

Small Schools Resolutions: A Bold Vision for LAUSD

Whereas, Research indicates that small schools offer a personalized learning environment and help strengthen academic performance when coupled with quality teaching, strong leadership, as well as relevant and rigorous instruction;

Whereas, Research indicates that school size is an important factor in student success, and that small schools that are well-planned and implemented can help narrow the achievement gap;

Whereas, Numerous studies have identified the benefits of small schools, as compared to large schools, including:

- Improved academic performance of students with disadvantaged socio-economic status (Howley and Bickel, 2000);
- Safer environments with less violence and vandalism (Cotton, 1996, 2001; Nathan and Febey, 2001; Lawrence, et. al., 2002);
- More parent and community involvement (Wasley, et al., 2000);
- Greater teacher satisfaction and retention (Wasley, et al., 2000);
- Better attendance (Cotton, 1996; Lawrence, et al., 2002);
- Reduced dropout rates (Wasley, et al., 2000); and
- Higher graduation and college-going rates (Center for Collaborative Education, 2003);

Whereas, Small schools provide a structure for accelerating change efforts and fostering greater accountability;

Whereas, When considering the ideal size and structure of a school, school districts must consider numerous factors, such as:

- The ability of the school to provide students access to the full curriculum, and in senior high schools, access to the full selection of required A-G courses;
- The ability of a school to secure and provide resources for students with disabilities;
- The ability of teachers to have on-site collaboration with other teachers in their content area, which is a key professional development support for teachers in developing quality instruction;
- The ratio of administrators to teachers; and
- The financial viability of a school;

Whereas, Multiple small schools within a residence attendance area can provide families with more educational options;

Whereas, Small schools can maximize joint-use opportunities and enrich community partnerships and connections;

Whereas, Studies show that in terms of cost-per-graduate, building and maintaining small schools represents a wise investment (Lawrence, et. al., 2002, 2005; Stiefel, et. al., 1998);

Whereas, A transition to small schools will build on the foundation of the District's Small Learning Communities (SLC) policy and accelerate progress toward a personalized learning environment for all LAUSD students;

Whereas, There are existing District schools that have demonstrated that a small school environment can facilitate progress toward improved academic achievement, such as:

- Arleta High School of Science, Math, and Related Technologies (S.M.A.R.T.);
- Harbor Teacher Prep Academy;
- Los Angeles School of Global Studies;
- Middle College High School; and
- Student Empowerment Academy;

Whereas, The governing board of the Los Angeles Unified School District is committed to making schools smaller, where appropriate, and ensuring that all schools have in place the conditions, including quality principals and teachers and rigorous curriculum, to foster improved learning;

Whereas, A Small Schools Policy would represent a monumental cultural shift for the District that will require strong and decisive leadership and purposeful collaboration to ensure instructional success and sustainability; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That a Small School be defined as a unique, personalized learning environment with its own school code, administration, staff, budget, contiguous space, responsibility for all aspects of its educational program, and generally no more than 500 students (approximately 400 in middle schools);

Resolved further, That Small Schools, as defined by the District, will offer a rigorous, relevant, and personalized educational programs offering an A-G curriculum with multiple pathways at the high school level) – evaluated by multiple measures – to ensure that every student is college-prepared and career-ready;

Resolved further, That the governing board of the Los Angeles Unified School District directs the Superintendent to report to the Board by December 1, 2008, with an analysis, including short and long term benchmarks, and a phase in plan to achieve the commitment to transform to small schools by 2020. The analysis will include:

- A portfolio of school sizes and structures that foster high student achievement and meet a variety of community needs;
- Identification of the elements needed to create successful outcomes for students;
- A cost analysis containing specific recommendation as to the source of the funds;
- Other suggestions to increase student performance and satisfaction, including per-pupil budgeting, re-energizing school-based management, and giving schools authority to create rigorous standards-based curriculum; and
- A process that provides opportunities for schools and SLCs that do not meet priority criteria to become small schools;

Resolved further, That the Board directs the Superintendent to appoint a lead staff person to direct the planning and implementation processes of this Small Schools Policy, including the formation of an implementation team. The Superintendent will report back to the Board within 30 days regarding this appointment and the key staff, as well as key external partners (including bargaining unit representatives), assigned to the implementation team;

Resolved further, that the Board directs the Superintendent to deliver a plan within 180 days that explains and identifies the leadership model that will be put in place to support the adoption of this Small Schools Policy. This plan, which will comprise part of the District's overall strategic plan, will include:

- An implementation strategy including timelines and the identification of which District offices or units will be responsible for the various aspects of implementation;
- Central office and local district roles and implications;
- Professional development strategies for all Small Schools, as well as for all District administration and management staff. These will include strategies for improving the delivery of rigorous, relevant and responsive instruction to diverse learners, as well as strategies for training and recruiting dynamic future to effectively lead Small Schools, including a full study of the lead teacher model;
- Strategies to involve all stakeholder groups including students, parents, community groups, teachers, principals, etc.;
- Strategies for students enrolled in English Learner, Standard English Learner, and Special Education programs;
- Implications for current reform plans already underway in existing schools and Districtwide;
- Plans to coordinate the preparation and design of the reports requested in this resolution; and
- A plan to give all schools in the portfolio training for leadership teams, consisting of elected representatives of all stakeholders, to develop collaborative decision-making;

Resolved further, That the Board directs the Superintendent to deliver a report within 180 days that assesses the funding and staffing implications of a Small Schools Policy. This report will include:

- Existing or future State bond opportunities in support of Small Schools;
- Comparison of per-pupil budgeting and zero-based budgeting models vs. a traditional District funding model;
- Fiscal models of staffing for Small Schools and strategies for keeping administrative costs down, and potentially lowering existing levels of administrative costs; and
- Impacts on collective bargaining agreements;

Resolved further, That the Board directs the Superintendent to deliver a report within 180 days that assesses enrollment options in support of Small School choice, both within and beyond residence attendance areas. The report will include:

- A review of other large districts with school choice policies;
- Recommendations regarding potential educational option zones and residence attendance areas that would support Small Schools;
- An assessment of how school choice will impact overcrowding, Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) sites, and Program Improvement (PI) schools;
- A review of current articulation policies for all school levels (PreK-16); and
- Analysis of how unique community needs will be considered in a choice plan;

Resolved further, That the Board directs the Superintendent to deliver a report within 180 days that assesses potential joint-use and career-tech opportunities for Small Schools. This report should include:

- Existing joint-use agreements;
- A list of potential partners;
- An identification of potential joint-use and career-tech sites; and
- Analysis of opportunities to partner with other stakeholders;

Resolved further, That the Board directs the Superintendent to deliver a report within 180 days that identifies current California Department of Education Facilities Planning Division student density ranges for the District and suggestions for improvements to those policies. The report should also include researched-based recommendations for appropriate student density ranges for new and existing campuses as well as mitigation recommendations where appropriate student density ranges cannot be achieved;

Resolved further, That the Board directs the Superintendent to deliver a report within 180 days that identifies opportunities to leverage and influence state and national policies related to the implementation of Small Schools;

Resolved further, That existing large schools (generally 1,000 students or more) will be transformed into campuses of multiple Small Schools based on their unique needs to accelerate student achievement. This transformation, guided by the analyses called for in this motion, will roll out in phases, with the first phase focused on the District's high-priority schools as well as middle schools. Future phases will be defined by the Superintendent. It is expected that implementation for Phase 1 schools would commence no later than 2010;

Resolved further, That Small Schools may share a site with other Small Schools. While State density policies and/or intended campus size may determine the maximum number of students assigned to a particular site, most sites shall be limited to no more than:

- 1,000 elementary students (in two or more Small Schools);
- 1,000 span students (various grade configurations in two or more Small Schools);
- 1,600 middle school students (in four or more Small Schools);
- 2,000 high school students (in four or more Small Schools);

Exemptions may be granted through a vote of the Board. These limits need to accommodate State classroom loading factor guidelines;

Resolved further, That when co-location or sharing of a single site is necessary, new construction and major renewal project designs for existing campuses will designate discrete space for each Small School that embeds administrative and guidance services within them;

Resolved further, That Small Schools co-located on a single site may share common services and spaces (such as a library, clinic, gym, fitness center, performance venues), may coordinate and share some services (music, inter-scholastic sports), and/or take advantage of opportunities to partner with the community to offer its students such amenities; and be it finally

Resolved, That the District will direct newly constructed K-12 schools to be configured as individual Small Schools of generally 500 or fewer students (approximately 400 for middle schools). Schools currently in design shall be configured as individual Small Schools if schedule and budget permit changes in design. Working in close collaboration with educators, future modernization and renewal efforts will support the establishment of individual Small Schools.