

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE
Los Angeles Unified School District

INFORMATIVE

TO: Members, Board of Education

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FROM: Randy Ross
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SUBJECT: Analysis of Board Motions 1996 to 2006¹

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Introduction and Overview

This is the second report on findings from the Educational Policy Unit’s analysis of motions and resolutions made by the Board between 1996 and June 2006. Based on our analysis of 623 motions considered by the board during this period, we recommend that, in general, board motions/resolutions include the following key elements: (1) problem statement; (2) provision for follow-up; (3) implementation timeline; (4) specification of who is responsible for implementing the resolution; and (5) specification of resource requirements and a strategy for funding the resolution.

The “Board Motions” data base developed pursuant to this analysis can facilitate Board members’ efforts to develop future motions. To that end, upon request the Educational Policy Unit will make the data base available to you and your key staff.

¹ The principal author of this report is Richard Bowman, based on analyses he conducted for the Educational Policy Unit in summer 2006.

Types of Board Motions

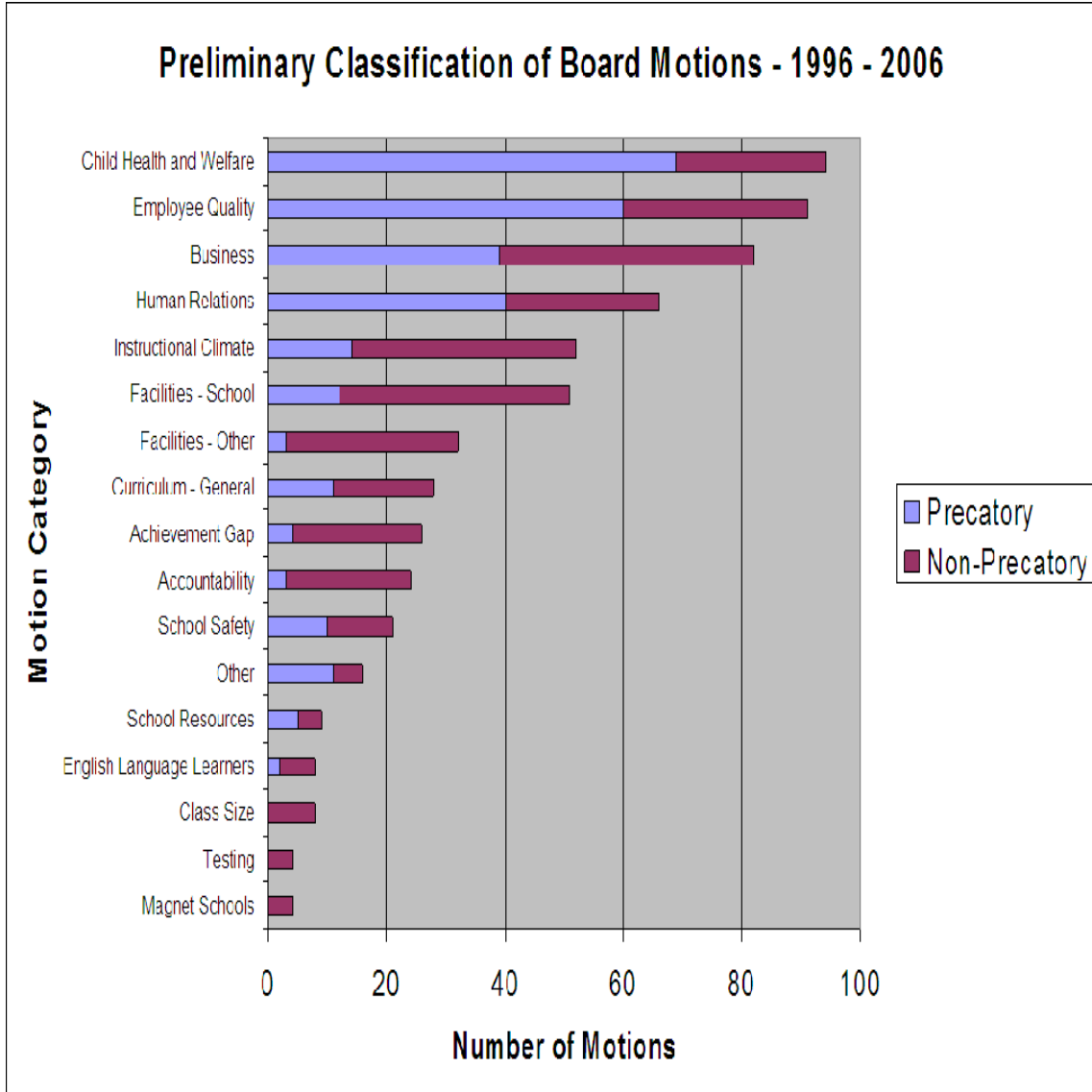
To facilitate this study of Board motions/resolutions, we created a data base with all motions from January 1996 until June 2006, containing the following elements: Subject, Date, How many votes in favor, Presented by, Seconded by, Action Taken, and Full Text. Information for the data base was extracted from files maintained by the Board Secretariat.

For one part of the analysis, we categorized each motion into the following categories: Magnet Schools, Facilities- Other, Facilities – School, Child Health and Welfare, Curriculum – General, School Resources, Employee Quality, English Language Learners, School Safety, Class Size, Business, Human Relations, Charter Schools, Instructional Climate, Achievement Gap, Accountability, Testing, and Other. These categories were chosen because they were representative of the various areas in which the Board has made motions.

Based on our classification of motions, the chart below shows the frequency of motions by type. Over 600 motions were considered by the Board during this 10.5 year period, for an average of nearly 60 motions per year. However, nearly half (46 percent) of these motions were precatory (generally expressing the Board’s position or support for an event, movement or piece of legislation, requiring nominal or no LAUSD resources or action to implement).

The largest proportion of motions related to “child health and welfare” and “employee quality.” However, the vast majority of these motions were precatory. Motions regarding school facilities and “instructional climate” were advanced with significant regularity over the decade. On the other hand, motions regarding the achievement gap (including English Learners), accountability and testing, and school

safety were less frequent over the period. Note, however, that motion counts do not necessarily reflect the overall importance of the targeted issue to the Board.



The Elements of Board Motions

In addition, we analyzed each motion to determine whether it contained the following elements that generally accompany well-developed policies: Problem

Statement, Person Responsible, Follow-up, Timeline, and Resources Allocated. For each of these elements, we answered the following questions:

Problem Statement: Does the motion include a statement of the problem or concern that the motion is intended to address?

Person Responsible: Does the motion specify a person(s) responsible for implementing the motion?

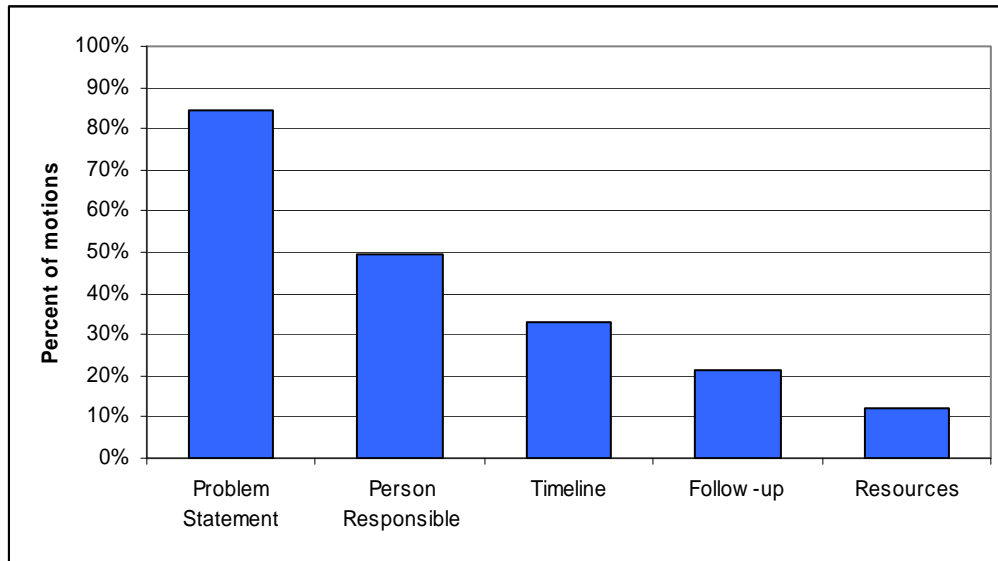
Follow-up: Does the motion include a requirement to report back to the board or some other form of follow-up?

Timeline: Does the motion include a specific time period in which a report and/or results are expected?

Resources Allocated: Does the motion specify an amount of money, number of FTEs, and the source of funds to support the motion?

Chart 2 below shows that most (85%) of the motions studied contained a problem statement. Problem statements are usually prefaced with “Whereas” and contained in the beginning section of the motion. However, some motions included a problem statement in their resolves.

Chart 2: Elements of Board Motions/Resolutions



A small proportion (21%) of motions contained language indicating that some level of follow-up was requested. However, some motions do not require explicit follow-up-- for example, a declaratory motion, or a motion appointing a person to a committee.

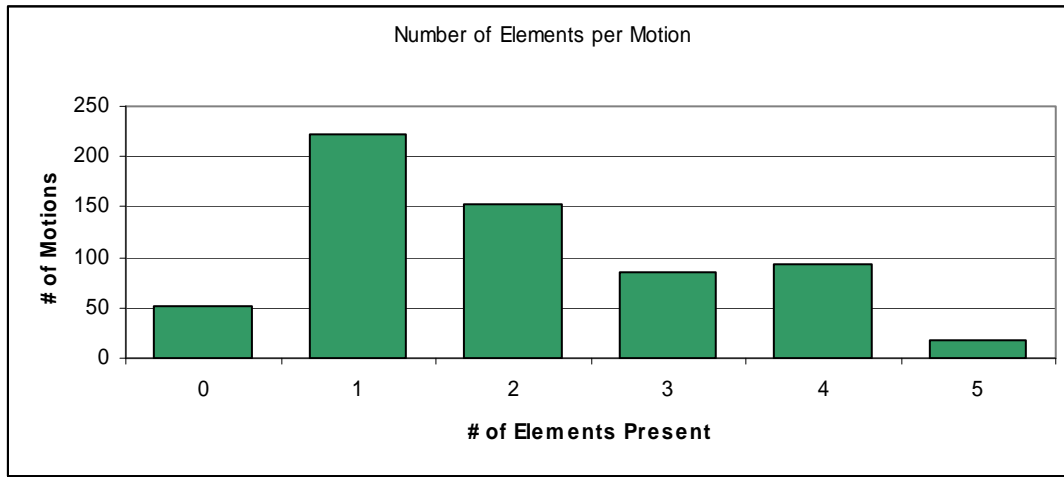
Roughly one-third (33%) of the motions contained a specific time period in which to produce the report or outcome.

About half (49%) of all the motions specified a person or group responsible for implementing the motion.

A little more than a tenth (12%) of the motions contained a section indicating the amount or source of resources to be used to implement the motion. A recently passed board resolution requiring that motions/resolutions be accompanied by analyses of their financial implications will help to boost this percentage for future motions.

Chart 3 shows that the most likely number of elements to be present in a motion was one, but on the average motions included two of the five elements.

Chart 3: Number of Key Elements Present in Board Motions/Resolutions



Of all of the motions we studied, the eighteen listed below contained all five elements.

Subject	Date of Action
Continuous Enrollment Calendar for Pregnant Minors Schools and Continuation Schools	06-May-96
Rebuilding LAUSD School Libraries	06-Oct-97
Delegate Authority to Year 2000 Steering Committee to Enter into Contracts in Amounts Above \$50,000 But Not to Exceed \$500,000 not to exceed an aggregate of \$5 million.	01-Dec-97
Safe Haven Project Student Safety Survey	22-Feb-00
Preserving Funding for District Priorities	13-Feb-01
Motion to Improve Management and Oversight of Professional Services Contracts	24-Sep-02
Early Childhood Education	08-Oct-02
Resolution to Create a Facilities Master Plan for Adult and Career Education Facilities	26-Aug-03
Budget Reductions -SB X1 18	26-Aug-03
Cafeteria Clerks	23-Sep-03
District Student Attendance Policy	13-Jul-04
Targeted Instructional Improvement Grant Funding	12-Oct-04
Resolution to Support the Transformation of Los Angeles Unified School District Schools by Integrating the Six Tenets of High Performing Schools into Educational Reform in Los Angeles	11-Apr-05
Program Improvement/Achievement Gap Reform	11-Apr-05
Resolution to Create Educational Equity in Los Angeles Through the Implementation of the A-G Course Sequence as Part of the High School Graduation Requirements	14-Jun-05
Providing Basic Resources to Improve Achievement and Eliminate the Achievement Gap Among the Four Lowest Performing Groups of Standard English Learners	12-Jul-05
Support District's Ethics Office	13-Dec-05
"Access for All" Resolution Concerning the District's Homeless Children	24-Jan-06

Of these eighteen, we chose three to illustrate the key elements of motions. These were:

Subject	Date of Action
District Student Attendance Policy	13-Jul-04
Resolution to Create Educational Equity in Los Angeles Through the Implementation of the A-G Course Sequence as Part of the High School Graduation Requirements	14-Jun-05
Providing Basic Resources to Improve Achievement and Eliminate the Achievement Gap Among the Four Lowest Performing Groups of Standard English Learners	12-Jul-05

The “**District Student Attendance Policy**” motion directs the Superintendent to develop and implement a district-wide attendance policy that includes incentives for schools to increase their attendance rates. To this end, it includes a problem statement, specifies who’s responsible for implementing the resolves, directs the superintendent to

give money to the schools, and stipulates that a quarterly report should be submitted to the Board.

The “**Resolution to Create Educational Equity in Los Angeles Through the Implementation of the A-G Course Sequence as Part of the High School Graduation Requirements**” stipulates that within ten years, all students must take college preparatory coursework (or obtain a waiver) to graduate from high school. To this end, it contains a problem statement referring to the “Achievement Gap” in the numbers of students that complete a college course sequence. To address the disparity in student access to a college preparatory curriculum, the motion delineates several graduated action steps. These steps range from allowing any student who wishes to take college preparatory classes to take them to requiring all students to take them to graduate. It also includes a more rigorous “Career and Technical Education” sequence as an option for students and parents who do not wish to take the college preparatory track. To these ends, the resolution includes a requirement for funding to implement this policy, and suggests that additional resources may be available through legislation. Finally, it sets forth a detailed schedule of report deadlines for the Superintendent to follow.

The “**Providing Basic Resources to Improve Achievement and Eliminate the Achievement Gap Among the Four Lowest Performing Groups of Standard English Learners**” motion directs the Superintendent to provide additional funding and professional development to school sites, local districts, and central office units for the implementation of the “Action Plan for a Culturally Relevant Education that Benefits African American Students and All Other Students,” which was adopted four years prior.

To this end, it includes a problem statement, specifies detailed resources, specifies who's responsible for implementation, and requires a semiannual status report.

Limitations

Because these findings may have implications for how board motions are constructed, it is essential that we describe the limitations of our analysis. First, while defining the critical elements of the motions and determining their presence, occasionally it was unclear whether and to what extent an element was present. For example, in determining whether there was a person responsible, it is often assumed that the Superintendent or staff is responsible. For our purposes, unless it was stated explicitly, we did not include it as an element present, although an implicit understanding may have existed. As a second example, few motions indicated an amount of money required or requested. But many motions asked for the Superintendent to come back with a plan to implement the motion, which included resources for implementation. If resources were not stated explicitly, we did not assume they existed. Also note that many motions did not explicitly include a timeline for implementation. However, it seemed implicit in many motions that immediate action was requested. However, for this study, unless the timeline was stated explicitly, we did not include a timeline as an element. In addition, some motions had more than one timeframe specified. In that case, we indicated the shortest timeframe.

A second limitation concerns the goal of having all motions contain certain elements. Depending on the type of motion, some elements are neither desired nor required. In particular, various declaratory motions do not require resources, a person responsible, nor follow-up.

Recommendations

Mindful of these caveats, we recommend that:

1. All motions should contain a problem statement.
2. Non-declaratory motions should contain a follow-up component.
3. Non-declaratory motions should contain a timeline for implementation of the desired action.
4. All motions should assign implementation responsibility to a specific person or unit.
5. As applicable, motions should specify resource requirements and strategies for obtaining those resources.

Next Steps

The data base we have developed could prove useful to you and your staffs for researching board motions for the period covered (1999 through June 2006) and developing new motions. Thus, if you or your staffs are interesting in gaining access to the data base, we can make this happen immediately. Moreover, we would be willing to provide a tutorial to you and/or your staff on how to efficiently navigate the data base.

Moreover, as indicated in our earlier report on the status of this study, we are currently conducting case studies of resolutions covering a few broad areas of educational policy: (1) magnet schools and (2) curriculum content and support. These initial case studies will provide us with models for studying other key board resolutions. In this manner, the Educational Policy Unit will gradually develop a body of knowledge that provides numerous benefits to the Board, including:

- (1) Improved understanding of the interconnections among Board-developed educational policies over time.
- (2) Improved understanding of the extent to which Board resolutions have been implemented.
- (3) Background information for developing future educational policy.

Anticipated long-term benefits include:

- (1) Improved coherence of LAUSD educational policy.
- (2) Better targeted and more effective educational policies.
- (3) Improved monitoring of the District's implementation of the Board's motions/resolutions.

cc: R. Romer, V. Ekchian, R. Collins, R. Ephraim, D. Isaacs, D. Jaque-Anton, J. Crain, M. Medina, J. Thornton