

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: November 22, 1999

FROM: CHRIS HOLDEN, CHAIR
CHARTER REFORM TASK FORCE

RE: CHARTER REFORM TASK FORCE WORKPLAN

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council, after reviewing the Workplan, receive and file it.

BACKGROUND:

On August 2, 1999, City Council adopted Resolution 7786 establishing the composition and charge of the Charter Reform Task Force on School District Governance. On August 30, 1999, the Council made appointments to the Task Force. The Task Force has had five meetings since it was established. In the establishing resolution, the Task Force was directed to provide a workplan to Council in mid-October, 1999; provide an interim report to City Council in mid-January, 2000; and to present its final report to the City Council on February 28, 2000. On October 25, 1999, the Task Force requested its \$53,000 budget be increased to \$201,600 to accommodate a longer timeline for the Task Force to complete its study, and increases in the areas of community outreach and staff consultant services. The timeline presented on October 25th proposed that draft recommendations be presented to the City Council on February 28, 2000; that the draft recommendations be circulated throughout the community during the months of March – May 2000, with the Task Force continuing to hold regular meetings as well as four additional community forum meetings at various locations throughout the District area. The timeline also proposed that the Task Force's final report be due to Council on June 26, 2000, in order to allow sufficient time to place any proposed measures on the November 7, 2000 ballot.

At the October 25th meeting, Councilmembers expressed support for the revised timeline and support for increasing the Task Force's budget. No formal action was taken, and the City Manager was asked to report back to Council with her recommendation on appropriating funding for the Task Force's revised budget. The City Manager's report regarding appropriating funds for the revised budget was presented to Council last week, and held one week to be discussed concurrently with the Task Force's workplan.

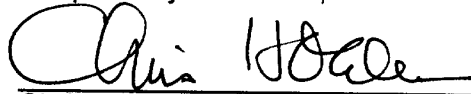
November 22, 1999

At the November 17, 1999, Task Force meeting, the attached Workplan was reviewed and approved by the Task Force. Due to identification of key issues to be addressed in the Task Force's study, the desire to schedule a panel of guest speakers in the field of education for the December meetings and defer addressing key issues during the holiday period, and the need to have a sufficient number of meetings to study identified key areas, the Task Force's workplan and timeline reflect that draft recommendations be presented to the community on March 27, 2000, rather than February 28, 2000, as last proposed; that draft recommendations be circulated for comment during April – May (with regular meetings continuing as well as holding the four community forums); and that the final report deadline be proposed for June 26, 2000 (no change from prior proposal).

FISCAL IMPACT

This change in the proposed timeline of presenting draft recommendations one month later should not impact the proposed revised budget of \$201,600, as the same number of meetings and forums will be held as proposed in the timeline presented to Council on October 25th. As mentioned earlier in this report, there is a separate agenda report from the City Manager recommending an appropriation of funds for the increased budget.

Respectfully submitted,



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

Prepared by:



Jane Rodriguez
City Clerk

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

Workplan

November 17, 1999

Prepared by Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, Staff Consultant

City of Pasadena Charter Reform Task Force on School District Governance

Task Force Members:

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

Task Force Staff:

Dr. Raphael Sonenshein
Jane Rodriguez
Larry Newberry
Kathy Vandervort

Task Force Consultant
City Clerk
Assistant City Attorney
Staff Assistant

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 reads, 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 is to explore the governance of the Pasadena Unified School District. The District includes the cities of Pasadena and Sierra Madre and the community of Altadena. 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 is empowered to explore Charter changes involving the governance of the School District and to more broadly explore reforms in the governance of the schools beyond the Charter. The Pasadena City Charter authorizes the City to shape the Board of Education -- the nature of its election system, and other elements -- but state law and Board policy govern the day to day operation of the schools. The recommendations of the Task Force may, therefore, include proposed changes to the City Charter and suggested policies that could be adopted by the City Council or by the Board of Education.

Brief History of the Pasadena Unified School District

The Pasadena school system was created by a vote by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to establish the San Pasqual School District, which held its first meeting on August 27, 1874. The Pasadena School District was formed by action of a group of residents who sought to secede from the San Pasqual School District in 1878. When the City of Pasadena incorporated on June 14, 1886, the seceding district became the South Pasadena School District. On May 5, 1890, the portions of the original San Pasqual district that were not part of the Pasadena district were incorporated into the Pasadena district. The new name of the combined district was the Pasadena School District.

In March 1953, Temple City voted to leave the District, and La Canada voted to stay. In 1960, La Canada established its own unified school district. The removal of La Canada from the Pasadena School District changed the racial demographics of the district, and contributed to a chain of events surrounding school desegregation that marked district governance for the next several decades.

In 1970, Pasadena became the first non-Southern city ordered by the federal courts to desegregate its public school system. During the court's jurisdiction over the schools, there was severe conflict within Pasadena over the direction of desegregation as well as over curriculum and reading materials. There were bitter school board elections and battles between liberals and conservatives.

The federal court of appeals removed the court's jurisdiction over the Pasadena schools in 1979, with the proviso that the district continue to maintain its efforts to integrate the schools. One legacy of the struggle to end segregation in the schools was a busing program that continues to this day, that takes approximately 2,300 minority students from the northwest portion of the district to other parts of the district. However, one cannot separate the issue of integration from that of school capacity in densely populated areas of northwest Pasadena.

Between the end of the court order and the present day, the district has had several superintendents. Ramon Cortines, who had lost his post as superintendent for 14 months in the late 1970's, was reappointed by a new Board, and held the position until 1984. Philip Jordan was hired in 1985 and served until 1990. Philip Linscomb was appointed superintendent in 1990 and served until 1992. He was replaced by Dr. Vera Vignes, who has since held the post of superintendent.

Today, the Pasadena Unified School District, which covers 76 square miles, serves the cities of Pasadena and Sierra Madre, the community of Altadena, and several unincorporated territories on the south and southeast of the District. The District is governed by a 5-member Board of Education, whose members are

elected to 4-year staggered terms. The Board has the authority to appoint the Superintendent and to set District policy. On a day-to-day basis, the Superintendent runs the District.

The District operates 31 schools and serves 23,656 students. The chart below provides a current profile of the District:

A Quick Look at the Pasadena Unified School District		
Schools	Student Population:	
	By area	By race/ethnicity
22 elementary, K-6	17,483 Pasadena	49.2% Hispanic
1 K-8	5,140 Altadena	15.9% White
2 middle schools, 6-8	228 San Gabriel	30.7% Afri-American
1 alternative, K-8	502 Sierra Madre	4.2% Asian/other
1 6-12 school		
3 high schools, 9-12		
1 continuation school		

Data provided PUSD Office of Research (based on October 1999 census figures)

References:

Superintendent's Annual Report. Pasadena City Schools. 81 Years of Public Education in Pasadena. June 1955.

Pasadena Unified School District. Report to the Legislature: Use of Voluntary Desegregation Funding, 1997-1998. February 1999.

Lynne Vernon. A Review of the Pasadena Unified School District's Pasadena Plan for Desegregating Pasadena's Schools. October, 1993.

Julie Salley Gray. To Fight the Good Fight: The Battle Over Control of the Pasadena City Schools, 1969-1979. Essays In History, Volume 37, 1995. Department of History, University of Virginia.

What are the Problems?

One of the Task Force's first tasks was to assess the 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 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. From the conversations with Task Force members, the Superintendent, the School Board, as well as other conversations with stakeholders, the definition of problems continues to evolve.

The potential problems that emerged began with a series of policy issues that have aroused community concern. Those that were most often mentioned were:

- School safety
- Need for neighborhood schools, particularly in Northwest Pasadena; the excessive use of busing
- Need for more after-school programs
- School maintenance
- Levels of student achievement
- 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

In addition to these identified problems, interviews brought out a number of perceived strengths of the PUSD. These include:

- Increasing support from the private, voluntary sector
- Recognition through federal and state grant programs
- Improving levels of student achievement
- Public support for the schools as indicated by support for a recent bond issue

School Reform: What Other Districts are Finding

In analyzing the governance issues that confront the Task Force, we are not alone. The question of how to design systems of governance to enhance student achievement and build community support has attracted nationwide interest.

Communities large and small are testing and examining systems of governance. State and national commissions have explored which elements are crucial to well-governed school districts. These model-building exercises can help the PUSD community to develop a set of objectives that will define a great school district. Several broad themes have emerged in the school reform debate:

The daily operation of school systems is almost always in the hands of an elected Board of Education and a Superintendent appointed by the Board. In the largest cities, this form has been facing alteration, as big city mayors are increasingly gaining the authority to appoint school board members.

While Boards of Education and Superintendents run the schools, making the schools work effectively is increasingly seen as the community's business. Americans are insisting that Boards and Superintendents produce the highest possible student achievement, safe and well-operated school facilities, and the best possible district organization.

At the same time, Boards and Superintendents are best able to deliver these results in communities where there is collaboration between the Board and the Superintendent, and where there is broad community support for the District.

Unless other governmental bodies are in a position to directly operate the schools, reformers focus on how best to make the Board-Superintendent relationship a source of accountability for the whole community, as well as the basis for building broad community support.

In 1997, for instance, the National Advisory Committee on Public School District Governance produced a report entitled, Getting There From Here. The report explored the role that school board-superintendent collaboration plays in raising student achievement. The report is based on a multi-district study that looked at well-governed and poorly-governed districts for very different levels of socioeconomic status.

The study concluded that effective collaboration between the school board and the superintendent directly contributes to improvement in levels of student achievement.

More specifically, the 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.

On November 15, 1999, the Education Commission of the States released the final report of the National Commission on Governing America's Schools. The authors of the report, which was funded by the Joyce Foundation, concluded that "without good governance, good schools are the exception, not the rule." They recommended further exploration of charter schools. Their main recommendations, listed below, are designed both for traditional school districts and for districts with extensive charter schools:

The Education Commission of the States believes that a well-governed school district:

- Creates a vision for the district
- Establishes districtwide standards and strategically aligns resources and policies to support them
- Monitors, analyzes and reports school performance
- Provides instructional leadership
- Creates incentives for progress and consequences for failure for all decisionmakers in the district, as well as for students
- Gives parents the right to choose any public school in the district
- Engages parents and the community, and partners with public and private organizations.

Source: Executive summary, Governing America's Schools: Changing the Rules, November 15, 1999.

Objectives

What emerges from the study of school reform efforts nationwide is that three features characterize successful school districts that support student achievement:

✓ **Accountability**

All those involved in educating the District's children are held accountable for their performance in supporting and sustaining student achievement. The standards of accountability are clear and consistent, and apply to everyone from the top to the bottom of the system. District and school goals are monitored.

✓ **Responsiveness**

The District is responsive to the public, solicits and pays attention to the views of the public, and makes a commitment to keeping the public informed in a complete and accessible manner about the performance and condition of the school system. The District informs parents about academic standards and encourages parent participation in meeting or exceeding those standards.

✓ **Collaboration**

The Board and the District work together collaboratively within their respective roles; other stakeholders, whether elected officials, civic leaders or residents contribute to a broad base of community support for effective operation of the schools. Principals and teachers are incorporated into the collaborative process. Principals have flexibility to make decisions at the school site. There is support and professional development for teachers.

These three objectives can be pursued by addressing a series of topics. The topics themselves are constructed as a series of questions. Some are primarily research questions. Some can best be answered by the District. Some can best be answered by members of the community. But everybody should feel free to address any of the questions. The Task Force members can take these questions out to the community. We will also seek input from the District, both Board and Superintendent. Other stakeholders should be encouraged to draw on their own experiences and observations to answer the questions. Experts on education should be asked their response. The answers will help frame the debate over problems and solutions.

Potential Speakers/Panelists:

Todd Ziebarth, author of newly-released report from the Education Commission of the States

Maria Casillas, president, Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project

Prof. D. Roderick Kiewiet, Department of Political Science, Caltech, author of article on school achievement

Steven Bingler, author of What If?, report produced by the Metropolitan Forum Project.

Dr. Kati Haycock, President, The Education Trust

Davis Campbell, Executive Director, California School Boards Association

Dr. Ramon Cortines, Acting Superintendent, Los Angeles Unified School District, and former Superintendent, Pasadena Unified School District

Thomas Tock, Brookings Institution

Christopher Whittle, Edison Schools, Inc.

Prof. Linda Darling-Hammond, Stanford University, Department of Education

Prof. Vito Perrone, Harvard University Graduate School of Education

Questions:

How do the students of the PUSD perform on various measures on academic achievement?

What tools are used for assessment of achievement?

What are the district standards for school achievement? How were these standards developed and with what degree of public participation?

Which comparison districts, if any, were used in the development of these standards?

How do achievement levels of PUSD students compare with students of comparable districts?

What diagnostic tools exist to assist students who are at risk for dropping out?

Do District statistics offer data on achievement by residence rather than by school?

Questions:

How effectively does the District handle complaints registered by the public?

What actually happens to complaints when they are brought to the Board, to district staff, or at individual schools?

Does the District seek out comments/suggestions from members of the public?
What happens to public comments/suggestions?

What happens when there is widespread community interest in actions of the District?

How effectively does the District relate to parents and PTA's?

Do Board meetings and other public activities provide an effective forum for addressing concerns of the public?

How active and effective is the District in engaging immigrant populations, and residents with limited English?

What is the District's policy and practice for recruitment and involvement of volunteers? Are decisions about utilization of volunteers made at the headquarters or at the school site, or both?

Does the community receive accurate, comprehensive information about the District and about Board issues and decisions from the local newspapers or from the District?

How effectively and responsively does the District deal with school site councils?

January 19, 2000

Financial Management

City Council Chamber

Questions:

How is the budget developed?

What are the procedures for Board consideration of the budget?

How does the Board analyze the budget; is there a Finance Committee of the Board?

What officer acts as the District's Chief Financial Officer? How is he/she selected, and to whom does he/she report?

What are the mechanisms, if any, for independent analysis of the District's finances? Are these organizational mechanisms the best available?

To what extent does the District utilize out-sourcing and cost-sharing?

Week of January 24, 2000

Student-Led Forum

Site to be determined

Topics to be determined by students

Questions:

What are the Board's legally mandated responsibilities? How does the Board exercise its responsibilities to provide policy direction and oversight to the district?

Does the Board micro-manage the District? Is there an expectation from the public that the Board should micro-manage? What happens in Board meetings; how are decisions made and at what level of detail?

What is the quality of the relationship between the Board and the District?

Does the Board conduct regular evaluations of the Superintendent, and does it specify clear criteria for professional success for the Superintendent?

Does the Board act as a positive force in the community to provide public access and generate community support for the schools?

How does the Board relate to other public officials, e.g., mayors, city councils, county and state officials?

Do the mayors, city councils, and other public officials provide critical oversight and broad support to the Board in order to help build community support?

What should be the role, if any, of charter schools within the governance of the District? Should there be greater outsourcing of school operation?

What is the best model for overall governance, centralized or decentralized?

Questions:

How safe are the schools?

What are the district standards for school safety? How were these standards developed, and with what degree of public participation? Have these standards been effective?

How does each school rate in terms of reported incidents?

What is the procedure for responding to incidents of intimidation, bullying or violence?

How safe or unsafe do students feel?

What is the most efficient method for providing school safety: the current use of an in-house District force, the Pasadena Police Department, or other method?

February 9, 2000

District Operations

City Council Chamber

Questions:

Does the District provide the Board with assistance so that the Board's policy and oversight functions may be conducted fully?

What do those who work within the District say about District operations?

What is the quality of the District staff's relationship with other public officials?

Does the District maintain publicly accessible data on student achievement in a manner that facilitates comparison to other districts?

Does the District maintain publicly accessible data on financial management so that independent evaluations can be carried out?

What is the District's approach to school-site management? How much authority do principals have?

Does the District offer maximum community use of school facilities?

February 16, 2000

Election/Selection of Board

City Council Chamber

Questions:

What are the advantages and disadvantages of changes in size of the Board of Education?

What other methods exist for selecting Superintendents (e.g. election), and where have they been used?

Why do some school districts have appointed school boards? What are the advantages and disadvantages of appointed boards? What about mixed systems of appointed and elected members?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having the Board President elected by the voters of the District rather than by the Board?

Should the compensation of Board members be changed?

February 26, 2000 Neighborhood Schools NW Pasadena - Madison School

Questions:

What are District policies on school site location? What are the District policies on who attends which schools?

How were these standards developed, and with what degree of public participation? Have these standards been effective?

Should the transportation (e.g. busing) policies of the District be changed? Should attendance policies be changed?

Is it possible or desirable to move toward a system of neighborhood schools?

Should there be more magnet schools?

March 1, 2000 Voting Methods City Council Chamber

Questions:

What has been the racial, ethnic, and geographic composition of the Board of Education over last 20 years?

What is the cost of running for the School Board in recent years?

Does the current voting system reflect majority preferences as expressed at the ballot box? What has been the level of voting participation in school board elections?

What is the prevalence of at large and district elections for school boards in other communities in California and nation wide?

Why do communities adopt district elections? What has been their experience?

What are alternative voting systems, where have they been used, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of such systems?

Should the election cycle be changed to coincide with county, state, or federal elections?

Schedule for Completion of Task Force Mission:

March 8, 2000	Task Force Consideration of Draft Recommendations
March 15, 2000	Task Force Vote on Draft Recommendations
Week of March 27, 2000	Public Presentation of Draft Recommendations
April - May, 2000	Public Comment on Draft Recommendations Regular Task Force Meetings Continue Four Interactive Community Forums for Public Comment on Draft Recommendations
June 21, 2000	Task Force Approves Final Report for City Council

For more information, see our website: www.ci.pasadena.ca.us

How You Can Contact the Task Force:

Come to a meeting: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays every month, at 7 pm, at City Council Chambers

Write, fax, or e-mail:

**C/o City Clerk
P.O. Box 7115
Pasadena, CA 91109
Fax: 626-744-3921**

Charter-reform@ci.pasadena.ca.us