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How can the state help strengthen the role of authorizers?

The State can help strengthen the role of authorizers by continuing the history of refining and clarifying the charter school laws to reflect and codify important trends that can support increased student achievement. Recently, as the Commission may be aware, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, released a report with its rankings of the strongest charter school laws in the Country. California ranked third by their accounts (Minnesota and the District of Columbia were first and second, respectively). The report recognized that “California has the nation’s second oldest charter law, but has continued to refine it to meet new challenges. It is a leader in providing facilities support to public charter schools (although challenges remain), and [includes] quality control components.”

We believe that a key tenet in the Charter Schools Act is the exchange between autonomy and accountability. To that end, the accountability requirements under Education Code Section 47607 set what many consider to be a low bar for renewal criteria. We recommend setting a higher bar to help ensure that operating Charter Schools are quality schools based on multiple rigorous and clear metrics. Organizations such as the California Charter Schools Association also have voiced a keen interest in strengthening accountability measures.

The role of authorizers could also be significantly strengthened by providing additional guidance to navigate the complicated and sometimes murky regulatory waters between public charter schools being treated as public entities versus California non-profit public benefit corporations. From conflict of interest laws to financial disclosure requirements to some State reporting requirements, it is at times confusing which laws apply to charters and which do not. Clarity on this issue would improve an authorizer’s ability to effectively oversee charter schools.

How can the state improve the authorizing process to ensure that schools are evaluated effectively, and that poor performers are shut down, if necessary?

In line with the public stance of the Obama Administration, we believe that quality schools should be fostered, and poorly-performing schools must be closed.

Candidly, we have recognized as the largest district authorizer of charter schools in the country that we need a better defined accountability methodology. This will assist LAUSD in having consistently accurate, intelligible, performance-based information about the schools we oversee. In doing so, we will also be able to provide useful information to all parents and students in Los Angeles. Developing sound accountability

measures, processes, and tools will significantly impact the quality of current and future charter schools by setting a high bar with incentives (i.e., expedited renewal process) and result in the closure of poorly-performing schools. Further, a mutual understanding of expectations among parties will help create efficiencies in oversight by allowing District staff and charter school administrators to focus on progress toward the agreed-upon metrics; provide a clear quality signal to new charter school developers and existing operators; and support the Board of Education in its decision-making process.

To improve the authorizing process state wide, I would encourage the state to foster a more collaborative environment between authorizers within the state through an authorizer forum or some other means to share effective authorizer practices throughout the state on an ongoing basis.

On a related note, we take very seriously our role as an authorizer, and believe that we have a critical responsibility to ensure quality schools. As mentioned previously, the state may also assist in establishing clear quality standards for all authorizers to facilitate improved calibration of authorizing practices.

Furthermore, since increasing student achievement is the fundamental goal of the Charter Schools Act, access to clear, accurate, and timely data is essential to sound assessment of charter school progress at a local, state, and even national level. We look forward to the full implementation of the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, or CALPADS, and would recommend ongoing support and resources to assist in the development and implementation of that system statewide.

How will the Public School Choice Resolution help replicate successful public school models in Los Angeles?

The Public School Choice Resolution has encouraged the system to act with a renewed sense of urgency to make sure all students receive a high quality public education. Underperformance or even the status quo is now concretely no longer an option for students in Los Angeles. The process has resulted in thousands of teachers, administrators, parents and community members sharing ideas, using data to identify programs that work for students and creating a sense of ownership in the resulting school programs. Further, I believe the Public School Choice Resolution demonstrates how increased healthy competition can help to stimulate improvements in student outcomes throughout the system.

The policy holds schools accountable and challenges all stakeholders—internal and external—to engage their communities in the process of turning around persistently underperforming schools. The Public School Choice Resolution will also encourage the sharing of effective ideas so that applicants can prepare the best plans to transform underperforming schools and, thus, bring positive transformation throughout the system for all students.

What challenges still need to be overcome as the district begins to implement the resolution?

Any new reform presents challenges, among the challenges that we need to overcome include:

- ensuring we continue to build trust among the community so that the best plans can be considered with limited political influence or pressure;
- adapting new ways of thinking and develop new systems that can meet the demands of the changes we seek to implement in order to be more responsive to schools and their communities;
- transforming the district from a management and compliance culture to a support and performance one will take time but is integral to truly embracing the concept of the resolution; and
- continuing to be a learning and more transparent organization. Therefore, we must remain committed to building upon the successes of this inaugural Public School Choice process as we continue annually with versions 2.0, 3.0, and beyond.

Could this resolution be replicated in other urban school districts in California and across the nation?

Absolutely and we stand ready to share what we have learned with any other district in the state or the nation just as we reached out to other districts as we embarked on this process ourselves.

President Obama for example has made very clear his desire that the traditional ways of educating children must be improved to ensure all students have access to a high quality education. Furthermore, he and Secretary Duncan have reiterated the focus on the bottom 1 percent of schools every year. The Public School Choice Resolution is the most proactive way in which the Los Angeles Unified School District is trying to realize that goal of the President and that promise to all students. The Race to the Top Funding opportunities will also incentivize many school districts to think anew about transforming public education with a fresh sense of urgency and creativity.

How does the LAUSD foster a collaborative relationship among charter and non-charter schools to ensure that all public schools benefit from the experience of successful charter schools?

LAUSD exists to serve all students in the Los Angeles area and we believe that all public schools, whether authorized by or directly run by the District, are part of that commitment. To effectively execute this commitment, collaboration is absolutely critical. The District is working to build more collaborative relationships among all schools to provide a wide range of schools and programs to meet the diverse educational needs and priorities of all students and families it has the privilege to serve. Charter

schools are valuable partners and viable choices among the District's robust set of educational options. Accordingly, the Board of Education views charter schools as an integral method of achieving its vision and mission. Following that guiding principle, we work to connect staff and stakeholders from charter schools, traditional schools, and the varying types of schools we have in our portfolio of options, so that may share ideas to improve student achievement.

For example, the Superintendent visits many schools and often follows up with staff to request that they take a team to visit and learn from an effective school and to exchange ideas. Furthermore, this March, we are having an inaugural best practices forum where all schools, including charter schools, will have the opportunity not only to attend but to participate as presenters to share their promising practices. Again, no one type of school model fits the needs of all parents and students and we firmly believe that there is much more we can learn from each other to continuously reflect upon and improve our practice. Finally, we have some successful co-locations where charter schools and traditional district schools are not only sharing physical space, but also professional development opportunities, after school programs, tutoring and/or Arts and Music programs.

What steps has the district taken, such as transparent budgeting, staff training and community engagement, to improve accountability?

In addition to what I have shared previously, I would like to note the promising role of a few additional steps the District has taken.

- School Report Cards: The District has developed a system-wide school report card that identifies and shares the results of various metrics for every district school. Starting next year, every charter school authorized by the District will also have a report card produced by the District. Attached is an example.
- Community Engagement: The school report card is the most recent example of significant community engagement. The most recent version of the report card involved input from important partners such as The United Way of Greater Los Angeles, the California Community Foundation, the LAUSD Parent Community Services Branch, Communities for Educational Equity. We also worked with representatives from schools, including teachers, administrators, families, and parent leadership organizations such as the LAUSD Parent Steering Committee and the Parent Collaborative.
- Per Pupil Funding: Per Pupil Funding or PPF is being piloted at a small group of schools this year and rolling out to all traditional schools next year and beyond. School-based councils now have a much larger role in deciding how resources are allocated on the school site so the decision between having an extra grounds worker can be balanced with the need for a library aide by those stakeholders closest to the need and most responsible for the student outcomes. This new sense of ownership at the school site and control of the link between budget and instructional outcomes is a key tenet of reform in LAUSD. When you can directly see the impact, you might think twice about whether expenditures are essential to your core mission. This power in and of itself, will necessitate staff

- training to equip our principals, staff and community with the skills to really embrace and succeed with this new level of responsibility.
- **Service Metrics:** While the District is just starting down this path, conversations have begun (due in a large part to the Public School Choice Resolution) about what level and caliber of service various district offices provide to our schools. This rich conversation is allowing stakeholders to reflect on how we support our schools in unique and challenging ways. We fully expect this dialogue to continue to create opportunities for improvement throughout the district.

How do you ensure that your staff has the necessary tools to evaluate the range of charter school options without limiting innovation?

Just as I discussed the need to have ongoing staff training and development for our transparent budgeting process above, we have to do the same for all areas of our work as we focus on student outcomes and working more efficiently in an environment of shrinking resources. Recently, our Board of Education adopted a new policy on charter school authorizing, and as part of that process, we are updating our administrative procedures so that we are consistent with the Board's policy direction. We are also working with outside organizations such as the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and the California School Board Association (CSBA) to ensure we use the most effective practices currently available and so we can share our own innovations with others. This immediate process of updating our procedures will provide all of us the opportunity to reflect on our practices and make the necessary changes to become a leading authorizer that encourages innovation.

We are developing a Charter School Collaborative of internal and external colleagues whose experience and expertise will be invaluable as we develop new tools and strategies to honor the quality hallmark of providing schools the autonomy which they are granted under the law and the accountability for which they are responsible. This working group will help ensure that the District continues to encourage and respect innovation while developing strong tools for evaluation.

What are key lessons that might be applicable for other school districts?

- **Bridge-building between district and charter schools advances district's mission on behalf of students**
 - “All of our students” instead of LAUSD schools vs. charter schools
 - Collaborative problem-solving, student-centered decision making
 - Creating authentic, trusting relationships through stakeholder meetings and ongoing communication that rely on transparency, reasonableness, follow through and honesty
 - Share best practices (Identify what works and connect people!)
- **Foster autonomy in charter schools**
 - Consistent with legislative intent that charter schools operate “independently” of the school district structure

- Test and learn from decentralized, locally-run models of delivering education to improve student achievement
- Liability protection (Ed. Code, section 47604)
- **Ensure actionable accountability measures**
 - Poorly performing schools must be closed
 - Develop clear, consistent, fair, rigorous, and objective performance metrics so data drives decisions and reduces political pressure or other more subjective criteria
- **Sound oversight helps foster quality education for students**
 - Assess academic, governance, operational, and fiscal strengths and challenges; share constructive feedback
 - Develop oversight rubric
 - Facility safety compliance from local authority
 - Statutory oversight obligations
- **Create revenue opportunities to offset ADA funding losses**
 - District as service provider
 - Facilities as an asset
 - Fee-for-Service Models, e.g. nursing, food service, etc...
- **Healthy competition and choices work!**
 - Offer quality, diverse choices to families
 - Competing helps to offset possible revenue losses
 - The charter law is a lever for reform beyond charters themselves
 - Districts have significant flexibility to pursue innovative programs
 - Public School Choice Policy