

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE
LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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From: Randy Ross

Subject: INFORMATIVE: CAHSEE and Teacher Dynamics in LAUSD High Schools

In his second inaugural address on Monday, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell said "I'm proud ... of authoring the (California High School Exit Exam – CAHSEE). It has truly helped students succeed, and it has restored meaning to a California high school diploma." While the impact of CAHSEE on student success remains to be definitively evaluated, what is clear is that CAHSEE has had both positive and negative effects on the operations of school districts, including LAUSD. Positively, districts and schools have begun to focus more keenly on the needs of individual students (especially students who fail to pass the English Language Arts and/or math portions of CAHSEE). Negatively, heavy intervention for students not passing CAHSEE has caused some disruption in the core educational program of high schools.

Mindful that the January 11, 2006 meeting of the Committee of the Whole will focus on CAHSEE, this Informative (also attached as

an MS Word document) presents a summary of a data analysis we conducted that shows that *school performance on CAHSEE varies directly with the proportion of fully tenured teachers*. Indeed, the results suggest that increasing the number of tenured (i.e., Permanent/Continuing) teachers by **10 percent** would increase the number of students passing CAHSEE by **5 percent (i.e., 2-for-1)**.

A key implication is that improvements in teacher recruitment, development, and retention are critical to students' performance on CAHSEE and to the attenuation of the need for heavy intervention. The recommendations enumerated at the end of this informative flow from this premise.

Introduction

The high school Class of 2006 was the first to feel the full pinch of CAHSEE. For them, failure to pass either the ELA or math component of CAHSEE generally meant they would not get a high school diploma. For several years, school districts, schools, parents, and students have watched, acted, and perhaps pondered the meaning of this eventuality.

In capsule, most students passed CAHSEE but many did not. The specter of failure (non-high school graduation) generated angst in parents and students and thereby precipitated intensive intervention to prepare non-passing students to retake CAHSEE (and, if necessary, retake it again and again) and thereby maximize CAHSEE pass rates.

Most of the discussion and emphasis to date has focused on what to do once students do not pass CAHSEE (intervention). Less emphasis has been placed on "prevention" --actions to maximize CAHSEE pass rates before the application of intervention strategies.

Using data we have gathered pursuant to our profiling of LAUSD schools for the Educational Equity Committee as well as the Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Equity Committee, this report explores the role of “prevention” through improved teacher dynamics (recruitment, development, and retention) in District high schools.

Analysis

Educational research over the past decade or more has revealed that teachers are a more critical determinant of students’ educational outcomes than heretofore understood.

Indeed, it is commonly perceived that reforms to close the achievement (or proficiency) gap that fail to adequately address the issue of “teacher dynamics” are doomed to fail.

Guided by this insight, the Educational Policy Unit began compiling information that would help us to understand the implication of teacher dynamics for LAUSD schools. Our profiling of several schools Local Districts 3 and 7 revealed high levels of teacher mobility that patently played havoc with the educational programs of many of these schools. For example, a few years ago half the teachers at Audubon Middle School departed the school. Around the same time, nearly 70 teachers exited Fremont High School in South Los Angeles.

The teacher attrition rate at Jordan High School was equally sobering:

Over the last four years, Jordan lost over 104 teachers

About ½ of these teachers left Jordan after only 1 year

About ¾ of these teachers no longer work for LAUSD.

Only 7 percent of Jordan’s 44 new teachers for 2005-06 were fully tenured (Continuing/ Permanent)

The bar chart below shows the distribution of LAUSD senior high

schools by the percent of continuing/permanent teachers in 2005-06. Typically, 70 percent of a high school's teachers are continuing/permanent (i.e., tenured). The following three LAUSD high schools have the lowest percent of continuing/permanent teachers: Jordan, Locke, and Fremont—each with less than 50 percent of teachers being permanent/continuing. The three high schools with the highest percent of permanent/continuing teachers are magnet schools – Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies (LACES), Bravo Medical Magnet, and Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies (SOCES).

Chart Missing

Source: Based on data from LAUSD's Decision Support System

The graph below shows that there exists a strong positive correlation between CAHSEE pass rates (cumulative for Class of 2006 through April 2006) and the percent of teachers who are permanent/continuing.

Chart Missing

Source: Based on data from LAUSD's Decision Support System

In an effort to evaluate the effect of teacher dynamics on CAHSEE, we conducted a statistical (regression) analysis of the relationship between CAHSEE pass rates for high schools and the percent of students who are permanent/continuing. Specifically, using high schools as the unit of analysis, we regressed "Percent of Class of 2006 Passing both parts of CAHSEE" on "% teachers that are continuing/permanent," controlling for differences among these schools on the following factors: (1) school type, i.e., whether school was a magnet (by virtue of selection effects, students in magnets do better on CAHSEE); (2) degree of poverty near school

based on 2000 Census (high poverty communities possess less educational capital); (3) attendance rates (both students and teachers thrive when students show up for instruction); and (4) student mobility (the more families move from place to place, the greater the inconsistency in their children's education, and hence the lower their expected performance).

After statistically taking into account the influence of poverty, student mobility, student attendance, and school type, the relationship between CAHSEE passage and the percentage of continuing/permanent teachers remained strong. Indeed, the results suggest that increasing the number of permanent/continuing (tenured) Teachers by **10 percent** would increase the number of students passing CAHSEE by an estimated **5 percent** (i.e., **2-for-1**).^[1]

Recommendations

Given the critical link between teachers and student achievement – including CAHSEE – we offer several recommendations for the Board's consideration.

The District should provide schools that experience high teacher mobility with extra teachers at the beginning of the school year. Providing priority staffing schools with five generic substitute teachers helps move us in this direction. Even better, schools faced with high teacher attrition rates could benefit from having extra permanent teachers in shortage fields such as math.

The District should provide teachers strong organizational and financial incentives to work (or continue working) in hard-to-staff (priority staffing) schools. One example regards incentives for National Board Certified teachers to teach in the lowest achieving schools. Another idea would be to establish a District policy stipulating that a higher priority for promotion will be accorded

individuals who have demonstrated sustained success in working in low-achieving schools.

The District should intensify teacher and administrator recruitment and selection support to hard-to-staff schools. While extant state and federal initiatives supporting this goal contribute to this object, they appear insufficient to meet the needs of schools saddled with very high attrition rates.^[ii]

The District should insure that the design and implementation of all educational policies (e.g., A – G) are aligned with teacher supply and demand considerations.

The District should avoid policies that exacerbate inequities in the distribution of teachers.

The resurrected Priority Staffing Program (PSP) is an important tool for promoting the recruitment, development, and retention of effective teachers in hard-to-staff high schools.^[iii] In conjunction with PSP, more needs to be done to improve low-performing schools' core educational programs and thereby reduce the need for, and attenuate the organizational disruptiveness of, heavy CAHSEE intervention. We believe these recommendations would help to promote this positive outcome.

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[\[i\]](#) Linear Regression Model: (% Class of 2005-06 Passed CAHSEE) = 17 + 0.5 (% Continuing/Permanent Teachers 05-06) – 10.7 (% Poverty in Community) + 0.45 (% Student Attendance 04-05) - .15 (Student Transiency Rate 2004-05) + 1.3 (Special School – Magnet)

95% Confidence intervals for regression coefficients:

(% Continuing/Permanent Teachers 05-06) = (0.3 to 0.7)

(% Poverty in Community) = (-26.0 to – 4.6)

(% Student Attendance 04-05) = (-0.2 to 1.1)

(Student Transiency Rate 2004-05) = (-0.29 to -0.01)

(Special School – Magnet) = (-4.1 to 6.8)

Note: Data were missing for two LAUSD schools which are now converted charter high schools: Pacific Palisades and Granada Hills.

[\[ii\]](#) For example, the Governor’s Recruiting and Retaining Highly Qualified Teachers and Principals proposal was designed to address the challenges facing inner-city schools. Funds (\$50 per student) could be used for: student loan forgiveness for teachers and principals; targeted improvement in school environments; differential pay for teachers and principals in hard-to-staff subjects or schools; signing bonuses, recognition pay, recruitment and training; professional development, housing incentives, including relocation costs and mortgage assistance, among others.

[\[iii\]](#) While this discussion of teacher dynamics focused on high schools, the same line of reasoning applies to middle and elementary schools. Indeed, improved teacher dynamics promotes improved results on all results-oriented measures (including CST, CAT-6, CELDT, API, AYP, as well as CAHSEE).