



Los Angeles Unified School District

Board of Education • Independent Analysis Unit

333 S. Beaudry Ave., Los Angeles, California 90278

The Charter of the Independent Analysis Unit

Approved: _____

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Los Angeles Unified School District (“LAUSD” or “District”) Independent Analysis Unit (“IAU”) is to inform and advise the Board of Education (“Board”) with objective and nonpartisan analyses regarding the District’s current, proposed, and potential policies, budgets, priorities, plans, practices, and initiatives.

The IAU is intended to help the Board develop long-term vision, establish priorities, and ensure that District budgets and initiatives are aligned with the Board’s priorities. Additionally, analysis of proposals prior to Board action is an important role of the IAU, to help the Board make better-informed, high-quality decisions. Both the Board and District staff may benefit from the IAU’s early engagement with District staff about forthcoming initiatives, whereby clarifications may be made prior to submission to the Board.

The IAU provides an independent viewpoint.

- The IAU reports directly to the Board. Candor and credibility are obtained by not having its work controlled by District staff, the Superintendent, or any individual Board member.
- The IAU is able to look at issues from a perspective bridging multiple disciplines and crossing District organizational boundaries.
- The IAU is able to examine deep policy issues, strategies, and long-term risks and opportunities more easily than operational staff bound to the annual decision cycle and immediate priorities.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

The IAU will conduct a variety of activities within the following categories:

a. Major Studies

Goal and Definition: Major studies are planned studies about defined topics. They typically involve a substantial commitment of time and resources, and may take from a few months to a year to complete. Examples of major studies include cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses, research studies on promising educational practices, impact evaluations of existing programs, and deep analyses of issues regarding the operations, policy, and organization of the District.

Allocation: It is intended that the majority of the IAU’s time and resources are spent on conducting major and, to a lesser extent, preliminary studies.

Semi-Annual Survey and Workplan: Each major study will be defined in the semi-annual work plan of the IAU, which will reflect the work to be undertaken in the following semester.

Survey: To identify projects for inclusion in the work plan, the IAU will design and distribute a survey to each Board Member prior to the October and March regular board meetings each year, soliciting ideas and gauging interest in various topics for major or preliminary studies. Each Board Member will complete the survey to identify all topics of interest and prioritization of those topics.

Each Board Member should also include any ideas that may not have been contemplated by the IAU in designing the survey. Board Members will submit completed surveys to the IAU Director prior to the November and April regular board meetings. Following receipt of completed surveys, the IAU Director shall use the input provided in the surveys, along with the IAU Director's independent judgment and knowledge of the status of pending projects, to create a semi-annual work plan that will be presented, amended if needed by a vote, and approved by a majority of the Board at the December and May regular board meetings. For the 2017-2018 school year only, the fall survey process will be expedited so that a semi-annual workplan may be developed during November and discussed and voted on at the December board meeting.

Workplan: In creating the work plan, the IAU Director should focus on areas of interest that are common to several board members, and seek to include requests from different Board Members with a diverse set of viewpoints. Any work that the IAU proposes to complete, with the exception of short-term questions or analysis of new board items as described below, should be included in the workplan. Major studies that require substantial District resources or staff time should be discussed with the Superintendent or designee prior to submission to the Board for approval. The work plan should focus on defining the scope, timeline and deliverables for major studies, but should also account for the significant amount of work to be completed on budget and finance research, and the more minimal amount of work to be conducted in analysis of pending board actions, short-term board questions, and ongoing analysis of issues and trends as described below.

Revisions to Work Plan: Changes may be made to the semi-annual work plan if: (1) the IAU completes major studies more quickly than anticipated; (2) changed circumstances render portions of the work plan inappropriate, unfeasible, or impossible; or (3) the Board determines that IAU resources should be invested differently than anticipated by the original work plan. Either the IAU Director or a Board Member may request, through the Executive Officer of the Board, that a potential change to the IAU work plan be placed on the agenda for a public board meeting. At least eleven days in advance of the meeting, the requesting Board Member or the IAU Director should provide a draft of the proposed changes to the work plan for discussion and a vote by the Board. If the Board votes in favor of changing the work plan, the new work plan shall replace the original work plan effective immediately upon the Board's vote. Mid-year revisions to the work plan, however, will not change the regularly scheduled survey and annual work plan process.

Reports: Major studies culminate in written reports (informatives) to the Board. Draft reports will be submitted to the Superintendent prior to submission to the Board so that District staff may make corrections or offer responses. The IAU should consider corrections and responses from the Superintendent, but the Superintendent may not direct the IAU to make changes to reports prior to submission to the Board. The Superintendent's comments and redlines will be presented to the Board along with the final IAU report.

b. Analysis of Pending Board Actions

Goal: To the extent feasible, the IAU will review proposed major programs, initiatives, plans, policies, budgets, and expenditures prior to Board actions. Given the short timelines on most board actions, these activities will be initiated by the Director of the IAU without prior Board approval.

Prioritization: The IAU Director should prioritize actions for review that will: (1) have a significant impact on the District's budget, (2) relate to any stated Board priorities, (3) relate to issues identified by several Board member as being of interest in the semi annual survey, or (4) relate to pending major or preliminary analyses.

Process: To facilitate the prompt review of pending board items, the Board President shall provide a draft meeting agenda to the IAU on the same day of the Board President's briefing. The Superintendent will provide information to the IAU regarding items that will be coming before the Board prior to information regarding those items being included in approved, final board informatives.

Additionally, certain items come before the board on an annual basis, and, if the IAU Director believes it is appropriate to prioritize such items for review, the IAU may begin analysis prior to that item being formally agendized. Such items might include, as examples, approval of the District's Local Control and Accountability Plan, approval of certain annual contracts, or certification of financial statements.

Presentation of Findings: Depending on the complexity of the proposed action and the priority placed upon it, this analysis of pending board actions may result in a written informative to the Board, a presentation to the Board, or the IAU Director being prepared to make an oral comment to the Board if asked. The IAU Director shall ensure that all Board Members are aware of which pending items have been or are being reviewed by the IAU prior to the relevant Board meeting.

Scale: Although review of pending board actions is an important function of the IAU, the IAU should maintain its forward thinking and proactive research role and continue to focus the majority of its time and resources on preliminary and major studies to inform future board action, and on the budget as described below.

c. Ongoing Review of the Budget and Budgeting Process

Goal: The IAU will review the District's budget, financial status and statements, and budgeting and finance processes as they develop, and will report in writing, at least quarterly, to the Board. The budget cycle is ongoing with several key decision points, so this activity will result in multiple reports rather than being formalized as a single annual report. This activity is intended to complement the work of District budget staff from an independent perspective, and not detract from the responsibilities of District staff.

Presentation of Findings: As with major studies, draft reports on the budget will be submitted to the Superintendent prior to submission to the Board so that District staff may suggest corrections or offer responses, which may then be considered for incorporation into the reports by the IAU. The Superintendent's commends and redlines will be presented to the Board along with the IAU's presentation.

Collaboration with District Staff: Because of the complexity and detail involved in budgeting and the strict timeline for budget submission and approval, year-round two-way communication between the IAU and District staff is needed to enable accurate, timely, high-quality analysis. This mutual feedback cycle can contribute analytical value, synergy, and clarity about Board concerns to the budget formulation process prior to final submission to the Board for approval, as well as helping to keep the Board informed about proposed budgets and related issues.

d. Answering Short-Term Board Member Questions

Goal: Board members or committees may raise questions from time to time that the IAU may be well positioned to answer within three to four business days. Such short-term questions referred to the IAU will be addressed with a brief (1-2 page) memo or email from the IAU, which might answer the question, discuss limitations in its answerability within a short time frame, or propose adding the question to the IAU's work plan for the following semester.

Process: Questions from individual Board members may be (1) accepted at the discretion of the Director of the IAU, (2) referred back to the board member for further clarification of the question, (3) with permission of the requesting board member, referred to the Superintendent or appropriate staff Division for a response, or (4) if the question does not lend itself to a short-term response, included on the list of possible items for inclusion in the next work plan as a major study. Any response to a short-term question should be sent to all Board Members so that they may equally gain the benefit of the IAU's analysis.

e. Ongoing Analysis of Issues and Trends

Goal: The IAU may review developments, issues, trends, published research, and practices in matters relevant to the Board. This includes the analysis of long-term risks and opportunities that the IAU considers valuable to bring to the Board's attention by inclusion as potential major studies in its proposed semesterly work plan, and can include conducting preliminary or exploratory studies to help determine need, define research questions, identify data sources, and budget the costs and time for a major study. Preliminary studies typically do not result in written reports to the Board, although an oral or written report to the Board or a proposal for a major study may be appropriate. This activity, however, should not detract from the IAU's capacity to complete the studies defined in the semi annual work plan.

f. Maintaining a Research and Analysis Library

Goal: Research questions arise within a context of previous research, and many of the questions asked by the Board may have already been studied by the IAU or other entities. The IAU will provide Board members and staff with electronic access to an intuitively organized or searchable library of previous studies by the IAU, other District units such as the Program Evaluation and Research Branch, and consultants working for the District. In addition, this library may contain copies of or links to (depending on access rights) relevant research published outside of the District's purview.

3. STAFFING, BUDGET, AND OTHER RESOURCES

The Director of the IAU will be selected by a panel of three Board Members selected by the Board President, and must be approved by a majority vote of the Board of Education. Other IAU staff will be selected by the Director of the IAU and approved by a majority of the Board. The Superintendent and District staff have no authority over the staffing of the IAU. All staff of the IAU will be employed and serve at the pleasure of the Board under the provisions of the California Education Code, Section 45112.

The budget of the IAU will be established by the Board each fiscal year, with consideration of the recommendation of the Director of the IAU and the Executive Officer of the Board, and in light of the purposes of the IAU and the District's fiscal condition. The budget of the IAU may be modified by the Board during the year as conditions warrant. The Superintendent and District staff have no authority over the budget of the IAU. Subject to the budget of the IAU, the Director of the IAU has the same authority to make purchases, approve contracts, and access District administrative, office, and IT resources as other Branch Directors within the District.

4. RELATIONSHIP TO THE BOARD

Goal: The IAU is authorized by the Board of Education to carry out its purposes within the guidelines set by this Charter, subject to revision by the Board. The IAU's goals and priorities will be determined by this

Charter and the process described above to create the semi-annual work plan, which must be approved by the Board.

Update Process: The IAU will provide a quarterly update to the Committee of the Whole describing the activities of the IAU, and projected work for the next quarter. Any Board Member may ask that a discussion of the work plan be placed on the agenda at a Board or Committee of the Whole meeting.

Presentation of Findings: The IAU will address any written reports to all Board members, and may be asked to make oral presentations to the Board or to any Board committee. Written reports of the IAU will be public information except as prohibited by law.

Roles and Responsibilities: The IAU serves as staff to the entire Board. The Unit will not replace the role of the staff of individual Board members, but may collaborate with the staff of individual Board members to stimulate thinking, create synergy, avoid duplication of effort, and be more efficient and effective. On administrative matters, the IAU will report to the Executive Officer of the Board.

Briefings: The IAU will receive notice of briefings provided by District staff to Board members and/or Board member staff, and will be allowed to participate in such meetings in the same capacity as other Board staff. The IAU should be prepared to comment on the initiatives of the Superintendent, major expenditures, and changes to policy and organization upon submission to the Board, as described above.

Evaluation: The Board will evaluate the IAU Director annually. The Director's evaluation will include, among other things, a review of the number, types, and depth of studies completed within the review time frame, timeliness of responses to Board members and, and working relationships with staff. Additionally, the IAU will be responsible for annually evaluating each of his staff members and presenting those evaluations to the Board for review.

5. Relationship to the Superintendent and District Staff

Goal: The Board expects and encourages the IAU to serve as an independent voice without censorship by District management. There may not always be agreement between the IAU and District management regarding the IAU's priorities, analyses, or recommendations. Nevertheless, to the extent possible without undermining the IAU's independence, the Board expects the IAU and District management to develop and maintain a constructive working relationship that furthers the goals of the Board. The IAU and District management may meet regularly to discuss outstanding analyses, and share information and ideas. The IAU does not supersede any of the reporting responsibilities of the Superintendent or District staff to the Board, and does not have any authority to direct the activities of the Superintendent or District staff. Likewise, the Superintendent and District staff do not have any authority to direct the activities of the IAU.

Access to District information: The work of the IAU depends on access to District staff and data. Within the constraints of appropriate laws, rules, and procedures, the IAU will have full access to District data and will be allowed to meet with District staff to discuss relevant issues. District staff will provide the IAU with all appropriate budget supportive components and documents as they become available. District data available to the IAU will include all District records, files, reports, and information received or maintained by the District. Reports submitted to the District by external agencies, contractors, or consultants will be available for review by IAU staff, subject to limitations arising from confidentiality or privilege. Questions of confidentiality or privilege regarding any information requested will be reviewed by the General Counsel.

Briefings: The IAU will receive notice of senior staff meetings where policies, presentations, or budget priorities relevant to the IAU work plan are expected to be discussed, and IAU staff members will be allowed to attend such meetings in an observing role except when confidential or preliminary matters are

to be discussed. Likewise, IAU staff members will be allowed to attend District staff briefings of Board members or Board member staff..

Costs of District Resources: It is anticipated and expected that IAU studies may require some investment of time by District staff to coordinate and provide information. If a proposed IAU project will involve substantial District staff time or other resources outside of the IAU budget, the Director of the IAU will consult with the Superintendent or designee prior to submission of the proposed project or work plan to the Board to propose a cost-effective scope of work that facilitates analysis of the Board's priorities using an appropriate amount of District staff time and resources. The Superintendent may provide the Board with legal, fiscal, and organizational impact statements regarding the IAU work plan or proposed projects. The Board will consider that organizational impact statement when determining whether to approve or amend the project or work plan.

Staff of the IAU will often meet informally with District staff to discuss relevant issues. If desired by District staff, requests by the IAU for such meetings may be referred to the Superintendent or designee for approval in consultation with the Director of the IAU.

Presentation of Findings: Reports and other work products of the IAU provided in writing to the Board will also be provided to the Superintendent. Material scheduled to be presented by the IAU to Board or committee meetings will be provided in advance if possible to the Superintendent and appropriate District executive staff so that a response may be prepared if desired.

Relationship to the Office of the Inspector General: The IAU differs from the Office of the Inspector General in that the IAU does not conduct audits, investigate cases or complaints, or engage in the accountability of persons as opposed to the evaluation of programs and policies. If it is unclear which office should be responsible for an issue, the Director of the IAU will consult with the Inspector General to ensure appropriate assignment of responsibility and avoid duplication of effort.

Relationship to the Office of the General Counsel: The IAU is not qualified to offer legal opinions, and will consult with the Office of the General Counsel whenever an analysis it is proposing or conducting appears to have legal implications. This explicitly includes any analysis that has collective bargaining implications.

6. RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM EVALUATION

The role and budget of the IAU do not include performing comprehensive evaluations of program implementation. Although the District's Research and Evaluation Branch is currently inactive, program evaluation should be an important function of the District that may be carried out internally or by contractors. However, the IAU work plan will include projects to evaluate the impact and/or effectiveness of specific programs of interest to the Board. The IAU may coordinate with the Office of Data and Accountability or other District organizations conducting program evaluations to avoid duplication of effort, create synergy, and to be more efficient and effective.