

## INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

### Los Angeles Unified School District

**INFORMATIVE**

**TO:** Members, Board of Education                      **DATE:** November 21, 2007

**FROM:** Randy Ross, Director of Educational Policy

**CC:** D. Brewer, D. Davis, J. Crain, M. Medina, J. Thornton

**SUBJECT: Resolution to Reverse Renorming and Restore School Site QEIA Funds**

If adopted, this resolution would: (1) retract the District's plan to initiate renorming at secondary schools beginning the current school year, (2) limit the share of SB1133 (Quality Education Investment Act of 2006 or QEIA) dollars reserved for central administration to 3 percent, and (3) provide additional training for School Site Councils (SSCs) (see Appendix for Resolves).

The logic underlying this resolution is that schools would have a better chance of improving student achievement if: (1) the teaching staff at secondary schools is stabilized; (2) School Site Councils at SB1133 schools are effectively engaged in planning and monitoring for improving student achievement (Single Plans for Student Achievement); and (3) the share of QEIA resources allocated directly to schools is maximized. Accordingly, the resolution's four resolves support this logic.

Below I reflect on the policy implications of a few key features of the resolution.

Staffing stability is a major issue at several of the District's low-performing secondary schools, especially those in Local District 7. According to Human Resources reports, teacher vacancies have been declining, and where there are vacancies, teachers are available to fill them. Yet, some schools seem saddled with ongoing staffing challenges. Part of the challenge seems to be that these schools suffer extraordinarily high attrition rates (which we have documented in the Educational Policy Unit's School Profiles). The Priority Staffing Program was reinstated last year to help address the retention challenge.<sup>1</sup> However, to the extent that these schools would be subject to mid-year renorming, their ability to retain teachers would be dampened. Moreover, in response to a policy of mid-year renorming, the threat of mid-year job displacement would incline prospective new teachers toward avoiding schools that have a history of precipitous mid-year enrollment drops.

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<sup>1</sup> PERB expects to complete its Year 1 evaluation of the Priority Staffing Program by the end of this calendar year.

Resolution to Reverse Renorming and Restore School Site QEIA Funds

On paper, a school’s School Site Council plays a critical role in school governance. Specifically, an SSC develops a Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) for Consolidated Application Programs (which now encompasses QEIA) operated at the school, monitors the plan’s implementation, and evaluates its outcomes. The table below shows that QEIA funds can account for a hefty share of a school’s SPSA resources. SSC training is an ongoing function coordinated by the Specially Funded Programs Division. Including QEIA in this training should have already happened.

Table 1: School Resources - Single Plan for Student Achievement

<b>2007-08 Single Plan for Student Achievement Budget</b>	<b>Feeder Pattern A</b>			<b>Feeder Pattern B</b>		
	<b>Elem A</b>	<b>Middle A</b>	<b>High A</b>	<b>Elem B</b>	<b>Middle B</b>	<b>High B</b>
Title I	46%	35%	28%	52%	28%	30%
EIA-LEP	35%	14%	13%	32%	10%	6%
EIA-SCE	11%	6%	5%	11%	7%	5%
School and Library Improvement Block Grant	7%	4%	7%	5%	7%	9%
Title III	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Title IV	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
School Assistance Intervention Teams	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA)</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>50%</b>
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Budget	\$496,737	\$3,225,675	\$6,014,821	\$669,231	\$1,798,306	\$3,432,398
Total Per Student	\$770	\$1,321	\$1,279	\$651	\$1,120	\$1,304

Source: Educational Policy Unit, “Dissecting Student Performance in LAUSD’s Secondary Schools,” November 20, 2007 (prepared for cancelled Committee of the Whole)

## Resolution to Reverse Renorming and Restore School Site QEIA Funds

However, the adequacy of the scope and periodicity of training is an open question. It is notable that most QEIA schools will be forced to use virtually all QEIA resources to reduce the size of classes and to reduce student-counselor ratios. Thus, SSC planning at these schools will likely be circumscribed by compliance considerations. However, a small number of high schools (those lacking the capacity to implement the class size reduction provisions of QEIA) will enjoy broad discretion in how QEIA dollars are used (see Table 2). Here, SSCs' capacity to plan, monitor, and evaluate will prove critical.

Table 2: QEIA Alternative Schools

School
Bell Senior High
David Starr Jordan Senior High
Elizabeth Learning Center
Huntington Park Senior High
James A. Garfield Senior High
John C. Fremont Senior High
Manual Arts Senior High
Phineas Banning Senior High
Sylmar Senior High
Thomas Jefferson Senior High

Given that most QEIA schools will fall under the umbrella of the Superintendent's Strategic Plan for High Priority Schools, this initiative complicates the SSC landscape. What are the implications of this initiative for the development/revision of SPSAs? What effect will the initiative have on the role of SSCs?<sup>2</sup>

One partial indicator of the quality of an SSC's work is the quality of the SPSA. In this regard, I have repeatedly called for the District to place each school's SPSA on LAUSD.net. In the interest of transparency and parent/community engagement, this action would enable a school's entire community, not just members of the SSC, to review and monitor the SPSA. One objection to this straightforward idea has been that the overall quality of the SPSAs is "embarrassing." Yet, placing the SPSAs on the Internet would encourage schools to take SPSAs more seriously, that is, view them less as a government mandate and more as a tool for improving student achievement.

***Accordingly, I would propose adding a resolve that the Superintendent present a plan within 45 days for making all SPSAs available on LAUSD.net.***

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<sup>2</sup> My review assumes that in the resolve stipulating that "the...District...train School Site Councils to take a leadership role in implementing QEIA at each school...", the term "implementing" refers to the functions of planning, monitoring, and evaluation, but not plan implementation, per se. If the resolve's intent is to extend the role of the SSC to share responsibility for plan implementation with the school's principal and staff, then the training module would have to be expanded to cover this new territory.

## Resolution to Reverse Renorming and Restore School Site QEIA Funds

Finally, the "Whereas" section delineates or implies the key costs and consequences of implementing the resolution. For one, elimination of midyear renorming would require identification of funds for replacing the \$18 million of anticipated savings from mid-year renorming in 2007-08. Potentially, this could come from balances from 2006-07 (if available) or budget reductions elsewhere in the 2007-08 budget. Given the looming shortfall in state revenue next year, the retraction of mid-year renorming in 2008-09 would likely require a counterbalancing reduction elsewhere in that budget. Furthermore, it is not clear, a priori, what effect a 3 percent limit would have on non-school administrative functions. (Note: I assume that the 3 percent limit applies to all non-school administrative functions, both central and regional, but are separate and distinct from program support services provided by Local Districts and the central office.)

Resolution to Reverse Renorming and Restore School Site QEIA Funds

APPENDIX

**Resolution to Reverse Renorming and Restore School Site QEIA Funds:  
RESOLVES**

Resolved, That the Governing Board of the Los Angeles Unified School District instructs the Superintendent not to implement Mid-Year Renorming for Fiscal Year 2007-08;

Resolved further, That the Board instructs the Superintendent not to include Mid-Year Renorming in his Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2008-09;

Resolved further, That the Board instructs the Superintendent within 45 days to develop and recommend to the Board his operational plan for how the District will train School Site Councils to take a leadership role in implementing QEIA at each school site in this school year; and be it finally

Resolved, That in the 2008-09 Fiscal Year and all subsequent years the District will allocate no more than 3% of QEIA funds for central administrative functions, with 97% of QEIA funds to be allocated directly to the respective school sites.