feedback mechanisms it has provided for community input.

Responding to Criticism

Inevitably, a school district will receive criticism as it goes about the task of educating the community's children. How it handles that criticism will help determine its ability to maintain close ties with the community.

The high intensity of the public debate over the PUSD schools has raised the stakes. While many members of the community describe the Board and the District as "defensive" in their dealings with criticism, there is also a very high, very intense level of criticism directed at the District on a regular basis. There is undoubtedly a circular phenomenon of rigorous criticism following by a "bunker mentality" or "circling the wagons", followed by more criticism, and on and on. One element of this viewpoint is a feeling not infrequently expressed by Board members and District staff that the media are unfair to the school system, and that there is no way to improve media coverage.

Even given the difficulty of fielding such intense criticism, the Board and the District have seemed to make the deflecting or defusing of criticism an end in itself. While this is highly understandable, it has unintended consequences. The tendency to try to have an answer to all criticisms, or to insist that "we're already doing it", suggests, perhaps unjustly, a reluctance to consider new ideas from the outside.

A number of key stakeholders in the community, in and outside government, report that the Board and the District expect public support to be given consistently and

unquestioningly. The phrase "one-way relationship" has been used in several quarters to note the difficulty of forging collaborative ties with the District. A common perception is that the District is only interested in collaboration when resources are available from potential partners. These perceptions limit the District's ability to call upon key stakeholders in the community for support when there is criticism of the District. Since the Task Force raised this issue, the Board has begun taking positive steps to build greater connections to key stakeholders, including holding a joint meeting with the Sierra Madre City Council.

Response/Contact Mechanisms for the Public

The District has made admirable progress in establishing new and innovative mechanisms for reaching the public. A number of these steps, such as SuperNEWS, grew out of the Summit recommendations. These steps have been hampered, however, by a tendency to fail to provide effective mechanisms by which the public can utilize them.

The following examples from SuperNEWS, which is one of PUSD's primary District-wide communication tools, are indicative of the problem:

- ✓ Website announced without URL address. (Website unadvertised on most literature).
- ✓ Partners in Education (PIE) program announced as an accomplishment, without contact person name or phone number. No solicitation for people to volunteer.
- ✓ Professional Development Center announced with no location.
- ✓ Measure Y Master Plan School Liaisons named, but with no contact phone numbers.
- ✓ Community Learning Centers announced with no listed hours of operation, contact numbers or names.
- ✓ Hiring of part-time Communications Director announced with no listed name or contact number.

An examination of the District website indicated that it was flawed as a vehicle for communication with the public. There were few easy ways to gain access to information. No phone numbers appeared for key staff. One phone number that did appear had an area code that had been changed two years ago. After the Task Force raised this issue, the District took steps to place staff phone numbers on the website, and to begin additional improvements.

There is no easy way for members of the public to directly reach members of the Board of Education. Those who visit the District website will find the Board members listed, but without e-mail addresses, or phone numbers. The only phone number given to contact Board members is the general information number of the District. It is perhaps not surprising that members of the public find it difficult to locate Board members.

When members of the community try to reach staff members, they often find the process laborious and confusing. It is a challenge to understand the directions of the telephone system at District headquarters, and frequently there is no voicemail when staff members are away from their desks.

Conclusions

The District has a part-time public relations person on board and a communications consultant position. But the Task Force has found that there are inherent problems in the strategy of the communications program that may undermine its effectiveness in forging ties with the community.

The problem will not be solved only by hiring a full-time communications person, unless that person can work within a more effective, two-way, community-oriented communications strategy. Despite some excellent community-oriented communications work at the school site level, the school system must have an overarching two-way communications strategy that engages the community and permeates the entire District.

With some exceptions, such as its successful work in the Measure Y campaign, the strategy the Board and the District have been operating under in recent years to engage and involve the public has been unsuccessful. To continue to build on existing approaches, by simply trying to do more of the same, will compound that lack of success. The Board must start again, with a fresh approach that is clearly different from the path it has been on. If it does so, the Board will find a community highly receptive to a reconnection.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING AND INVOLVING THE PUBLIC

The Board should change the District's current approach to engaging and involving the public and direct the Superintendent to instead develop a new plan for public involvement and outreach that is based on customer service and real two-way communication rather than public relations. The Board should ask for periodic progress reports on this effort.

R14) The Board should establish and monitor a District policy of “customer service” so that members of the community receive needed help or information. Customer service should be designed to accommodate non-English speaking parents; to principally serve the communication needs of parents, teachers, students, and the diverse, multilingual PUSD community; to make a special effort to provide up-to-date information to students about District policies and issues; and to upgrade the District website, including multilingual content. The Board should make the selection, hiring and retention of staff with varied language skills a high priority; as needed, the Board should provide translators at all meetings, including teacher conferences.

R15) The Board should seek opportunities to design and hold public hearings on topics of great public interest, in order to emphasize to the public the policy and oversight role of the Board. Some of its regularly scheduled meetings should be held throughout the community, and consistent with the pattern of the Task Force, allow members of the public to speak in languages other than English with Board members using translation earphones.

R16) The Board and the District should undertake a new approach to the news media that treats the media not as an adversary, but as a vehicle to reach the community. Specific measures include: factual news articles regarding the District and regarding state education issues (funding, standards and statistics available from state data bases, state-wide trends, etc.); a brief summary of Board meetings; the same news articles to large community stakeholders -- Chambers of Commerce, realtor's associations, business associations, colleges, etc.; news articles and summary of Board meetings to PTAs for inclusion in their newsletters; such news to high school newspapers; publicize all local school site decisions in local school newspapers and newsletters, and in the District newsletter to be distributed to parents and the public.

R17) The Board should expand and adjust its policy on volunteers, to increase and better utilize District volunteers, such as its efforts through the Partners in Education (PIE) program. This policy would develop centralized information regarding volunteer needs; list volunteer needs of all schools; publicize the program on the District website and on the public access television channel; increase outreach to the business community; develop a mentoring program for middle and high school students; develop a program of engaging adults to speak about business and jobs to middle and high schools.

R18) The Board should seek student input on important issues that affect students. The student-led forum developed by the Task Force should be reconstituted on an annual basis.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Findings:

F12) Recruiting, selecting, and retaining competent personnel in the Business Services Division, which handles financial management of the PUSD, has been a serious, continuing problem. The selection of a new Assistant Superintendent for Business Services is a promising development.

F13) The District has had a rocky audit history, with numerous uncorrected problems. The District's financial audit performance has improved significantly in the last several years, assisted by the involvement of the Board of Education and top District administrators.

F14) In 1996, the Board commissioned the Vogel Report, a wide-ranging audit of the District's Business Services and Technology Divisions. The Report found serious problems and made numerous recommendations. Task Force research found that the District has made significant progress in implementing a number of the Vogel Report's recommendations. The Board has never directed District staff to compile and present any report on the implementation of the Vogel Report.

F15) The District's budget process, as presently designed, is not a useful vehicle for evaluating and, if necessary, augmenting, reducing or eliminating programs.

F16) The public's access to budget information in a usable form is limited, and this problem has aggravated public concern about the financial management of the District. The Measure Y program, by contrast, has illustrated the value of community involvement in PUSD decisions.

In the preliminary review of potential problems, issues were raised about the financial management of the District. Task Force staff explored these areas to assess where there were real problems that needed to be addressed.

The financial management of the District is housed in the Business Services Division. The key post is the Assistant Superintendent for Business Services, who acts as the Chief Financial Officer of the District.

Recruiting and retaining competent personnel in the Business Services Division has been a serious, continuing problem for the PUSD. The problem begins at the top of the division with the high turnover of Assistant Superintendents for Business Services.

There have been five Assistant Superintendents for Business Services during the past decade. None of the five has served more than 2 1/2 years in the post. A Task Force survey of neighboring districts indicates that while some districts have new people in this post, others have had much greater stability.

Turnover at the top is matched by turnover in middle-level positions. The 1994-95 fiscal audit found significant turnover in key accounting positions. Three years later, the 1997-98 fiscal audit noted that 11 out of a total of 35 positions in the Division were either vacant or filled with temporary employees. The lack of experienced personnel has contributed to past weaknesses in performance. (Virtually all positions in the Division are currently filled on a permanent basis.)

These past vacancies could have resulted from retirements and normal movement to other jobs for advancement and higher salary. There is competition with the private sector and other school districts in the recruitment and retention of qualified candidates. These reasons alone, however, seem inadequate to explain the number and frequency of vacancies within the Business Services Division.

The delay in filling positions could also be enhanced by the normal operations of the District's Personnel Commission. The Personnel Commission was established by vote of the District's classified employees in 1979. It oversees a merit-based hiring system similar to a civil service system, which involves interviews, competitive examinations and the creation of lists from which candidates can be hired.

With all these factors taken into account, there is still a real problem of attracting and retaining a solid core of professionals to undertake the critically important task of District financial management. Finding the right person for the top financial position and getting that person to stay are critical tasks.

In early 2000, the District undertook a major, successful search to fill the position of Assistant Superintendent for Business Services. The search to fill the vacant Assistant Superintendent position represented an opportunity to hire an individual with the knowledge and expertise to manage the District's financial affairs, who will attract and retain qualified and competent employees and provide the stability the Business Services Division has been lacking. The search process for the Assistant Superintendent vacancy involved a nationwide search and review panels that included District staff, public officials, and community leaders. This approach reflected the great importance the District appropriately attached to the appointment.

Financial Audits

California law requires school districts to have an annual financial audit. The primary mechanism for analysis of the District's finances is the annual audit by an outside auditor hired by the District. The District changed auditors beginning with the 1995-96 fiscal year. Its current auditor is Quezada, Godsey and Co.

The PUSD has had a rocky audit history. A Task Force review of District audits in the 1990's revealed numerous reportable conditions, known as *findings*, and *material weaknesses*, which are reportable conditions serious enough that the error would probably not be discovered in the normal course of doing business and could therefore result in a material misstatement of financial statements.

The numbers of findings and material weaknesses that appeared in District audits throughout the mid-1990's are startling. A number of these findings and material weaknesses went uncorrected for a significant period of time. Some findings reappeared in successive years, such as those regarding Associated Student Body (ASB) funds, attendance verification, revolving cash reimbursements, cash clearing and fixed assets inventory.

The District's audit performance has dramatically improved in recent years. The chart below shows the declining number of audit findings and the increased percentage of implemented corrections. The findings for the 1998-99 audit involve the areas of independent study, ASB, and the over-accrual of accounts payable.

Year	Number of Findings	Material Weakness Findings	Status of Prior Year Findings
1994-95	52	4	9% implemented
1995-96	14	4	67% implemented
1996-97	10	4	79% implemented
1997-98	6	3	70% implemented
1998-99	6	1	100% implemented

The District's improved performance may result, in part, from the establishment in 1994 of an audit committee to review and take action to correct problems identified in audits. The audit committee consists of the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent for Business Services, the Business Manager, and two members of the Board of Education.

At its January 11, 2000 meeting, the Board of Education contracted with its outside auditors to provide additional auditing and support services in the areas of cash flow, certificated and classified payroll, Measure Y, fixed assets inventory, implementation of new Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB 34) requirements, ASB, independent study program, reconciliation, accounts payable, and other areas deemed important by the District and its auditors. This Board action came as a result of a recommendation from the outside auditors that the District needed to perform additional auditing tasks in order to comply with new State reporting requirements. The Board's efforts in these areas are headed in the right direction, and indicate a commitment to financial oversight.

Management Audit of Financial Structure

In 1996, the Board of Education commissioned The Vogel Group, Inc. to conduct a performance and managerial audit of the Information Technology and Business Services Divisions. The Vogel Report was the subject of a formal presentation to the Board on May 14, 1996, by Cathi Vogel, President of the Vogel Group, Inc. The report identified a large number of highly significant fiscal management problems, including material deficiency in the coordination and management of fiscal and budget data, the absence of critical budget information and the lack of accuracy in fiscal information. Some ledger entries were being made in pencil.

The Vogel Report contained 42 specific recommendations. Task Force staff explored the extent to which the District has implemented the recommendations of the Vogel Report. No written material could be identified that listed the recommendations and the District's progress in implementation, although the District did develop such a document in response to Task Force requests. There is no record of any formal attempt to document or follow through on the implementation of the Report's recommendations.

Interviews with District staff were conducted to assess progress, and some preliminary observations can be made. Based on these interviews, it appears that the District has been making progress in implementing a number of the Report's recommendations, either fully or partially. The pace of implementation has been greater in the past two years, and provides preliminary evidence of a good faith effort on the part of the District to respond to the Vogel Report.

One of the most important results of the Vogel Report was the creation of the position of Internal Auditor. The Internal Auditor currently reports to the Assistant Superintendent for Business Services. The work of the Internal Auditor is intended to provide an additional mechanism for analysis of the District's finances.

The Board and the District deserve credit for commissioning the Vogel Report -- a study whose authors had the freedom to explore a wide range of potentially troublesome issues in District management. Questions arise, however, about the extent to which the Board has shown interest in follow through.

The Vogel Report was presented in detail to the Board in 1996, and the breadth and scope of its recommendations would have been expected to trigger an ongoing demand for information on implementation. However, Task Force staff have been unable to identify any directives from the Board to the District requiring a report on the implementation of the Report's recommendations. In fact, the interviews by Task Force staff of District staff seemed to be the first attempt to contribute to such an assessment.

Budget

The District's annual budget is approximately \$155 million, and expresses the priorities the Board attaches to various programs and efforts. The budget development cycle for the following school year begins in the fall and development of the proposed budget proceeds through March. The Board holds public study sessions in April and May. A Board-level finance committee reviews the budget in a special study session. The budget is adopted in June and sent to the Los Angeles County Office of Education for review.

The proposed budget is developed with input from principals and department heads under the oversight of the Business Services Division, the Superintendent and the executive cabinet of senior management personnel, and is then presented to the Board for action. Interim budget reports are made to the Board in December (based on October 31 actual numbers) and March (based on January 31 actual numbers).

There is opportunity for public input at various stages in the budget development process. A Budget Review Committee, whose ten voting members consist of representatives of employee organizations, PTA/PTSA, Southern California Edison, the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Pasadena, Pasadena Schools Federal Credit Union, and other members of the community, has input into the process. Other District personnel are members of the Committee, but do not vote. The Committee spends a significant portion of its time prioritizing items for funding that are brought before the Committee primarily by member representatives of organizations that sit on the Committee.

There is some difference of opinion among Committee members as to the role the Budget Review Committee plays in the budget development process. Some members said that the Committee does not look at the real District budget, but is relegated to prioritizing the "wish lists" of District employees and others for which funds may or may not be available. Other Committee members did not agree with this assessment. There does not seem to be sufficient feedback from the District to the Committee regarding which, if any, of the prioritized recommendations were actually included within the budget approved by the Board. Several Committee members indicated that they felt that the budget should be developed using "zero-based" budgeting.

The budget process, as presently designed, is not a useful vehicle for evaluating and, if necessary, augmenting, reducing or eliminating programs. Rather, the budget process seems to allow programs to grow incrementally each year without a thorough review of their benefits. While school districts in general have not developed the same level of program management analysis that is common in federal, state, and municipal government, more systematic review is necessary in a District that utilizes a wide range of externally funded programs. There has been some evaluation of individual programs, such as special education and early childhood education, but little systematic examination of programs, including various curricula and externally-funded programs, for their impact on student achievement.

Public Access to Financial Management Information

While the District's past performance in the area of financial management has been marked by staff turnover and often substandard work, there has been significant progress in a positive direction in the last several years. Some of the most egregious problems seem to have been addressed, fully or partially, and the District seems to be moving in the right direction. The Measure Y program has shown what can be achieved when there is community involvement and "buy-in". This program is on a sound financial and managerial footing, and is likely to produce significant benefits for the schools.

Yet there continues to be widespread suspicion within the community that there are far more serious problems involved. The public's perception of District financial management has possibly been shaped by the persistence over a number of years of remarkably high levels of problems identified in the District's audits. The perception that the District cannot effectively manage its finances has had years to take root, and the problems have indeed been serious. The more recent movement of the Board and District staff to correct these problems should be commended. In order to shake a perception built up by real problems left largely unchecked, the process of improvement will have to be sustained and completed.

The public's perception of District financial management is aggravated by the approach to public information taken by the Board and the District. For years, community members have asked for a simple, clearly-understandable statement of the budget. Despite the continual resurfacing of this request, no such document has been produced. As a result, some members of the community complain that the District is "hiding" something.

The fact that there has been little or no public discussion of the Vogel Report and its implementation has meant that the Board and District have not received credit for asking a very hard question that led to very tough answers. And the public has not had a way to hold the Board and District accountable for dealing with those tough answers.

Conclusion

The Board and the District have dealt with some very serious problems in the management of school finances in the past decade. Many of these problems stemmed from a lack of organization, coordination, planning, budget preparation, and from antiquated computer equipment and systems. Extremely serious problems identified in audits of the District's finances have been addressed in the past several years, and the number of audit findings has steadily declined.

The 1996 Vogel Report highlighted the seriousness of the problems. A preliminary analysis suggests that in the last several years, the District has made progress in correcting a number of the reported deficiencies identified in the Vogel Report, although there has been no formal accounting to the community of the District's efforts and their results.

More work remains to be done. The community's confidence in the Board's handling of its \$155,000,000 budget will be enhanced if the community, through the Budget Review Committee, and through accessible budget documents, has the opportunity to thoroughly review and provide substantive input into the District's budget decisions. The problem of turnover in the position of Assistant Superintendent for Business Services will hopefully now be addressed. Most of all, the public must have effective access to the full range of information on the financial management of the District.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Board should make certain that the financial and business practices of the District meet the benchmark industry standards as demonstrated by a comparative financial practices analysis. The Board should establish policies to evaluate all programs the District undertakes and operates.

R19) The Board should demand a full accounting of the implementation of the Vogel Report on financial management and technological upgrading of the District.

R20) The Board should establish a system to judge performance of programs based on clearly defined benchmarks designed to reach District goals. All programs, including those funded by external grants, should be evaluated for their contributions to the academic program.

R21) The Board should direct staff to create a simple, understandable budget document for wide public dissemination and discussion.

DISTRICT OPERATIONS

Findings:

F17) The Task Force could not find any evidence that the District has ever had a full-scale management audit of its operations. Such an audit could help the Board to design a lean, effective central administration in support of the work of teachers and principals at the school sites.

F18) For years, students, faculty and parents have complained about the condition of school bathrooms. The Task Force found that there is not a cohesive plan to clean and maintain bathrooms within the existing budget. Even though scheduled Measure Y repairs and renovations will significantly improve the physical structure, maintenance has not been fully addressed.

F19) District use of technology, recommended for improvement in the Vogel Report and in the District's Technology Plan, is behind schedule. Staff are insufficiently trained in new technologies, some of which are essential to maintaining contact with members of the public.

F20) Seventy percent (70%) of the school computers are not connected to the Internet.

F21) The District has not used a state-mandated ratio of administrators compared to teachers as a vehicle to reduce administrative overhead. As measured by a state-mandated ratio, PUSD has the lowest ratio of teachers to administrators of any school district with more than 1,000 teachers in Los Angeles County. On a statewide basis, PUSD ranks 52nd out of 54 such districts.

The Task Force's preliminary exploration of potential problems identified District operations as a source of concern. Many in the community had come to believe that the District is not well-managed, that it has too many administrators, and that District facilities are not well maintained. The Task Force explored these issues in depth.

The Task Force could not find any evidence that the Board has ever had a full-scale management audit of District operations. Such an audit could help the Board to design a lean, effective central administration to support teachers and principals at the school sites.

Management audits are a widely accepted tool for governments at all levels, and have often both saved money and led to the redesign of government operations. The closest step to a management audit was the Vogel Report, which only explored the financial management of the District.

Maintenance of School Facilities

Dr. James Q. Wilson, professor emeritus at the UCLA Anderson Graduate School of Management, has presented a theory of "broken windows," suggesting that lack of basic maintenance leads to a series of negative impacts on student morale and achievement. Wilson's theory is that every broken window or similar facility problem must be promptly addressed or the insidious effect of poor maintenance will lead to further destruction.

A key symbol of well-maintained facilities is the school bathroom. For years, PUSD students, faculty, and parents have complained about the lack of cleanliness and safety of school bathrooms. Many students in the secondary schools refuse to use the bathroom facilities, opting instead to simply wait until leaving the school campus. Students have reported broken toilets, flooded floors, missing soap and towels, leaky faucets, peeling paint, the stench of cigarette smoke and vandalized walls.

In the PUSD, the Assistant Superintendent for Facilities reports that funding for regular school maintenance activities dropped by about half in the decade after passage of Proposition 13 while student enrollment and related facility maintenance demands grew. The table below summarizes the approximate number of District employees in maintenance trades and custodial positions in 1978, 1997 and the present:

PUSD Facilities Staffing, 1978- Present			
	1978	1997	2000
Maintenance staff	96	48	55
Gardening staff	32	19	20
Custodial staff	203	115	138

In the early 1980's, the State Legislature increased funding for an existing Deferred Maintenance program for schools. This money is used to repair, paint and refurbish school facilities. The program is chronically underfunded by the State. In recent years, the District received about \$300,000-500,000 annually for deferred maintenance but this level of funding is inadequate to meet the District's needs. The well-designed Measure Y implementation plan, which will save money in the long run and provide critical refurbishing of facilities, is not able to fill the immediate gap in maintenance, nor does it address the ongoing need to make maintenance a key part of even the best-designed facilities construction plan.

Task Force research on school safety found that a surprisingly high number of property crimes (including vandalism) were reported in the PUSD. The lack of maintenance may

have led to a serious downward spiral of vandalism – living proof of the broken windows theory. This may be a warning sign that the District has not been as creative as possible within its limited resources in maintaining a clean and safe environment. The Los Angeles Unified School District recently recognized the importance of this issue by instituting a 24-hour hotline for the reporting of bathroom maintenance problems.

Any building is only as good as its bathrooms. The Board needs to bring together the central staff and school site staff, with input from students, to jointly develop a proactive plan to keep the bathrooms clean and well-maintained throughout the school day and evening. This is not just a task for custodians, who are already overworked and spread thin by years of budget cuts. It is a task for everybody, even including community volunteers. The goal should be to have bathrooms that are not avoided by students, and that testify to the community's investment in the schools.

District Use of Technology

The 1996 Vogel Report documented serious technology deficiencies in the District's Business Services and Information Technologies Divisions. At the time, the District was using incompatible computing technologies, duplicative data entry procedures, and paper intense work processes. The Vogel Report assigned high priority (after restructuring of the Business Services operation itself) to the assessment of District technology needs and development of short and long range technology plans for both educational and administrative functions.

Two years after release of the Vogel Report, a District-appointed Technology Committee of staff, parents and community experts put forth a District Technology Plan. The Technology Plan focused both on the instructional program and on administrative functions. The Plan placed great emphasis upon staff development. The Technology Plan included a detailed Action Plan with tasks to be completed, personnel responsible for implementation, and a timeline.

The construction of an advanced technological structure at the school sites, in accordance with the Action Plan, is far from complete. Many parents of the District participated in Net Day 1996, the national day when parents helped install network wiring for their schools. In some schools, the principal and PTA or similar parent collaborative purchased computers, wiring, and telecommunications service with discretionary school site funds or donations. To the frustration of many parents, this wiring at some schools remains unconnected to computers or a telecommunications service nearly four years later. Today, out of approximately 2,500 District computers, 70% remain unconnected to the Internet. Internet connections depend on the completion of the Measure Y implementation schedule.

While the District staff struggles to get basic network computing technology in place in the schools, its integration of a technology curriculum into classrooms and development of staff to teach it has not started. By June 1999, a year after release of the Technology

Plan, little had been done to develop technology integration for the District's curriculum. This inactivity seemed to stem from a problem in District operations -- the continuing vacancy in the District Technology Coordinator position called for in the Plan. The position was filled effective June 1, 2000, and hopefully this step will accelerate the implementation of the Technology Plan.

Of equal concern is the level of staff development in the use of technology. The District has taken major steps forward in getting the basic technology infrastructure in place at the Education Center and District Service Center, the District's two principal administrative offices. Networked IBM-compatible computers with DOS/Windows operating systems, compliant with the District-wide Universal Platform standards in the Technology Plan, are in place. But many staff members do not seem to be sufficiently trained to make use of the technology, and staff complain that a training computer lab at the Education Center is underutilized.

Although significant training was conducted for the Business Services staff, most District staff have not been trained to use technology effectively. Much data is still gathered and recorded by hand, despite the availability of a wide range of databases such as those used in this report. Many District staff members do not check e-mail as a daily habit, and others do not know how to send documents as attachments. The District clearly has much left to do to fulfill the promise of its 1998 Technology Plan.

The Teacher/Administrator Ratio

Some members of the community have asserted that the District has more administrators than it needs to efficiently manage the school system. Information about the teacher/administrator ratio is gathered by the State. The Education Code requires that school districts maximize the allocation of resources to the classroom by financially penalizing any district that falls below a set ratio of teachers per administrator. For a unified school district, the minimum number of teachers per administrator allowed before financial penalties are levied is 12.5 teachers per 1 administrator.

The law that created this program of administrator/teacher ratios had a specific intent: to prod Districts to make their operations leaner and more effective. It was not simply a system of fines and punishments, but had the specific purpose of holding districts accountable to the taxpayers for efficient management of the schools. In fact, in the most recent year examined (1998-99), no district in the State fell below the line at which fines are applied.

When PUSD is compared to all districts in California with 1,000 or more teachers, it has one of the lowest ratios of teachers to administrators of any such district in the State. It ranks 52nd among 54 districts.

Teacher/Administrator Ratios for California Districts with 1,000 or More Teachers for FY 1998-99

School District Name	RATIO	School District Name	RATIO
San Jose City Unified	27.52	Fontana Unified	18.80
Sweetwater Union High	23.29	Garden Grove Unified	18.69
Rialto Unified	23.17	Fresno Unified	18.46
San Bernardino City Unified	22.22	<i>Statewide Average Ratio</i>	18.36
Saddleback Valley Unified	21.81	Vallejo City Unified	18.22
Hayward Unified	21.25	Poway City Unified	18.10
Modesto City High	21.19	Compton Unified	17.73
Bakersfield City Elem.	20.84	Glendale Unified	17.66
East Side Union High	20.62	Clovis Unified	17.66
Mt. Diablo Unified	20.55	Montebello Unified	17.58
<i>Statewide Mean Ratio</i>	<i>20.34</i>	Hacienda-La Puente Unified	17.37
Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified	20.31	Corona-Norco Unified	17.33
Sacramento City Unified	20.17	Elk Grove Unified	16.62
Los Angeles Unified	20.08	Kern County Union High	16.62
Norwalk-La Mirada City	19.84	West Contra Costa Unified	16.50
ABC Unified	19.73	Santa Ana Unified	16.38
Grossmont Union High	19.72	Pajaro Valley Unified	15.77
Moreno Valley Unified	19.64	Long Beach Unified	15.57
Visalia Unified	19.54	Torrance Unified	15.40
Ontario-Montclair	19.51	Stockton Unified	15.16
Fairfield-Suisun Joint Unified	19.48	Oakland Unified	14.91
Vista City Unified	19.36	Anaheim Union High	14.79
Chino Valley Unified	19.18	San Francisco Unified	14.14
Orange Unified	19.17	Pomona Unified	14.10
Fremont Unified	19.12	San Diego Unified	13.80
Capistrano Unified	19.04	Pasadena City Unified	13.44
Irvine Unified	18.97	Lodi Unified	13.39
Riverside Unified	18.82	San Juan Unified	13.15

In comparison to unified school districts with 1,000 or more teachers in Los Angeles County, the PUSD has the fewest teachers per administrator.

Teacher/Administrator Ratios for Los Angeles County Districts Over 1,000 Teachers (1998-99)	
School District Name	Teacher/Admin. Ratio
Los Angeles Unified	20.08/1
ABC Unified	19.73/1
Compton Unified	17.73/1
Glendale Unified	17.66/1
Montebello Unified	17.58/1
Hacienda/La Puente Unified	17.37/1
Long Beach Unified	15.57/1
Torrance Unified	15.40/1
Pomona Unified	14.10/1
Pasadena Unified	13.44/1

Source: State Department of Education Annual Report 1998-99

The pattern of PUSD's ratio has been stable for a decade. Over the last ten years, the number of PUSD teachers/administrator has ranged from 12.82 (just barely above the State penalty threshold) to 13.87. The following table summarizes the PUSD ratio since 1990:

PUSD Teacher/Administrator Ratio 1990-2000	
Year	Teachers per Administrator
1990-91	13.08/1
1991-92	13.39/1
1992-93	13.87/1
1993-94	13.07/1
1994-95	12.82/1
1995-96	13.82/1
1996-97	13.76/1
1997-98	13.24/1
1998-99	13.44/1
1999-00	13.11/1

According to the State ratio reports, most California school districts are able to support more teachers with fewer administrators than the PUSD. PUSD's higher number of administrators could theoretically be attributable to its numerous grant-funded programs. However, State law requires any administrators or teachers funded with federal funds or categorical grants to be excluded from the ratio calculation.

Task Force staff sought to discover what organizational dynamics underlie these figures. Staff explored a contention made by a District official in comments to the Task Force that PUSD had a low number of teachers per administrator because it had an unusually large number of school sites. In this view, to reduce the ratio would be to lose principals and other school officials who directly serve the community. Further research failed to support this suggestion. A comparison of PUSD's number of school sites and therefore the number of personnel required to run them, was not significantly different than statewide averages.

A detailed comparison of PUSD and Glendale districts revealed that while the two districts are very similar in the number of school sites, and the administrative structure at the top, their teacher/administrator ratios are very different both in overall numbers and in the distribution of administrators. Glendale seemed to have a leaner central office and to allocate more administrative resources to school sites.

Comparison of PUSD and GUSD Administrative Staffing		
	Pasadena Unified	Glendale Unified
<i>School Sites:</i>		
Principals	30	32 (Co-principals at High Sch.)
Sen. High Assistant Principals	6	5
Mid. School. Assist. Principals	5	8
Elem. School Assist. Principals	3	11
Deans and Others	8	8
<i>Total On-Site Admin.</i>	52	64
<i>Central Office:</i>		
Superintendent and Assistants	5	5
Other certificated	43	26
<i>Total Central Office Admin.</i>	48	31

Further research indicated that there were anomalies in the PUSD's calculations of its ratio. Task Force staff found that literacy and math coaches were being calculated as administrators, when an analysis of State law and interviews with State officials indicated that they could be considered positions partially offering direct student service as long as full documentation was provided to the State. District staff indicated that they were being conservative in classifying them as administrators.

Meanwhile, other positions that are more obviously administrative, including the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendents and several deans, were classified as non-administrators. Telephone calls to six neighboring districts found that most counted the Superintendent as an administrator in the ratio. State officials told Task Force staff that districts could exempt such officials, but only with documentation of the reasons for the exemption and a resolution of the Board of Education. District staff reported that they could locate no such documentation or Board resolution supporting the exclusion of the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendents from the ratio.

Some overall conclusions can be drawn after months of discussion and research on the teacher/administrator ratio. The State's program of encouraging districts to keep administration lean is hampered by the lack of State or County enforcement and follow up. There is no guarantee that districts are following comparable reporting practices. While the PUSD may be out of compliance with some aspects of the State program, including the need for documentation of the exemption of certain positions, the State has no compliance program.

But even if compliance is not enforced, there is a spirit to the State program. The purpose of the program is not to provide a measure of how close to a particular line a district can go before it gets fined. It is to encourage districts to reexamine their balance between administrators and teachers, and to hold them accountable to the taxpayers by collecting and reporting data.

The great stability in the ratio year-by-year in PUSD, how close it annually comes to the level of state fines, and the somewhat inconsistent internal process for classifying positions in and out of the ratio, suggests that the District responds to the State program by staying just above the line at which fines are levied.

A Board-directed strategy that follows the State's lead in examining just how lean and effective its administration can be would be useful. In fact, the Board should go beyond the state-mandated ratio, and establish a classification of personnel that makes clear to the public who is doing what, and how the position assignments contribute to student achievement, whether directly or indirectly.

Conclusion

This report raises concerns about District operations in the areas of maintenance of school facilities, use of technology, and teacher-administrator ratio. In these cases, the Task Force did not find a coordinated plan to utilize the best techniques of organizational management and accountability. Compared to other school districts statewide and in Los Angeles County, the PUSD has a high ratio of administrators to teachers.

This preliminary examination of District operations cannot substitute for a management audit of the District. The Vogel Report in 1996 showed how complex such an audit can be, but also how illuminating and helpful to improving District operations. A full-scale

management audit of the District is undoubtedly called for, to further explore issues raised in this report, and also to consider a number of dimensions of District operations that were not covered.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT OPERATIONS

With the support of a management audit, the Board should examine the organizational structure of the District, including the ratio of administrators to teachers.

R22) The Board of Education should undertake a full, independent management audit of the PUSD within one year of the adoption of this report by the Pasadena City Council. Auditors should be appointed by the Board of Education; a management audit should be conducted every four years thereafter; and the Board should present the results of the audit to the public.

R23) Drawing on the best effective practices of other Districts, the prevailing management standards of school districts, and the management audit, the Board should require the leanest and most effective District organization to support the work of classroom teachers.

R24) The Board should require the Superintendent to streamline management in order to bring the administrator-teacher ratio into better alignment with state averages.

R25) The Board should create a special task force of senior staff and principals, with input from students, to establish and implement a plan for assuring maintenance of school bathrooms throughout the school day and evening.

R26) Consistent with the academic program and the Measure Y implementation schedule, computers at the schools should be hooked up to the Internet, with reasonable teacher supervision of student use.

For Further Study:

Appoint a Task Force, including representatives of PUSD employees, business, and others, to examine the effectiveness of the Personnel Commission and to compare it to other alternatives.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Findings:

F22) Surveys of students, school staff, and teachers indicate a substantial concern about the behavior of other students in school.

F23) An examination of records of school crime that are reported to the State of California indicates that the District has higher rates of certain crimes than the statewide average.

F24) In the category of property crimes, PUSD has average rates more than twice as high as the state average.

F25) Data on school crime are not kept by the District on a school site basis. Available data on school crime have not been analyzed in order to discern trends, identify “hot spots”, identify school sites, or analyze causes.

F26) The Board has not directed District staff to develop any report on school crime statistics, nor has the Board had any discussion at Board meetings in recent years of California Safe Schools Assessment (CSSA) data.

F27) Not all school crimes have been reported to local authorities.

F28) While students rated safety as their top concern, students also expressed their discomfort with some security measures in the schools.

F29) Earthquake and disaster preparedness have not received sufficient attention nor has there been sufficient follow through.

F30) Safety reports conducted for the PUSD by the Alliance of Schools for Cooperative Insurance Programs (ASCIP) found significant problems with playground equipment, electrical equipment, and other issues of potential safety in the schools. The reports have now been turned over to the principals and to the facility management staff to begin making repairs.

School safety is critically important to student achievement. A safe and secure atmosphere is a precondition for student success. In the PUSD, school safety is the responsibility of the PUSD Security staff and the various auxiliaries at each school site.

The Task Force examined data on school crime in order to locate an objective measure of school safety. But reports of school crime are not the only measures that are helpful. The District conducted Customer Satisfaction Surveys in both 1998 and 1999. The 1998 results have been analyzed and they indicate concerns among staff and students about certain safety issues. Out of a total of 20,714 surveys, students returned 16,865.

A number of safety related questions were asked. Approximately 80% of the elementary students responded that they felt safe at school, on the way to and from school and approximately 78% felt safe in their community, while only 65% felt safe on the playground. Among middle school students, approximately 80% were satisfied with their personal safety on the way to and from school and in their community, but less than 70% were satisfied with their personal safety in school. Approximately 75% of high school students stated that they were satisfied with their personal safety on the way to and from school and in their community and approximately 70% were satisfied with their safety at school.

Among the lowest levels of student satisfaction were with the behavior of other students in class. Only about 40% of elementary students and 50% of middle and high school students responded that they were satisfied with the behavior of other students in class. 55% of teachers and 35% of the central office staff were satisfied with the behavior of students in class. The fact that students have a high level of dissatisfaction with the behavior of other students in class and the fact that middle and high school students' sense of personal safety in school is somewhat less than when they are in their community is troubling. 70% of the surveyed students are satisfied or very satisfied with their safety in school, while 30% are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

At the student-led forum sponsored by the Task Force, students expressed discomfort with the methods used by the District to keep schools safe, especially the use of drug-sniffing dogs. At the same time, a poll conducted by these students found that school safety was their #1 issue.

School Crime Data

The State of California requires school districts to report incidents of school crime. The California Safe Schools Assessment (CSSA) crime incident reports for PUSD are compiled by the PUSD school police department, sent to the Superintendent for signature, and filed with the State semi-annually.

Task Force research indicates that there does not appear to be a formal report to the PUSD Board on school crime incidents. District staff sought to identify such reports, but were informed that there were none. An examination of Board minutes for the past two years, when the CSSA data were available, did not indicate any Board discussion of CSSA school crime statistics.

PUSD's crime incidents reported to CSSA over a four year period are set forth in the table below.

PUSD Crime Incidents, 1995 –1999

Year	Drug/ Alcohol Offenses	Battery	Assault Deadly Weapon	Robbery and/or extortion	Sex Offense	Possess Weapon	Prop- erty Crimes
1995-96	154	55	12	11	12	34	210
1996-97	64	54	8	6	18	28	293
1997-98	101	78	6	5	9	44	240
1998-99	85	75	19	7	5	27	242

The table below compares crime rates for all California public schools to the rates for PUSD, reported as incidents per 1,000 students. The reason for using this measure is that there has been intense discussion in the educational community about the fairest way to comparatively assess school safety. Not all districts are conscientious about reporting school crimes. There is widespread agreement that the fairest method is to use the state average rate per 1,000 students, assuming that individual district reporting differences will not skew the results.

PUSD Crime Incidents (Rate per 1,000 students) Compared to CA Average

Type of incident	1995-96 CA avg. incidents per 1000 students	1995-96 PUSD incidents per 1000 students	1996-97 CA avg. incidents per 1000 students	1996-97 PUSD incidents per 1000 students	1997-98 CA avg. incidents per 1000 students	1997-98 PUSD incidents per 1000 students
Drug/ Alcohol Offense	3.77	<u>6.96</u>	3.54	2.85	3.55	<u>4.43</u>
Battery	3.31	2.48	3.08	2.40	3.00	<u>3.42</u>
Assault Deadly Weapon	0.35	<u>0.54</u>	0.41	0.36	0.37	0.26
Robbery/ Extortion	0.27	<u>0.50</u>	0.23	<u>0.27</u>	0.21	<u>0.22</u>
Sex Offense	0.16	<u>0.54</u>	0.20	<u>0.80</u>	0.16	<u>0.39</u>
Possess Weapon	1.22	<u>1.54</u>	1.10	<u>1.25</u>	1.23	<u>1.93</u>
Property Crimes	5.00	<u>9.49</u>	4.58	<u>13.03</u>	4.47	<u>10.52</u>

Underlined numbers indicate when the PUSD rate of incidents per 1000 students exceeds the state average. PUSD crime incidents exceeded the state average in at least two of the three years in the categories of drug and alcohol offenses, sex offenses, possession of a weapon and property crimes. In the area of property crimes, which include vandalism, defacement of property, arson, burglary and theft, PUSD was considerably higher than the state average.

The table below compares the average PUSD crime rate by category over the three available reporting years to the state-wide average.

**PUSD School Crime Incidents per 1,000 Students
Compared to State Three Year Average**

State/ District	Drug/ Alcohol Offense per 1,000 students	Battery per 1,000 students	Assault Deadly Weapon per 1,000 students	Robbery/ Extortion per 1,000 students	Sex offense per 1,000 student s	Possess/ Weapon Per 1,000 students	Prop. Crimes per 1,000 students
CA 3- yr. avg.	3.62	3.13	0.38	0.24	0.17	1.18	4.68
PUSD 3- yr. avg.	<u>4.75</u>	2.77	<u>0.39</u>	<u>0.33</u>	<u>0.58</u>	<u>1.57</u>	<u>11.01</u>

Underlined numbers indicate cases where PUSD rates were somewhat higher than the state average. The average crime rate experienced by PUSD schools exceeded the statewide average in the categories of drug/alcohol offenses, assault with a deadly weapon, robbery/extortion, sex offenses and possession of a weapon.

However, PUSD rates in the category of property crimes were more than double the average for the state. The impact of a high level of property crimes can be severe in schools that are already in need of maintenance.

Task Force research indicates that there is a gap in utilizing these statistics to develop plans to address site-specific safety concerns and to use them to measure the effectiveness of school policing and security measures. The Task Force learned that not all school crime reports are forwarded to local police authorities, and paperwork could be more effectively developed and maintained.

School and local law enforcement authorities could do more to increase communication and cooperation in the common goal of increasing school safety and security. Indeed, the current system of having all school security provided by an in-house police force should be re-examined.

District Safety Standards

In an effort to provide objective crime statistics for school districts, the State initiated the CSSA reporting requirements. AB 187 followed up by mandating that each school site must prepare a safe school action plan. School sites are required to assess the current status of crime incidents and other safety concerns such as disaster procedures, child

abuse reporting and a safe and orderly environment. This program can potentially provide a method to begin the objective assessment that is critical to solving the problem. The District has prepared an Emergency Procedure Manual that establishes procedures and provides useful guidance and information for natural disasters and other emergencies.

Problems have been identified in the District's earthquake and disaster preparedness that need to be resolved. No comprehensive audit of earthquake and disaster preparedness has been conducted. A recent safety audit at PUSD schools and headquarters conducted by the Alliance of Schools for Cooperative Insurance Programs (ASCIP) identified problems that the District is now addressing, some of which involve earthquake and disaster preparedness. Most of the findings involve the safety of playground equipment and the condition of electrical equipment. The safety audits were transmitted by the ASCIP consultants to the District in February, 2000, and were sent by the District to the principals at the end of May. Instructions to make repairs have been transmitted to the facilities management staff. Progress on solving those identified problems must be communicated to the public. A legal compliance audit in the area of physical safety and preparedness is also appropriate.

The PUSD school safety plans, prepared by a committee of teachers and parents familiar with the needs of each school, are potentially good vehicles for the enhancement of school safety. Pasadena schools submitted their first plans in the spring of 1998. Due to time constraints, they submitted relatively skeletal plans patterned closely after the sample circulated by the District.

School sites have been directed to reconvene their committees with the goal of submitting revised and more detailed safety plans in the spring of 2000. The reconvening of these committees provides an opportunity for the District to supply the committees with the site-specific crime data needed to assess any crime problem at the sites, and devise a plan to deal with it.

The 1998 plans state that the school sites maintain CSSA incident data by site. One of the three school sites contacted by Task Force staff supplied copies of individual incident reports for the current school year; this did not include summary data on types of incidents. The other two school sites did not reply to the request for information. It does not appear that either the District police or the school sites maintain the *total* number of crime incidents by CSSA crime category for each school site.

The apparent lack of site specific crime information in an easily useable format makes it difficult to assess the amount of crime at each school site and to develop plans to reduce that crime. Without such data, it will be difficult for the District to move beyond its current reactive approach of answering calls to a more proactive safety management program that anticipates and prevents crime.

District Standards for Discipline

The Board maintains policies on student conduct and discipline. The District provides a Handbook for Appropriate and Expected Behavior informing new and returning PUSD students of the minimum and maximum discipline for violation of the California Education Code and District policy on student behavior. PUSD Student Support Services, the department responsible for handling of student suspensions and expulsions, is obligated to adhere to State due process and Education Code requirements.

The discipline of last resort is the suspension and/or expulsion of students. Students are subject to suspension for many of the types of conduct for which CSSA reports are filed. However, suspensions cover behavior that is not subject to CSSA reporting. For example, the CSSA definition of battery has been interpreted to exclude "mutual combat" between students, which can be a suspendable offense. Significant numbers of students are suspended for defiance and disruption of school activities, which is not a CSSA reportable offense.

Suspension and expulsion data are collected by the Office of Student Support Services. In 1998-99, PUSD high schools suspended a total of 1,143 students and issued 1,704 suspensions. The numbers differ because some students are suspended multiple times. The total number of students suspended and the total number of suspensions for PUSD high schools over the past three years are set forth below.

Suspensions in PUSD High Schools, 1996-1999, Showing Approximate Enrollment

Year	Blair (1200)	Marshall (1800 grades 6-12)	Muir (1575)	PHS (2000)	Rose City (180)
	Students/ suspensions	Students/ suspensions	Students/ suspensions	Students/ suspensions	Students/ suspensions
96-97	177/239	105/136	272/405	328/536	61/68
97-98	277/426	190/235	223/294	217/302	71/86
98-99	253/384	173/224	249/384	416/649	52/63

The number of students suspended over the three-year period expressed in the above table indicates that each year Blair suspended an average of approximately 20% of its students, Marshall 9%, Muir 16%, PHS 16% and Rose City 34%.

These high rates of suspensions cause concern because of the misbehavior they represent. On the other hand, the suspensions and expulsions may indicate an entirely appropriate approach aimed at maintaining a safe learning environment for students and teachers. The principal of Blair High School indicated in an article in the Pasadena Star-News (February 13, 2000) that when he became principal, teachers felt they were not being supported by the administration in matters of discipline. The principal said that as suspensions and other punishments went up, so did student achievement.

Some, but not all PUSD schools have programs, such as Saturday school and in-school suspension (detention), which keep students in school in lieu of sending them home. These programs offer alternatives to suspensions that may be more effective in curbing undesirable behavior while keeping the students in school. These programs need to be evaluated.

Students are *expelled* by the Board of Education for the most serious infractions, such as the use or possession of a weapon. The Board holds expulsion hearings, and expelled 39 students during 1998-99. The table below sets forth PUSD expulsions by grade level for 1996-97 through the current date.

PUSD Expulsions, 1996-2000

Year	Elementary	Middle School	High School	District Totals
1996-97	3	11	8	22
1997-98	2	17	12	31
1998-99	1	14	24	39
1999-1/24/00	2	1	13	16 (to date)

Conclusion

The school police work hard, and have good leadership, but they are following an outdated model of reactive policing, essentially responding to calls. This makes it difficult to undertake a more proactive policy that would anticipate crime by accurately charting and dealing with "hot spots" that are likely to be troublesome.

When they are able to be proactive, school police obtain good results. For example, when PUSD police heard rumors about a rival gang starting to move into the Muir community, they flooded the campus and community with school police, stopped all cars cruising the area and generally made it so uncomfortable that the new gang decided to try to expand its territory elsewhere.

The Board has not directed the District to develop a coherent, data-driven, school site based plan for improving the safety of all schools. The method of reporting school crime is not useful to the Board of Education or to parents seeking to understand the level of

actual safety at each school. District CSSA crime reports are totaled for each crime category according to school level (elementary, middle school or high school), but not by school site. This information is reported to and signed by the Superintendent, and then sent to the State semi-annually. But there is apparently no *District* collection of this data by individual school site so that policies can be adopted based on the different rates of crime at different schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

The Board should replace the current school safety program with a data-based, strategic, pro-active school safety program the results of which are available to the Board, to District staff at the central office, at the school sites, and to the public.

R27) The Board should develop a District-wide school safety plan that includes: an independent assessment on a school-by-school basis of school crime; a comparison of such crime rates to state levels; an analysis of student, parent, and staff responses to the Customer Satisfaction Surveys on safety issues; an analysis of the best use of computer technology to track incidents; and directives on sharing information with other Police Departments.

R28) The Board should direct staff to utilize the new school safety plan to help guide the development of school site safety reports, updated on an annual basis in compliance with State law.

R29) The Board should direct District staff to regularly report to the Board on safety matters, including but not limited to school crime.

R30) The Board should reexamine the effectiveness of the current system of providing all security by a PUSD school safety force, and compare it to the alternative of having other governments provide some or all of the service.

R31) The Board should direct the creation of a full report on earthquake and disaster preparedness, and on the physical safety of the schools as identified in the ASCIP reports, including a legal compliance audit in these areas.

R32) The Board should direct staff to develop a procedure and train personnel regarding accident reports, ensuring parental access to such information.

R33) The Board should review the effectiveness of background checks of employees.

R34) Pending the outcome of an ongoing federal research study on seat belts in school buses, the Board should seriously consider mandating the use of seat belts in PUSD buses.

For Further Study:

The Board should explore suspension and expulsion data to assess whether high rates are due to improved discipline in support of teachers and students or greater misbehavior. The Board should explore the impact of suspension and expulsion on student behavior and school safety. The study should also examine the extent, effectiveness, and impact of in-school suspension.

The Board should evaluate the efficiency of existing security systems and, if appropriate, examine the feasibility of installing security systems in all schools, and of using audible sirens to alert neighbors.

SCHOOL CHOICE

Findings:

F31) Parental choice in schools is relatively limited because of the limited capacity of many schools, the class size reduction program, the District's well-founded goal of reducing the population of students at each school site, and the Board's desegregation policies.

F32) The largest number of students live in the Northwest Pasadena area, where there are insufficient schools available.

F33) There is insufficient information on the priority parents place on having their children attend neighborhood schools, as compared to other options such as magnet schools or busing to outlying areas of the District.

F34) While the new PUSD Facilities Master Plan calls for the construction of a new school in the Northwest, the need to reduce overcrowded campuses in the Northwest means that there would be only a small net increase in the options for neighborhood elementary schools.

F35) There are new models of school construction available that could improve community support for the construction programs to be undertaken by the District over the coming years.

F36) Charter schools may provide additional options for parents, but have not been widely explored in the PUSD. Two charter schools exist within the PUSD boundaries. One was chartered by the County Board of Education, after its application was not brought before the PUSD Board. The other was chartered by the PUSD Board.

F37) The Board has not made it clear that decisions about charter schools are to be made as a policy matter by the Board, as required by State law.

One of the potential problems raised to the Task Force was the need for greater parental choice in schools. Task Force research did reveal that there are important limitations on parental choice in the PUSD. These limits were not found to be the fault or responsibility of either the Board or the District. However, the Task Force is able to make some recommendations that may increase parental choice.

The Impact of the Desegregation Program

Like most school districts, the PUSD originally constructed its elementary schools with the goal of educating children within their neighborhoods. During the decade before the federal court-ordered desegregation of PUSD in 1970, the District operated almost entirely on a neighborhood basis at the elementary level, with only a few boundary changes necessitated by overcrowding at some schools. In 1969, District enrollment was 30,622 students.

In 1970, United States District Judge Manuel Real ordered the PUSD to desegregate so that "there shall be no school in the district ... with a majority of any minority students." The court order resulted in busing of students to attain the prescribed racial percentages.

In complying with the court order, the District broke up elementary schools into primary centers, serving kindergarten through third grade, and elementary schools, serving grades four through six. Children spent half their elementary school years in a neighborhood school and the other half at a campus across town. Minority children were sent primarily from the inner city areas to more affluent, outlying neighborhoods such as San Rafael and Sierra Madre for kindergarten through third grade. White children were sent to west Pasadena's minority neighborhoods in grades four through six.

From 1970 to 1990, the first 20 years of busing, total District enrollment decreased by 25%, from 29,123 to 21,662. By 1975, the District had lost more than 7,200 white students. District officials made frequent changes in attendance boundary lines as whites declined as a percentage of students, and campuses reverted to minority-majority status in violation of the judge's order. One Northwest Pasadena school, Lincoln Elementary, was sold and demolished in the 1970's, partly because it was perceived as difficult to integrate. Today, complex and often confusing boundaries at the middle and high school levels result from the effort to make each school racially balanced. High school boundaries in PUSD have not changed since 1979, the year the desegregation order was lifted.

From 1970 to 1999, the District's Latino student population increased from 9.2% to 49.2%, while the District's white population decreased from 53.7% to 15.9%. The percentage of African-American students in 1999 is 30.7% as compared to 32.8% in 1970.

In 1983, the District returned its elementary configuration to kindergarten through sixth grade and busing was scaled back. In 1991, 8 of the 20 non-magnet elementary schools were given wholly contiguous (neighborhood) attendance zones that did not include areas from which students must be transported, thus reducing busing even further. These 8 schools are: Altadena, Edison, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Longfellow, Madison and Roosevelt. The remaining elementary schools currently receive students from the

surrounding area as well as additional students bused from other parts of the District, primarily Northwest Pasadena.

In 1995, the District's integration plan was revised to provide that enrollment at a school by ethnic/racial group could vary by as much as 20% over its level of representation in the overall District population, and set a ceiling of 40% for white enrollment at any given school. In 1998, the plan was further revised to limit the number of transfers if the transfers would cause the percentage of students in a racial group at the school to exceed or fall below its representation in the overall population by 20%.

Today, busing continues in PUSD, both for desegregation and capacity reasons. In the 1998-99 school year, the PUSD anticipates receipt of approximately \$1.68 million in State desegregation funds (out of claimed costs of approximately \$3.4 million) to pay for bus transportation and for other programs considered relevant to maintaining integrated schools at the District's three magnet schools.

Although busing serves to better integrate the District's schools, it is also required because so few classrooms are available in Northwest Pasadena. Currently, 6,536 students in PUSD are transported to school daily, of whom approximately 3,100 are bused to middle and high schools. Of the approximately 3,400 elementary children who ride buses, about 950 attend one of the District's magnet schools by choice. Of the remainder, approximately 2,300 elementary students are bused from Northwest Pasadena to outlying areas.

Choices for Parents: Available Facilities

Students are assigned to schools based on their residence. There is a process for obtaining transfers to attend a school other than the student's assigned school, subject to school capacity and limitations set by the PUSD integration plan. Currently, in addition to those attending magnet schools, approximately 3,200 students attend schools other than their assigned school by permit. Parents of students at some schools are given a choice whether or not to keep their sixth graders in elementary school or to send them on to middle school. However, these choices are constrained, particularly at the elementary level, by the limited capacity of schools.

The PUSD also offers its students the choice of attending one of its three magnet schools: Don Benito Fundamental School (grades K-5); Norma Coombs Alternative School (grades K-8); and Marshall Fundamental School (grades 6-12). Together, the three magnet schools serve approximately 3,000 students. Students attend these schools by choice, but seats at some of the magnet schools, especially Don Benito, are in great demand.

If the number of applicants for magnet schools exceeds available slots, preference is first given to the siblings of students already enrolled. If there are still more applications than openings, the District utilizes a lottery. In the spring of 1999, a computerized lottery

system was used to determine who would be admitted. Although District policy allowed an applicant's race, ethnicity, and gender to be factored into the lottery if a school is on the verge of becoming segregated, these factors were not used in the 1999 lottery. On February 7, 2000, a federal judge barred the PUSD from using race, ethnicity and gender as factors in admitting students to its magnet schools.

PUSD elementary school enrollments generally exceed their permanent classroom capacity. Many students are already housed in portable classrooms. Because of the capacity limitations at elementary schools throughout the District, there is little or no *new* opportunity for elementary students to obtain permits to attend a school other than their assigned one, except in the case of the two magnet elementary schools.

Facilities Master Plan Changes

Changes contemplated by the PUSD Facilities Master Plan will not significantly expand the choices of schools available to students. The size and grade configuration of the District's magnet schools will remain relatively unchanged, although the impact of the court decision, if not overturned on appeal, may exclude any consideration of race, ethnicity or gender in selection of applicants.

The Facilities Master Plan anticipates that only students in grades K-5 will attend elementary schools. The parents of sixth graders will no longer have the choice of keeping their children in elementary school, but must send them on to middle school.

As a result of community interest, the Plan provides for the construction of one new 500-student elementary school in Northwest Pasadena. Measure Y prohibits use of its bond proceeds for construction of a new school. The proposed new school may be paid for by funds in the Special Reserve Fund for Capital Outlay, proceeds from the sale of surplus school property, or from future state or local bond measures. PUSD has been ineligible for State funds for construction of new schools because it currently has two schools that are unused by the District and leased to other tenants.

The District has given notice to terminate these leases, and these two schools will be reopened after they have been used to house students from other schools during construction at those sites. Audubon (located in Northwest Altadena) will reopen as an elementary school and Sierra Mesa (located on the eastern edge of the District in the City of Sierra Madre) will reopen as a middle school. McKinley (which currently houses some special education students and Rose City High School) will be converted to a middle school. However, despite the reopening of Audubon and the construction of a new school, there will still be a severe shortage of elementary school seats in Northwest Pasadena.

The Facilities Master Plan strives to equalize the student density per acre among the District's elementary schools, in order to avoid the continued overcrowding at some

schools. While the state recommended density standard is 67 students per acre, the current density at 14 PUSD elementary schools exceeds 100 students per acre.

Under the Master Plan, only three schools will exceed 100 students per acre, although a number will be right at the 100 mark. These changes will reduce the capacity of a number of the District's elementary schools. It will reduce the capacity of Madison and Washington elementary schools (located in densely populated Northwest Pasadena) by approximately 250 seats. Thus, despite the construction of a new 500 seat elementary school in Northwest Pasadena, there may be a net increase of only 250 elementary children who can attend a neighborhood school.

Expanding Choices

Few people question the desirability of providing students and their parents with the greatest number of choices in schools. However, these choices are currently constrained by the reality of the location and capacity of the District's schools and the scarcity of money with which to build new schools where they are most needed. Even if funds were immediately available, the challenge of finding sites will remain. Furthermore, many parents may prefer that their children be transported to schools that the parents perceive to be better for their children.

There is no evidence that the Board of Education or the District intentionally sought to restrict parental choices or to impede neighborhood school attendance boundaries. A goal of the desegregation program was to expand the choices available to minority parents who had previously been restricted to schools in their own neighborhoods. Additional obstacles grew from the significant demographic changes experienced in Northwest Pasadena and were compounded by the worthy goal of reducing school crowding and the mandate to reduce class size.

Even so, the Board should explore new, innovative ways to expand parental choice. In the construction of the proposed new school in Northwest Pasadena and other future construction, Board should explore the concepts of New Schools, Better Neighborhoods (NSBN). The NSBN philosophy calls for the construction of smaller schools, which can share uses with community and governmental agencies, and which are built in cooperation with such agencies. The NSBN model also calls for a high degree of community involvement in school site location, design, and construction, and State law requires consultation with other governmental units.

Charter Schools

Another alternative to expand parental choice is the charter school. In California, charter schools are authorized by State law under the supervision either of a local school district, or a County or State board of education. They are public schools, but are relieved of some of the legal requirements imposed on public schools.

While there is widespread interest in charter schools, there has been little formal evaluation of their work. In the past several years, a few studies have been undertaken, which suggest questions the Board might investigate further.

The State of Charter Schools, Third Year Report

The U.S. Department of Education has been studying charter schools for several years. In 1999, they published a third year report that examined a number of features of charter schools nationwide. This report found generally positive results regarding charter schools, and suggested that they are making a strong contribution in the area of accountability. Its main conclusions were:

- The charter movement continued to expand in 1998.
- Most charter schools are newly-created, small schools. The charter schools that opened during 1997-98 were more likely to be newly-created, small schools than previously existing schools.
- Nationwide, students in charter schools have similar demographic characteristics to students in public schools. However, charter schools in some states serve significantly higher percentages of minority or economically disadvantaged students.
- Most charter schools aim to realize an alternative vision of schooling.
- Practically all charter schools have had to overcome obstacles during their development.
- Charter schools, particularly newly-created ones, have considerable autonomy. They provide standard financial and student achievement reports to different constituencies depending on the state's approach to accountability.

The Rules Matter

A study of Michigan charter schools was conducted at the School of Education at Michigan State University. In Michigan, charter schools are called Public School Academies (PSA's). The Michigan report raised several concerns about PSA's:

- PSA's may have an advantage over public schools in their ability to select the student population that they serve.
- PSA's are not easily held accountable for their performance.
- The development of PSA's does not necessarily create the desired market effects on public schools that would increase the performance of public schools.

A UCLA study (*Beyond the Rhetoric of Charter School Reform*) examined the California experience with charter schools by examining 10 schools districts with charter schools. The report's findings were that, overall, "the experiences of charter schools do not support the advocates' claims." Among the report's 15 findings were:

- #1 Charter schools in California are, in most instances, not yet being held accountable for enhanced academic achievement of their students. They are more likely to be held fiscally accountable.
- #6 Private resources are usually necessary for the survival of charter schools.
- #8 Charter schools often depend heavily on strong, well-connected leaders.
- #9 Charter schools exercise considerable control over the type of students they serve.
- #12 Although not obligated to do so, most charter schools continue to employ teachers with regular state credentials.

In his exploration of charter schools in Arizona and Michigan, published in *U.S. News and World Report*, Thomas Toch found numerous examples of successful, creative charter schools. He also found examples of financial mismanagement, poor education, and overworked staffs. He concluded:

"For decades, public schools have been at the mercy of central-office edicts and teacher-union contracts – and thus not responsible for their own performance. They were told what to spend money on, whom to hire, and what to teach. Many charter schools, in contrast, are largely free of such bureaucracy. In exchange for that freedom, it would make sense to allow public authorities to scrutinize charters' financial practices and educational results – and to crack down on laggards. Such a trade-off could in turn inspire a similarly rigorous system of accountability in traditional public schools. What *is* clear from the Arizona and Michigan experiences with charters is that, without rigorous accountability, both students and taxpayers suffer."

Charter Schools as an Option in Pasadena

Charter schools have been the focus of great expectations as a means to improve student performance and school accountability. They are a relatively new phenomenon, with less than a decade of experience.

The studies that are available thus far indicate that there is considerable potential for charter schools. At the same time, there are important questions that need to be addressed in a systematic manner. These questions concern equity in student population served as well as methods of ensuring accountability.

The Board of Education has adopted a policy statement favoring the exploration of charter schools in the PUSD. One school has been chartered in the PUSD. Another charter school in the community (the Odyssey School) was presented to District staff but there was a lack of interest, and no formal application was made to the Board of Education. Application for sponsorship was successfully made by the Odyssey School to the County Board of Education for sponsorship. Under the legal authority vested by State law on charter schools, decisions about charter schools should be made by the Board of Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

The Board should continue its policy that maximizes school choice without contributing to the resegregation of the schools. This policy should be enhanced by building more schools in the Northwest and directing that applications for charter schools are to be considered policy matters for Board decision, rather than a decision of District staff.

R35) The Board should maintain its current policy calling for neighborhood schools as the highest priority in site selection. The Board should maintain its policy that, within space limitations, preference to enroll in a neighborhood, non-magnet school should be given to those who live closest to the school.

R36) The Board should survey parental opinion on school choice, in order to measure the importance of neighborhood schools, as compared to other school options.

R37) As part of a comprehensive policy, the Board should seek to create additional choice schools; assist schools to develop into choice schools; and allow choice for schools other than those currently designated. The Board should clarify that applications to create charter schools are policy matters for decision by the Board, not District staff.

R38) The Board should explore methods to reconfigure existing and planned schools. The District could look at creative use of existing and proposed classrooms in the most densely populated areas. For example, the proposed new elementary school in Northwest Pasadena and the existing Madison Elementary could be reconfigured as primary centers for kindergarten through third grade. Washington Elementary and Middle Schools could be used to house grades four through eight. This approach will not solve the problem of the need for more elementary schools in Northwest Pasadena, but it would alleviate the burden of busing on some of the youngest children. It could increase the numbers of young students who could attend a local school, at least for the first four years.

R39) The Board should explore new models of school construction. There is increasing discussion in school reform circles of new models of school construction. The traditional model requires a school district to take on the full responsibility of a construction manager, which has led to problems in site identification and selection, community involvement, and environmental assessment. Under the design-build construction model,

the developer would acquire the site, design, and build a school. The builder would then sell the school to the District.

R40) The Board should explore new methods of site selection and joint use. One of the most promising models for school site selection is the New Schools, Better Neighborhoods (NSBN) model. The NSBN approach calls for the development of smaller schools that could also serve as centers of the community. The key to the NSBN approach is strong community involvement in site selection and in identifying possible joint uses. Consistent with State law, the Board should work in conjunction with the Cities and County as it builds new schools. It should be a goal of school construction to include such community activities as library, recreation, and community meeting facilities, and to emphasize shared uses with other governments, including institutions of higher education.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Findings:

F38) The Board has generally not fulfilled the role of governing the District in a manner that fosters public responsiveness or accountability.

F39) In the last two years, the Board has begun to take steps to assert its policy and oversight roles in District governance.

F40) Until very recently, the Board allowed District goals to be set by District staff, and not by the Board of Education.

F41) The Board has generally not asked the type of questions nor required the type of staff reports or follow up that would foster the Board's oversight in such areas as school safety, district operations, financial management, and school choice.

F42) Board agendas are not designed to emphasize the policy and oversight roles of the Board.

F43) Until recently, the Board has not created clearly measurable objectives for the Superintendent. The current search for a new Superintendent provides an opportunity for the Board, working with the community, to establish goals for the District and objectives for the new Superintendent.

F44) Members of the community have frequently complained about a lack of follow through regarding issues that they raise to the Board.

The governing body of the PUSD is the five-member Board of Education, elected at large. One of the preliminary problems identified by the Task Force was a concern in the community that the Board of Education has not been able or willing to play its full governance role. Task Force staff explored whether this problem was a real problem. Staff conducted interviews with, among others, School Board members, present and past; and examined agendas and minutes of Board meetings as well as other documents.

In a broader sense, this is the critical issue because the Task Force's mission is principally to explore the governance role of the Board of Education.

A board of education is regarded in California law as an administrative agency of the State government. Boards of education in California operate within a world of detailed laws and regulations set down by the State Legislature and the State Board of Education. In addition, the election, number of members, and member compensation of some districts' boards of education are subject to the Charter of a city government, as is the case for the PUSD.

The Legislature has enacted a State Education Code that consumes thousands of pages and two feet of shelf space. State Board of Education regulations are equally voluminous. A great deal of Board and District staff time is dedicated to assuring legal compliance with these laws and regulations.

The Education Code imposes numerous mandated responsibilities upon the governing board of a school district. The California Education Code does, however, grant broad authority to school boards to "...initiate and carry on any program, activity, or ... otherwise act in any manner... not in conflict with the law or purposes for which school districts are established." In enacting this section of the Education Code, the Legislature declared its intent that school districts "should have the flexibility to create their own unique solutions."

School Boards and School Reform

As school performance and accountability have come under greater public scrutiny, greater attention has been devoted to school boards as a key element in improving student achievement.

For a number of reasons, however, ranging from the relationship between school boards and school district staff, the part-time nature of board work, and the lack of local control over significant shares of funding, it is impossible for school boards to be the *sole* source of school reform. Consequently, it is necessary at times for institutions and persons outside the Board and the District staff to become involved in promoting school reform.

Many state officials, particularly elected officials, have pushed for school reform. In a number of communities, this push has come from city officials. School boards often find themselves on the defensive in the current school reform debate, in battles initiated at other levels of government and fought on unfamiliar territory.

Regardless of where school reform is initiated, it is the school boards themselves that will ultimately determine whether school reform will be successful. There are tools that school boards can utilize to place themselves in the forefront of reform.

The California School Boards Association defines school board members as "trustees" of the community's deep and abiding interest in public education. The CSBA governance model reduces the tasks of a successful school board to four:

The CSBA Model of School Board Governance:

- Setting the direction for the district
- Maintaining and supporting the structure of the district
- Holding the district accountable
- Serving as community leaders

A 1999 report by the National School Boards Foundation, *Leadership Matters*, examined urban districts with diverse and often disadvantaged student populations. The NSBF report adds a note of *urgency* to the criteria noted above.

The authors of the NSBF report conducted a survey of urban school board members and of the general public in each district, and found that the school board members were much more likely than the general public to be satisfied with the state of the schools. Thus, school reform has involved motivating school board members to view and publicly acknowledge the problems in a manner that will be credible with the public without becoming alarmist and negative about the schools.

Noting the resource deficit that urban districts face along with their educational challenges, the NSBF report called for major changes in the approaches taken by urban school boards. The authors recommended that urban school boards commit themselves to three approaches: *No more business as usual; focus, focus, focus on student achievement; and do it now.*

It is also worth noting that school boards can do *too much*, and thereby hurt the ability of a district to support student achievement. Boards can micromanage and interfere in the daily operations of the schools. They can interject themselves as individuals, rather than as members of a collective body whose power is applied in the context of the Board meeting.

School boards do not and should not run the schools. They provide policy leadership, not operational management. They hire, evaluate and remove the superintendent, they approve the budget, they set goals, make policy, and are expected to be accountable to the electorate. Do those jobs well, and boards will be successful. Do less, or do more, and they will be unsuccessful.

As stated by Davis Campbell, executive director of the California School Boards Association, in the Leadership Matters report:

"All too often, school board members are like firefighters on the ground, battling the flames, when they should be in a helicopter above the fire, able to see how extensive the blaze is, which way the wind is blowing, and where the resources need to be deployed."

Governing the PUSD

In the 1960's and 1970's, the overriding impact of the desegregation controversies generated profound political and philosophical differences in the community and inevitably on the Pasadena Board of Education. These conflicts made it difficult, if not impossible, to develop agreed-upon approaches to School District governance. In the midst of the cauldron that was Board life in those days, abstract notions of Board-Superintendent roles were far from center stage.

By the mid to late 1980's, the desegregation issue had begun to recede, and successive Boards and Superintendents had to find ways to work toward greater accountability. In the last several years, the movement within the Board toward greater accountability has accelerated. This development has been influenced by the greater public interest in the Board as a potential vehicle for school reform.

The following sections analyze the role of the Board in the areas identified as critical tasks for school boards by the California School Boards Association.

Setting the Direction for the District

In order to create a vision for the District, widely supported by the community, the Board must be involved in the process of setting goals. Beginning in 1992, the District held a wide-ranging community process known as the Summit. The Summit produced a set of goals for the District that the Board adopted. Several years later, District staff substituted different goals for the Summit-derived goals, apparently with the assent of the Board. The Board, however, was not centrally involved in this process.

In the last several years, the Board has shown increased interest in playing a more important role in the process of developing goals for the District. As a result, there developed two parallel annual goal-setting processes: District goals created by the staff and approved by the Board, and a separate set of Board-designed goals for the District. Over the past year, there has been a growing Board sentiment to mesh these goal-setting processes under the leadership of the Board.

In 2000, the PUSD Board plans to design goals for the District, after consultation with District staff. District staff will develop objectives based on implementing these goals and submit them to the Board for approval. The Board will evaluate the Superintendent

based on the success of the staff in implementing these strategies and in making progress toward meeting the stated goals.

The trend to coordinate the visionary, goal-setting process under the leadership of the Board is a promising one. As it undertakes this task, the Board will be well-advised to draw on the interest and involvement of the wider community.

Maintaining and Supporting the Structure of the District

The Board makes policy for the District, and supports and maintains the structure of the District. Policy decisions include the annual budget, the facilities master plan, social promotion, school discipline, and the review of financial and administrative management structure and operation of the District.

Meetings of the Board are not structured to reflect these critical roles of policy leadership. An examination of Board minutes indicates that a wide range of issues are considered at the twice-monthly Board meetings, from reports from individual schools, to announcement of awards, to approval of contracts, to broad and important policy matters. Meetings are very long, and have led to some discussion within the Board of whether the proceedings should be made briefer.

The interest and involvement of the public are far greater at meetings that focus on broad policy matters. Since the policy role of the Board is critical to the successful management of the District, the Board should reexamine its agendas to highlight policy issues, and to make certain that routine or ceremonial matters are kept to a minimum.

Holding the District Accountable

The most important way for the Board to hold the District accountable is through its selection, evaluation and oversight of the Superintendent.

The Board has had difficulty creating clear and rigorous evaluation standards for the Superintendent. In recent years, there has been a promising trend toward greater rigor and more specific criteria. The current Board is endeavoring to link the evaluation of the Superintendent more closely to the stated goals and objectives of the District. The previously noted trend in the PUSD to tie together Board goals, District objectives and evaluation of the Superintendent provides a greater opportunity for accountability.

The current search for a new Superintendent gives the Board a rare opportunity to clarify the role of the Superintendent. The Board should undertake a process of deciding what it and the community want in a Superintendent before completing the search.

Beyond the hiring and evaluation of the Superintendent, the Board has an ongoing responsibility to oversee District operations, primarily through its relationship to the Superintendent. The Board needs to ask questions of the staff that will elicit sufficient information to allow the Board to provide oversight. In addition, the Board needs to make

certain that initiatives and directives are carried out in a timely fashion, and if not carried out, to receive an explanation.

Task Force research indicates that the Board of Education has not directed District staff to develop and produce data on all aspects of school safety, on student achievement, on teacher/administrator ratios, and on the Vogel Report on financial management, even as members of the public continued to raise questions about these issues. Data on these subjects are readily available from public sources, but until the Task Force undertook this process, the data were largely unknown to the Board, and therefore to the public.

Serving as Community Leaders

As noted in the section on engaging and involving the public, the District has a seriously troubled relationship with the community. The Board has an obligation to help reconstitute that relationship.

Since the Board conducts its official business at public meetings, the conduct of those meetings can have a powerful impact on public perceptions. One of the complaints the Task Force has heard about the Board is that its meetings are not good forums for public involvement. Questions raised by members of the public seem to be shunted from Board to District without any clear follow-up process to determine whether the answers were provided to the public or to the Board. Some members of the public sought the help of the Task Force at public meetings in frustration at getting an effective, helpful response from either the Board or the District.

In an attempt to foster great compliance with the Brown Act requirements for public access, the Board has proposed changes to its by-laws. The Board's handling of these issues – the opportunity for the public to be involved in and aware of the business of the District – will play an important role in the public assessment of the Board's efforts.

Outside of official Board meetings, individual Board members can play an important role in fostering community engagement. Each member brings a unique perspective and opportunity for outreach. Board members, however, must keep in mind that, as numerous studies have emphasized, they do not have authority as individuals, but only as members of a collective body.

Conclusion: Continuity and Urgency

According to the criteria that have been identified by the California School Boards Association for a successful Board, the PUSD Board has not fully exercised the appropriate level of governance.

The Board of Education has attracted outstanding people, and the members are highly dedicated to their challenging positions. However, the Board does not seem to ask hard questions, or insist on follow through. The problems that were found by the Task Force could have and should have been found by the Board.

The Board is not organizationally prepared to exercise the policy and oversight role that is traditionally associated with a Board of Education. Its meetings are too often consumed with ceremonial matters or brief reports that do not lead to serious, sustained questioning or follow through. It does not have sufficient staff resources to foster its policy and oversight roles.

However, there are promising signs that the current Board is moving in the right direction toward greater accountability and responsiveness. In the coming months, the Board will need to look closely and critically at the range of District operations, from policy and oversight perspectives. As the research on urban school districts indicates, the Board will also need to develop an even greater sense of urgency, given the intensely important context within which it is operating. The process of searching for a new Superintendent will provide a crucial test of the new direction the Board has been charting.

The goal should not be to turn the Board into an organization that interferes with the daily operations of the District. Such a Board will neither attract nor retain the best possible Superintendent. The goal instead should be to move from abdication to delegation, from a confusion of leadership to the assertion of legitimate authority. A well-functioning Board is in charge of the District, so that the voters can hold the Board accountable, but it delegates the running of the District to the Superintendent in accordance with Board policy. Delegation, rather than abdication, means that the Board holds the reins, but rarely pulls on them. A successful District requires a trusting relationship between the Board and the Superintendent, but the public needs to be reassured that it isn't blind trust.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Board should change its current role to one of active engagement in the policy-making and oversight of public education. In so doing, the Board must avoid micro-managing the District. To make this change, the members of the Board must centralize governing authority in the Board, while delegating operational authority to the Superintendent.

The Board should enhance its relationships with local and county governments. Neighboring governmental agencies must move beyond criticism of the District, to provide financial and organizational support for the steps the District must take to address its problems.

R41) The Board should establish goals for the District and put in place a mechanism for their periodic review.

R42) The Board should continue its progress in defining measurable performance goals for the Superintendent.

R43) The Board should reformat its meeting agendas to emphasize policy and oversight issues.

R44) The Board should reallocate staff positions to facilitate its policy and oversight roles.

R45) The Board should create the position of Ombudsman to assist the public in its dealings with the School District.

R46) The Board should consider appointing additional citizen advisory groups or task forces, along the lines of Measure Y and Facilities Task Forces, in such areas as student achievement, finance, safety, and enhancing parental choice, as long as such advisory bodies do not interfere with day-to-day classroom instruction.

R47) The PUSD, the Pasadena City Council, the Sierra Madre City Council, and the County Supervisor representing Altadena and other unincorporated areas should explore the potential for joint powers agreements to carry out public purposes with overlapping functions and jurisdictions, such as consolidating various operations with cities or the County in such areas as fleet maintenance, public safety, and transportation.

R48) The Board should initiate discussion of a joint powers agreement which would fully fund and maintain the important after-school programs after the grants now in place run out.

For Further Study:

The City Clerk of Pasadena shall be requested to investigate the option of all-mail elections for the PUSD and the City of Pasadena, as well as other methods to increase voter participation.

**A NEW STRUCTURE
FOR THE
PUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION**

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Findings

F45) The current system of at-large election of Board members contributes to the distance between the community and the schools.

F46) The Board does not have any structural requirement of reporting to the public on the state of the public schools.

F47) The Charter does not make clear the central role of the Board of Education as the public's key access point to the schools.

F48) The Board of Education has too few members to carry out the complicated and time-consuming policy and oversight responsibilities called for in this report.

In Part One of this report, the Task Force presented a series of findings and recommendations about new policies and directions for the management and operation of the PUSD system. Taken together, these recommendations comprise the School Accountability and Reform Plan. The recommendations emerged as a result of a thorough analysis of perceived problems within the District.

The underlying mission of the Task Force, however, is to go beyond policy matters to a fundamental structural question: Is the current structure of the PUSD Board of Education the best possible vehicle to attain the accountability, responsiveness, and effectiveness the community expects? And if not, are there preferable structures for the governance of the PUSD?

Any such structural changes require amendments to the City Charter of Pasadena, which governs the structure of the PUSD. As a result, the Task Force deliberated with great seriousness on these structural issues, understanding that the Charter is a fundamental governing document that should be changed sparingly and for good reason.

In addition to exploring the governance structure of the PUSD, the Task Force also examined a series of issues and alternatives associated with voting and representation methods and with various methods of appointment of Board members. Out of this discussion emerged a small set of decisions that are described below.

The Task Force considered a wide array of alternatives, including:

Changes to the method of voting, such as plurality voting, and variations of proportional representation. The Task Force resolved to maintain the current system of majority-rules elections.

Changes to the method of selecting Board members. The Task Force expressed a preference to continue the election method.

Requiring an annual address by the Board President. The Task Force felt that this address would provide a vital tool for responsiveness and accountability, and that it was particularly important to have the address conducted by the Board President to emphasize the Board's governance role.

Changing the size of the Board. Sentiment on the Task Force was widespread that the size of the Board should be increased from 5 to 7 members. This recommendation was based on a number of factors. The Task Force had heard from members of the Board of the Education of the scope of their work and the need for additional members to serve on committees. In addition, the Task Force concluded that there would be greater opportunities for representation and community access to the Board with an additional 2 members.

Research indicated that the vast majority of school boards in California have either 5 or 7 members. Larger school boards are very rare, at least in part because school boards are not seen as legislative bodies, but as governing boards. Thus, the Task Force members concluded that an increase from 5 to 7 members would assist the operations of the Board while remaining within the normal range of board sizes.

Changes to the electoral structure. The Task Force strongly endorsed the concept of sub-district elections. Currently, the Board members are elected at large, with all candidates needing to win an election in the entire School District. Under sub-district elections, the PUSD would be divided into areas, from which individual Board members would be elected.

This recommendation was based on the greater likelihood of more varied candidates running for the school board; greater access by the public to individual members representing smaller numbers of voters; and greater public interest. The Task Force members believe that with sub-district elections, the Board of Education will be more responsive to the public, and will more effectively exercise its oversight authority over the school system.

During the public comment period on the draft report, a majority of members of the public and a majority of teachers supported the shift to sub-district elections. While in most instances the Task Force recommendations represent a consensus of the Task Force

as a whole, as to the particular issue of sub-district elections, there was strong opposition by Task Force member Marge Wyatt.

The arguments against sub-district elections are that such a system will encourage fragmentation of the community; that Board members will not have the interest of all the students in mind; that it will be difficult to know whether representation should be provided at the place of residence or the location of the school attended; that the Board already has diverse representation; and that the specific boundary lines will not be known until 2002.

Task Force members weighed these arguments, and concluded that Board members elected by sub-district are likely to keep in mind the interests of the whole community. In addition, the Board members elected by sub-district are likely to pay close attention to the sort of problems that were illuminated in this report. The Task Force felt that, on balance, the advantages of creating a Board structure that maximizes direct contact with the community outweigh the objections raised to the recommendation.

CHARTER RECOMMENDATIONS

R49) The size of the Board of Education shall be changed from 5 members to 7 members.

R50) The election method for the Board shall be changed from at-large election to election by sub-district.

R51) The President of the Board of Education shall make an annual State of the Public Schools address to the community, including progress on the implementation of the Task Force recommendations.

**IMPLEMENTATION
AND
TRANSITION**

The School Accountability and Reform Plan, by contrast to these Charter changes, is a set of policy recommendations, mostly addressed to the Board of Education. The Task Force recommends that several steps be taken to foster the implementation of the School Accountability and Reform Plan.

The Charter should be amended to require the President of the Board of Education to present an annual address to the community on the state of the public schools. As part of this address, the President of the Board should be required to report on the progress of implementation of the Plan. The Task Force recommends that there be at least one joint meeting per year among the various governing bodies with the understanding that discussion of the Task Force Plan would be one of the key items.

The Task Force further recommends that the Board of Education make an accounting to the community concerning the implementation of the Plan at the end of a six-month period which begins after Council adoption of the Plan. Finally, the Task Force recommends that this Task Force be reconvened by the Council on an annual basis, beginning one year after Council adoption of the Plan, with a budget appropriate for the task, in order to review the implementation of the Plan, and to report its conclusions to the community.