

Presidents' Joint Commission on LAUSD Governance

Status Report

January 31, 2006

Commission Meetings

Members of the Presidents' Joint Commission on LAUSD Governance took their oath in Los Angeles City Council Chambers on June 29, 2005 and held their first meeting two weeks later on July 13th. Los Angeles City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo, City Clerk Frank Martinez and City Councilmember Alex Padilla assigned key staff members to assist the Commission. The City also hired RAND Corporation to provide research and analysis for the Commission.

The strength and quality of the Commission appointees and the complement of staff allowed the Commission to cover tremendous ground in exploring a range of school district issues. In a series of 14 meetings the Commission studied district history and past reform efforts, school finance, student achievement, drop-out rates, educational equity, parental and community engagement, school safety, accountability and existing governance models throughout the United States.

The Commissioners made a decision early on not to break into committees but rather conduct all of their meetings as a full commission. Each of the meetings ran approximately four hours and included presentations from education scholars, panels of local experts, school district officials, and discussions among Commissioners (a list of speakers who addressed the Commission is attached). Copies of the agendas and presentations can be found on the Commission website at www.lacity.org/council/commission/lausd/.

Community Outreach Meetings

The Commission received public input by conducting community meetings in each of the 7 School Board members' districts. This process added both perspective and new ideas to the discussion while providing Commissioners the opportunity to hear directly from students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and community activists.

The RAND Working Paper

The Commission instructed RAND staff to compile the information that had been presented to the Commission as well as the myriad ideas, concepts and models that had been discussed and produce a document analyzing each of the many options available to the Commission. In December 2005 the Rand Working Paper was delivered to the Commissioners and released to the public. A copy of the working paper is attached.

The Legal Analysis

The Commission requested that the Los Angeles City Attorney's office prepare a comprehensive legal analysis of the many options examined in the RAND Working Paper including relevant sections of federal and state law and the Los Angeles City Charter that would need to be amended to effect change. In January, the LA City Attorney's office presented its analysis. The presentation is attached.

Proposals from Individual Commissioners

To clarify and focus the Commission's work the Commissioners decided to present their individual ideas at a standing meeting held January 26, 2006. During that meeting a variety of proposals were presented. These proposals are presented in an attached matrix. The proposed options fall under the following 7 broad categories.

1. School Board changes, including size, role, functioning, compensation, and selection methods
2. District Decentralization
3. Los Angeles Mayoral involvement
4. Mayoral involvement for Mayors of cities outside of Los Angeles
5. Formal collaborations between the cities and the school district
6. Alternative funding mechanisms
7. School and student safety changes

Commissioners will be considering mechanisms for making governance changes, including changes to the city charter and state law. Other facilitators of change under consideration include garnering additional state resources, developing new board policies and exploring terms of collective bargaining agreements.

Future Commission Benchmarks

- February - April – The Commission will focus on a second round of outreach meetings providing an opportunity for additional public input on the more specific options now before the Commission. RAND and the LA City Attorney’s office will also use this time to respond to Commissioners’ follow-up questions and requests for additional information.
- April and May – the Commission will deliberate and vote on specific recommendations for change.
- June – the Commission and staff will prepare and release a final report that will include the Commission’s official recommendations, thus completing the work of the Commission.

The Commission is proud of the progress it has made to this point and believes that its work has contributed greatly to the civic discussion on LAUSD governance by compiling the available research and analyzing the benefits and drawbacks of the many options. The Commission’s work to-date has resulted in perhaps the most comprehensive compendium of information about school governance available anywhere in America.

The Commission looks forward to the challenging months ahead as they hear more from the public, proceed with deliberations and consensus building, and release a report that will guide the discussion and lead to local and state action that will improve public education in the Los Angeles area.

Attachments:

- Summary of Governance Options Proposed by Individual Commissioners
- List of Speakers
- RAND Working Paper
- Report from Los Angeles City Attorney
- Los Angeles City Council Resolution creating the Commission