WE CHOOSE ALL

Building a System of Excellent Public Education

Table of Contents

Dedicated to the children and families in our public education system

We Choose All: Research to Inform Public Education in Los Angeles

John Rogers, UCLA

I. Introduction

More than 160,000 students are enrolled in Los Angeles charter schools today—far more than in any other city in the nation. The four-fold increase over the last decade in Los Angeles charter school enrollment has coincided with declining enrollment in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). As a consequence, more than ¼ of all Los Angeles K-12 students now attend charter schools. A group of philanthropists and advocates under the banner "Great Public Schools Now" has proposed to expand charter enrollment much further. In 2015, the group called for doubling charter enrollment such that, by 2022, as many students would attend charter schools as district schools.

In early 2016, representatives of UNITE-LA, In the Public Interest, the Advancement Project, the Learning Policy Institute and UCLA IDEA came together with the goal of informing public debate about these dramatic changes in Los Angeles education. We called ourselves, the "We Choose All" coalition, in recognition of our shared interest in supporting an educational system that provides high quality education to all Los Angeles students. We entered the conversation recognizing the wonderful work of Los Angeles educators in both district and charter schools as well as the civic energy of labor and community leaders, advocates and philanthropists who grappled with one another to define the future of Los Angeles schools. Yet, we worried that "reform" that emerges without systemic planning and public deliberation could not meet the needs of all Los Angeles students. Further, we believed that such "reform" was likely to further erode institutional stability, cross-sector civility and public confidence.

In spring 2016, the LAUSD School Board passed a resolution calling for *We Choose All* to convene researchers to inform the board about issues associated with the rapid growth of charter schools as well as the conditions necessary to create a system that promotes high quality education for all students. On August 30, 2016, *We Choose All* hosted a symposium at the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce that featured both presentations from 15 leading national researchers as well as facilitated discussion amongst researchers, LAUSD officials, representatives of charter organizations, leaders of community and labor organizations, philanthropists and other education and community leaders.

The 2016 symposium produced three results. First, it led our coalition to articulate a set of shared values that give meaning to the phrase, "We Choose All." Second, it highlighted emerging evidence

3

from around the country about charters, choice and competition. Third, it pointed to the need for us to learn more about how different stakeholders in Los Angeles think about these issues.

Building on these outcomes, we have worked closely over the past year and a half with a group of researchers who have developed papers and briefs on the theme of "We Choose All." We also commissioned a new study exploring the beliefs of Los Angeles charter school operators, philanthropists, labor officials and civic and community leaders. Below, we present our shared values and then summarize the research that has been produced for this project.

II. The Values of "We Choose All" and the Value of Research

In declaring "We Choose All," our coalition echoes those who have struggled to realize the egalitarian promise of public education since the earliest days of California's statehood. To take just one example, in the 1850s, the African American journalist J. Holland Townsend documented efforts of San Francisco's Black community to fight back against pro-slavery forces who rallied to exclude one of the top performing students from the City's high school because of her race. Rejecting the idea that quality education is the birthright of a few, the advocates instead envisioned "a common school system that shall educate all of her sons and daughters alike."[1]

Our coalition believes that three values should animate today's system of common schools—inclusivity, interdependence and collective determination. The value of *inclusivity* calls for attending to the interests of all Los Angeles students. As leading education scholar Jeannie Oakes notes, "We need a system to develop all people, not just some, into highly competent and caring community members." Linda Darling-Hammond, founding director of the Learning Policy Institute, connects this value of inclusivity to a particular understanding of choice. "The central question for a public education system in a democratic society is not whether school options exist, but whether they are good ones, and whether high-quality schools are available to all children." Veteran Los Angeles educator and scholar Sylvia Rousseau makes a related point, "There is no real choice, unless every child has a high-quality neighborhood school among the choices available." Dr. Rousseau also highlights the value of *interdependence,* or what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. termed "the inescapable network of mutuality."[2] Quality neighborhood schools, she reasons, sustain strong communities, and such communities are essential to ensuring the holistic development of young people. Precisely because our interests are bound up with one another, we have a responsibility to deliberate together about our shared future. The value of collective determination speaks to the importance of an informed and engaged public that is committed to ensuring every student has access to a high-quality education.

The values of inclusivity, interdependence and collective determination underscore the relationship of public education to democracy. Public education is an enterprise of, by, and for all the people. Yet, part of the challenge facing Los Angeles education today is that contentious school politics make it

hard to conceive of ourselves as part of a collective. How do we move from entrenched and divisive positions toward common cause?

We Choose All believes in the potential for public dialogue, informed by research, to establish new relationships that hold the possibility for new understandings. But our vision is modest. The research papers we solicited will not, in and of themselves, resolve deep differences. They are not meant to "win" a campaign or realize a particular consensus. Rather, these papers aim to help civic leaders and the broader public understand a bit more about what divides us and offer shared language and information that might serve as starting points to renew our conversations around public education with more depth, empathy, and sense of possibility.

In this spirit, we encourage you to read the full set of eight papers and briefs produced for this project. Four of these papers review research on charters, choice, and competition. Three briefs outline a set of design principles for a system that chooses all. A final paper reports on new research into how key stakeholders in Los Angeles think about school choice and educational change. We summarize the salient arguments of each research brief below and end with a set of recommendations synthesized from these papers.

III. A Summary of the *We Choose All* Research Briefs

Research on Charters, Choice and Competition

1) Building a System of Schools Worth Choosing
Linda Darling Hammond, Learning Policy Institute

In this brief, Linda Darling-Hammond describes an array of approaches to school choice, including charters and vouchers as well as district supported initiatives (such as magnets, language immersion schools and networks of innovative schools). Darling-Hammond provides information on how and why these different approaches to school choice emerged and how they have fared in different contexts. She emphasizes that schools of choice can be of high or low quality and points out that choice can exacerbate inequality when there are insufficient quality options for all. Under such conditions, schools may select students deemed more promising or less costly, thereby excluding the most vulnerable students and families. Darling-Hammond draws on evidence from around the country and around the world to identify school choice policies and practices that support *a system* of high quality public schools available to all. Such policies include regulation of curriculum, financing, staffing, admissions and students' civil rights. Darling-Hammond also points out that such regulation creates opportunities for productive collaboration across district and charter sectors. In closing, Darling-Hammond

points to a number of conditions that also must be in place to ensure a strong system of public education that guarantees good choices for all—spanning from early childhood education, to supportive child welfare policies, to decent and equitable school funding and more.

2) Charter Schools and Competition-based Reform: Lessons and Recommendations for LAUSD
Kevin Welner (University of Colorado), Janelle Scott (UC Berkeley), and Tina Trujillo (UC Berkeley)

Welner, Scott, and Trujillo's brief examines how school choice engenders competition and the effects of such competition on equity and access and school quality. Reviewing a broad body of research, the authors find that marketplaces of school choice prompt competition between schools and amongst parents. Educational systems often incentivize schools to enroll particular students–those with higher test scores, more learning supports at home, fewer special needs and less disciplinary problems. At the same time, parents with more knowledge and/or stronger social networks invariably seek the most advantageous placement for their children. These twin dynamics often lead to more stratified opportunities and outcomes across the system as a whole. The authors consider the possibility that competition might also prompt improvement in the system by encouraging innovation or pushing poor performing schools to close. They find limited evidence for such beneficial effects and note that online schools thrive in choice systems even though such schools tend to be of the lowest quality. In conclusion, Welner, Scott and Trujillo point to the need for new policies to reduce the negative effects of competition. Such policies include: 1) Greater transparency and monitoring of charter schools' recruitment, discipline and finances; 2) Requirements for new charter schools to address identified needs of the system as a whole and attend to their potential impact on existing district schools.

3) Building an Equitable and Excellent System of Schools
Patrick Shields and Titilayo Tinubu Ali, Learning Policy Institute

The brief by Shields and Ali considers what we can learn from the experiences of districts with high charter school enrollment—what they refer to as "charter dense districts." A high concentration of charter schools means that students and families have a number of choices, but it does not ensure that these are all good choices. In areas such as Detroit and Philadelphia, poor choices have expanded when districts lack a strong charter authorizing and renewal process. Shields and Ali favor such a process, pointing to the Massachusetts example. They also support structures that treat charter schools and district schools on equal footing—in relation to accountability, enrollment and discipline practices. Further, Shields and Ali highlight the need for policies that focus attention on how conditions in the charter sector can affect conditions in district schools. A system in which all choices are good choices must ensure that students requiring additional supports or teachers who lack sufficient qualifications are not concentrated in particular schools.

4) The Los Angeles Charter War and the Peace Dividend
Charles Kerchner, Claremont Graduate School

Charles Kerchner provides an historical account of how the "charter school war" grew up over the last quarter century in Los Angeles, as well as a framework for how the City might benefit from a "peace dividend." By grounding today's battles in the reforms of 1993, Kerchner reminds us of a time when L.A.

civic elites, community advocates, union leaders and charter supporters alike embraced a commitment to decentralized governance, professional development and local innovation. Conflict and contention grew over time, as the so-called "LEARN" coalition fractured and some philanthropists and advocates turned to charters to overturn the district's power. Rather than merely lamenting the pitched battles that have emerged, Kerchner suggests a way forward. He describes a system of public education in Los Angeles (including both district and charter schools) that would foreground personalization, target supports to English Learners, and encourage teacher autonomy and innovation. In such a system, the district would ensure high quality by adopting good metrics, collecting and sharing data and creating opportunities for educators to learn from one another.

Design Principles for a System That Chooses All

5) Public Schools for the Public Good: Building an LAUSD Grounded in the Principles of Deeper Learning, Student Centeredness, Equity, Inclusivity, Democracy, and Collective Responsibility
Jeannie Oakes, UCLA and Learning Policy Institute

In her brief, Jeannie Oakes builds on work from the Partnership for the Future of Learning to lift up a set of core values of a system of education in which "we choose all." The values of *collective responsibility* and *equity* call upon the broader community in Los Angeles to join together and ensure that every student has access to a quality education. The values of *student centered* learning and *deeper learning* define what quality learning is—a process in which young people collectively identify and pursue meaningful questions, apply their emerging understandings to real world issues and develop higher order thinking skills. Finally, the value of *democracy* reminds us that the central purpose of public education is to foster informed and engaged participation in civic life.

6) The Role of Community Schools Partnerships in the Pursuit of Democratic Schools
Sylvia Rousseau, USC

Sylvia Rousseau's brief highlights the essential relationship of strong schools and strong communities. Community schools are schools that build relationships of trust and understanding among students and between educators and community members. Common features of community schools include community-based curriculum, after-school enrichment programs, parental involvement and wrap-around social and health services. These practices support community well-being, civic-mindedness and democratic relationships among young people and across different groups of adults. Rousseau argues that because such schools serve as the anchor of strong communities, every child is entitled to a quality school in his or her neighborhood.

7) LAUSD and English Learner Policies: Unlocking Opportunities for More Equitable Education
Patricia Gandara, UCLA

In this brief, Patricia Gandara addresses the critical importance of ensuring high quality education to English Learners. English Learners represent a quarter of Los Angeles students at any time, and about two thirds of Los Angeles students are the children of immigrants. A system that "chooses all" in Los Angeles must attend to the particular needs of these young people. It requires a body of teachers who are well-prepared to work with English Learners. And it demands broad access to quality bilingual education that supports students' academic development and (through two-way immersion programs) builds multi-lingual, multi-racial and cross-class communities. In this way, bilingual education can help construct a more inclusive and dynamic "we" that is committed to choosing all.

Research on How Key Stakeholders Think About Choice and Educational Change

8) "One City, All Kids": Creating a Collaborative Public Education System for All of Los Angeles' Students
Jennifer Ayscue, UCLA

Jennifer Ayscue's article draws on 22 interviews to explore how differently-situated Los Angeles stakeholders understand school choice, charter-district relationships and the possibilities for building a system that chooses all. Ayscue interviewed representatives of charter schools, community groups, labor organizations and philanthropists. For these diverse L.A. stakeholders, school choice represented either 1) a *principle* of freedom; 2) a *strategy* for helping individual students; or 3) a *structural mechanism* for system-wide improvement through competition. While differing on the meaning of choice, all the stakeholders associated the growth of school choice with increased tension between supporters of charters and advocates for district schools. They envisioned possibilities for collaboration across these sectors—opportunities for shared professional learning, a joint data system and even a common system for enrollment. While most remained unsure of how to move forward toward such collaboration, not a single participant described a vision of an education system without any charters nor did anyone express a desire for a system that is exclusively charter.

IV. Recommendations

The research briefs highlight the need for public actions and public policies which will support a system of public education in Los Angeles that chooses all. We close with a set of seven proposals for next steps.

1. Create forums for leaders of district and charter schools to regularly discuss core design principles of a system that chooses all.

2. Create a "Network of Innovative Schools" (including community schools, magnet schools, early learning centers, expanded school based management model schools, local initiative schools, pilot schools and charter schools) in which educators who are committed to a system that chooses all incubate, support, and share best practices.

3. Create a cross-sector forum with representatives of labor, business, community organizations, university partners, City and County governance, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), charter schools, etc. to explore opportunities for joint advocacy around conditions necessary for all Los Angeles students to succeed, such as quality early childhood education, supportive child welfare policies, decent and equitable school funding, sanctuary for immigrant families and more.

4. Establish common rules and shared data collection protocols for school enrollment procedures, transfer policies and discipline practices (with special attention to the experiences of racial/ethnic sub-groups, English Learners and special needs students) and encourage all publicly funded schools serving Los Angeles children and youth to adopt these standards.

5. Develop a common, unified enrollment system for all public schools serving Los Angeles children and youth that adopt the shared standards specified above.

6. Monitor and issue an annual public report on: a) The impact of charter school growth on the fiscal health of LAUSD schools and the well-being of Los Angeles neighborhoods; b) The demographic composition of all district and charter schools; c) Formal outcomes of all district and charter schools, including student academic achievement, graduation rates, post-secondary enrollment and persistence and civic and community readiness.

7. Establish a task force at the State level to review and strengthen charter school authorization, oversight and renewal so that these processes support the goal of a system that chooses all.

ENDNOTES

1   Townsend, J. Holland. "The 'Struggle for our Rights' in California." *The Anglo African Magazine.* March, 1859.

2   King Jr, Martin Luther. "Remaining Awake Through A Great Revolution. Washington DC: 31 March 1968. Transcript contribution: Martin Luther King, Jr." *Research And Education Institute, Stanford University. http://mlk-kpp01. stanford. edu/index. php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_remaining _awake_through _a_great_revolution.*

Building a System of Schools Worth Choosing

Linda Darling-Hammond, Learning Policy Institute

Abstract

Efforts to expand school choice in recent years have typically focused on charter schools and vouchers for students to attend private schools. However, the large majority of school choices exist in the traditional public school sector, where magnets, themed schools (e.g., arts, law, health professions), language immersion schools, and networks of innovative school models have also proliferated. A number of districts offer district-wide choice. A look at all of these alternatives shows that, while there are some excellent and innovative schools of choice, choice does not guarantee quality, and can sometimes exacerbate inequalities when less advantaged students are not offered access to schools worth choosing. This article summarizes evidence about the success of different choice models in the U.S. and about what kinds of state and local policies and practices can support a system of high-quality schools that are available to all children – that is, a system of schools worth choosing in which every child is chosen by a good school that supports his or her needs and interests.

Efforts to expand school choice are currently a central education policy issue in California and the nation. President Trump and his education secretary, Betsy DeVos, announced early on that school "choice" -- by which they mean expanding privately operated charter schools and vouchers to private schools as DeVos worked to do in her home state of Michigan – was their major education agenda. They have proposed budgets that expand federal investments in existing voucher and charter supports. Meanwhile, several major philanthropic organizations have also continued to expand their investments in these policies, often with a presumption that expanding choice in this way will improve quality options for parents and students.

"Choice" is a core American value which, along with freedom, defines a major part of our national value system. All of us want good choices in every aspect of our lives, including the schools we choose for our children. And our rhetorical commitment to equity should mean that we want good choices for other people's children as well. We all know there are some excellent charter schools and private schools in the country, as well as a much larger number of district-run schools of choice in which children thrive. However, as a matter of public policy, the issue of choice is not so simple.

In Michigan, DeVos was a central player in creating a market system which features the largest number and share of for-profit charters in the nation: 79 percent. (Fewer than 20 percent of charters nationwide are for-profit.)[1] In an unexpected twist during her nomination, the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association opposed DeVos' nomination because of concerns about the low-quality of many of these charters under Michigan's lax accountability rules.

In addition, one of the nation's leading proponents and funders of charter schools, Eli Broad, strongly opposed DeVos's nomination, calling her a threat to public education. In a strongly worded letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, Broad said, "At the risk of stating the obvious, we must have a secretary of education who believes in public education and the need to keep public schools public."[2]

Clearly the issues surrounding school "choice" are more complex than a pro-charter/anti-charter battle. The central question for a public education system in a democratic society is not whether school options exist, but whether they are good ones, and whether high-quality schools are available to all children. The fact that choice does not guarantee quality should be clear each time we flick through 500 cable TV channels without finding a single good viewing option. In public education, this kind of choice is not an acceptable outcome.

The key issue is whether we can create a system in which all schools are worth choosing and all children are chosen by good schools. The key question is how we might accomplish these goals?

The Status of Educational Choice in the U.S.

Despite the association of choice with privately operated charters and voucher schools, the vast majority of schools of choice are operated by public school districts. Since the 1960s, districts have sponsored alternatives, such as magnets, themed schools (e.g., arts, law, health professions), language immersion schools and networks of innovative school models, such as the Internationals High School Network, New Tech High Schools, Boston's Pilot Schools, and California's Linked Learning Academies.

Many districts – like New York City, San Francisco, and Cambridge, Massachusetts – have pioneered choice systems in which all parents choose schools, most of which are district-run, while students are guaranteed access to a neighborhood school. Meanwhile, choice is managed to support racial, economic and linguistic integration, and the districts work to continually improve all the schools in the system. In cases where charters are authorized by districts with strong regulations governing oversight, districts can incorporate charters into these school improvement efforts.

However, private choices have not always been introduced in ways that allow districts to manage them as part of a system, or in ways that guarantee quality. On the voucher front, four recent major studies of large statewide programs in Indiana, Louisiana, and Washington D.C. found large negative effects

on achievement for students who received vouchers to attend private schools compared to similar students who stayed in public schools.[3]

Research also finds mixed outcomes for charters as a group. For example, a large-scale study of student data from 16 states, from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University, found that only 17 percent of charter schools produced academic gains that were better than traditional public schools, while 37 percent performed worse than their traditional public school counterparts serving similar students. Most showed no difference.[4]

After 25 years of charter school efforts, there are now about *6,500 public charter schools serving 2.5 million students—or about 5 percent of the K-12 student population nationally.[5] This share is considerably greater in some communities: As of 2015-16, it was 95 percent in New Orleans, Louisiana, and comprised nearly 1 in 4 students in Los Angeles Unified, which has more than 150,000 students enrolled in charters, the largest number of any district in the country.[6]*

The movement has produced some innovative and successful schools across the country that engage in high-quality education and produce strong outcomes. At the same time, concerns have emerged about charters that use their autonomy to admit only the most promising students and push out those who struggle to learn.[7] As a whole, the charter sector serves many fewer special education students and English language learners than do district-run public schools,[8] and charter schools are more racially and economically segregated.[9]

Over time, the charter movement has grown from individual schools mounted by groups with innovative education ideas to chains of schools operated by charter management organizations, some of them operating as for-profit companies. The number of for-profit education management companies running charter schools increased twenty-fold between 1995 and 2012, from 5 to 99, and the number of schools they operate increased more than one hundred-fold, from 6 to 758.[10] These education companies exert substantial influence on U.S. policymaking. As *Education Week* reported in 2013:

> The online education provider K12 Inc.—a publicly traded company with $708 million in revenue in 2012—had 39 lobbyists around the country on the payroll last year to work for state and local policies that would help expand the use of virtual learning...And the charter school operator White Hat Management and its employees contributed more than $2 million in campaign support between 2004 and 2012 to mostly Republican politicians in Ohio, where the company, which runs 33 schools in three states, is the largest for-profit charter operator and has been under fire for poor performance.[11]

<u>Consequences of Privatized Choice</u>

While the promise of choice sounds tantalizing, the realities of creating viable choices for all students through charters and vouchers have proven to be much more complex. It turns out that in many systems of choice, a relatively small number of good schools are available to a small number of children—usually the most advantaged. These schools are oversubscribed, and, unless the district is doing something to strengthen all schools, many of those left over are of low-quality, offering little meaningful choice. In addition, because schools have incentives to admit selectively, high-need students are often excluded from all of the schools nearby and cannot get into any school that is not far away, physically dangerous or academically failing.

Some successful charters serve high-need students without "creaming and cropping," a now common process by which schools admit only the most promising students and push out those who struggle to learn. For many schools, however, selectivity has become one of the major ways they sustain positive effects. In a system of accountability where schools are evaluated by test scores and threatened with closure if they do not continually increase their scores, the easiest way to appear successful is to keep out or push out low-performing students. Pushing out such students through counseled transfers or disciplinary expulsions also reduces school costs, leaving fewer hard-to-educate students in the mix.[12]

Both charters and district-run schools have engaged in these practices,[13] but it is easier for charters that manage their own admissions and expulsion policies to do so. In some states, like Louisiana, charters are allowed to set admissions policies just like private schools. In others, like California, this practice is illegal, but a recent study found that 1 in 5 California charters violate state law by restricting access for high-need students.[14] Most studies have found that charters underserve English learners and special education students relative to public schools in their districts.[15] They are also more racially and economically segregated than public schools generally.[16]

In New Orleans, which is now entirely composed of charters, the Southern Poverty Law Center had to sue to ensure that charter schools would accept special education students, as most refused to do so.[17] Even after the lawsuit was resolved, Stanford researchers found that special education students, those from the most impoverished families, and other vulnerable young people have little choice in the system, as they are often assigned, against their will, to failing schools, which frequently close, bouncing them to another failing school – a practice that reduces their achievement further.[18] While New Orleans has some innovative and successful charters, they disproportionately serve the more racially, economically, and educationally advantaged students in a highly stratified system that leaves most poor, Black students in what the state labels as failing schools that they cannot choose their way out of.[19]

In recent years, there has been a focused effort to turn public schools in many cities over to private operators, stimulated by fiscal crises and reinforced by federal incentives under No Child Left Behind to close district-run schools and replace them with charters. For example, in the last two years, a fiscal

crisis in Detroit led to the installation of an emergency manager, who has aimed to replace the entire school district with charters. In Pennsylvania, former Governor Tom Corbett cut Philadelphia's budget by $500 million, throwing it into fiscal distress overnight. The local school board was eliminated, hundreds of educators were fired, and a manager was installed who carved up the school district and gave large sections to private operators. More than 20 cities have experienced widespread public school closures coupled with charter expansion, and the breakup of public school districts into segments given to private organizations to run.[20]

A new organization called Journey for Justice, comprised of civil rights and grassroots organizations and community members in 21 cities, has set out to halt this progression, demanding "community-driven alternatives to the privatization of and dismantling of public schools systems."[21] In addition to New Orleans, its members represent Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Newark, New York City, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C. The organization explains:

> The policies of the last 15 years, driven more by private interests than by concern for our children's education, are devastating our neighborhoods and our democratic rights… Journey for Justice is intentionally creating a space for organized low-income and working class communities who are directly impacted by top-down privatization and school closing efforts…[22]

The coalition notes that in every one of its districts, school closings disproportionately impact African American and Latino students, schools and communities. As a consequence, a number of organizations have filed complaints under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act with the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, demanding that the Department investigate the racial impact of public school closings in these cities.

The experiences of students in many of these cities were graphically described in the recently released NAACP report[23] challenging the choice agenda. Based on seven hearings across the country following its call for a moratorium on charter schools last year, the report highlighted both the good work of some charters and the widespread problems with others. These range from exclusionary admissions and pushout policies to placements in schools far from children's homes to poor teaching and financial scandals.

The report noted that closing failing charter schools is not an answer to low quality. More than 2500 charters have closed since 2001 – nearly 40 percent of those started in that time – disproportionately affecting Black children and disrupting the education of tens of thousands of low-income children of color. The closings frequently sent students from one failing school to another and have had a negative effect on achievement for those students.[24]

Furthermore, some types of charters have had predictably negative effects on students. For example, virtual or on-line charters – most of which are for-profit – have been found to produce far lower

achievement for their students in both math and reading than traditional public schools serving similar students. The differences in student learning equate to a student losing 72 days of learning in reading and 180 days of learning in mathematics, based on a 180-day school year.[25] NCES data also show that 87 percent of virtual schools were identified as low graduation rate schools in 2013-14, with an average graduation rate of only 40 percent, less than half the national average rate (82 percent).[26]

These experiences suggest that, without effective regulations and a strong public education system that creates high-quality schools and manages choice, developing a system of schools worth choosing proves to be an elusive goal.

Differences Across Contexts

These worst case scenarios are not inevitable. Outcomes do vary across states, which have very different laws.[27] Whereas states like Minnesota, Massachusetts and California initially passed laws exercising considerable oversight of charters to ensure fair access, a thoughtful curriculum, qualified staff, civil rights protections and financial stability; some other states have allowed almost anyone to start up a school with little accountability.

In carefully regulated Massachusetts, for example, the state's 81 charters, which operate under a cap that voters refused to lift last November, are consistently found to be high-performing.[28] These schools are held to rigorous expectations not only for curriculum and staffing quality, and academic performance, but also for the admission and retention of high-needs students.

Unlike those in Louisiana, for example, Massachusetts charters may not impose admissions requirements, must admit students by lottery and must serve special education students and English learners. Their willingness to do this must be publicly posted and, after earlier concerns, is now monitored extensively by the Department of Education, which not only approves recruitment and retention plans and enrollment as well as attrition data, but also makes anonymous "Mystery Parent" calls to verify that students with high levels of need are provided with "equal and unfettered access to each school's application and enrollment process." To renew a charter for an additional five years, a school must affirmatively demonstrate faithfulness to its charter, academic program success and organizational viability, as well as adherence to its recruitment and retention plan to serve high-need students.

Meanwhile, Boston authorizes a small number of charters and also operates many district-run schools of choice through its successful Pilot Schools program[29] and others. Boston is one of the higher achieving cities in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and has created means for supporting high-quality options throughout the city.

Similarly, Denver has created a system with many high-quality options both by providing district-run schools of choice and supporting professional development for both district-run schools and charter

schools. It operates a rigorous authorization process and ensures that all students are served by schools they want to choose by managing the admissions process by which lotteries are used to allocate students to schools (so that high-need students are not excluded). In addition, the district ensures that empty seats in charters are filled from the lottery wait list when there is attrition during the year. Charters cannot expel students on their own; they must go through a district-run process that provides due process and seeks to minimize student exclusions.

By contrast, in Ohio and Arizona, where an unregulated market strategy has created a huge range of for-profit and nonprofit providers with few public safeguards, most charter schools have low ratings and charter school students achieve at consistently lower levels than their demographically similar public school counterparts.[30]

In unregulated contexts, scandals abound, especially in on-line virtual charter schools, which have consistently negative outcomes nationwide,[31] while they reap the largest profits, since operators do not have to purchase buildings and often hire few teachers at low salaries. For example, over the course of nearly a decade, the Columbus *Dispatch* reported on the cyberschool eCot in Ohio, which in one month received $932,030 in taxpayer money for 2270 students, but could provide evidence that only seven students had logged on. At another point, only 25 percent of eCot students had actually received computers, and student-teacher ratios reached as high as 150 to 1. Nonetheless, the state did not close the school or many other failing schools with widespread abuses.[32]

In Michigan, critics, including many charter school proponents, say the state's unaccountable charter school policies have produced many failing schools in the state's poorest communities. These include Detroit, now the nation's worst-performing city district. Investigative reporting by the New York Times described the city as "awash in choice, but not quality," dealing with competition that "created chaos" and "replicated failure."[33] Eighty percent of Michigan's charters are for-profit; the largest of these are on-line -- a class of schools that is typically low performing. In 2015, a federal review of a grant application for Michigan charter schools found an "unreasonably high" number of charters among the worst-performing 5 percent of public schools statewide. The number of charters on the list had doubled from 2010 to 2014.[34] In denying the grant, reviewers also cited very low graduation rates for charter students, in particular low-income students, English language learners and students with disabilities.

The policies have also weakened the finances and performance of traditional public-school districts. Michigan State Board of Education President John Austin, who describes himself as a strong charter-school supporter, has noted that the expansion of choice in that state is "destroying learning outcomes."[35] And indeed, Michigan's overall performance has declined dramatically in the last 15 years. Until the early 2000s, Michigan was typically in the top tier of states in achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, especially in math. However, by 2015 it was lagging most other states.[36] In 4th grade reading, only six states scored lower, and no state scored lower for Black students in reading or math.[37] In comparisons among cities, Detroit's students scored below those in every single major U.S. city, by a large margin.[38]

An International Perspective

Michigan's outcomes are similar to those that colleagues and I found in our investigation of several countries that had adopted privatization initiatives without safeguards. In our 2016 book, *Global Education Reform,*[39] we tracked what happened in Chile, beginning under dictator Augusto Pinochet in 1980, and later in Sweden, starting in 1992, when these wealthy countries adopted widespread voucher and charter-like policies, including public funding to private for-profit providers, while disinvesting in their public systems and allowing resources for schools to grow more unequal. Both are now trying to reverse course after their systems became more segregated and unequal, and dropped dramatically in achievement in comparison to their international counterparts.

Sweden, once the educational jewel of high-achieving Scandinavia, now performs well below most European and Asian countries on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)—and below the United States. It stands in sharp contrast to Finland, once the least-educated Scandinavian country, which made substantial investments in a high-quality public system beginning in the 1970s, and now consistently performs near the top of the international rankings.

Meanwhile, Chile performs even lower than Sweden, closer to the ranks of developing nations, despite featuring a wealthy upper class. And it has only one-third as many high-performing students as economically disadvantaged Cuba, which leads the countries in South and Central America by a very wide margin. Like Finland, Cuba invested equitably in its public schools with a highly-prepared teaching force, thoughtful inquiry-oriented curriculum, and strong relationships with parents and families.

Can Choice and Democracy Co-Exist?

A public education system cannot leave choice to chance: It must design policies that ensure equitable access to high-quality schools for all children.

Are there ways for us to get the benefits of choice without the downsides that have accompanied initiatives like Michigan's, Sweden's, and Chile's?

Massachusetts demonstrates some of the principles that might support a democratic system that incorporates productive choice. Schools of choice aimed at democratic values would increase educational quality and equity, not by creating a competitive marketplace of successes and failures, but encouraging innovation and allowing more diversity among schools, including public schools run by districts, thereby enabling students to find settings that support their learning styles and passions, and by giving parents a greater voice in school improvement,[40] while protecting students' rights of access and guarantees of basic educational quality.

A commitment to equity and access would demand open admissions policies and would disallow selective admissions that would separate schools by their ability to choose their students, rather

than by the ability of all students and families to choose their schools. Schools of choice would need to be monitored to ensure that they do not push or counsel out students who present educational challenges. School funding would need to be equitable across all schools and pose no burdens to families for tuition, fees or transportation. For-profit entities would be disallowed as they have an inherent conflict of interest. In order to maintain profit margins, such schools must continually decide which services will be reduced or which students will not be served because they are too expensive to educate.

In short, the system must operate like a public system. To serve the public purpose, schools also need to help develop a citizenry that shares common values and knowledge and can live together productively in a pluralistic democracy. To accomplish this, schools must be a vehicle for integrating different groups to a common democratic relationship. Furthermore, public ownership must remain close to the local community being served, providing oversight from agencies that have both a commitment to the goals of public education and a capacity for effective monitoring. Continuous improvement processes that share knowledge and help schools build capacity should be based in a collaborative, rather than competitive, framework for school operations.

Finally, the elements of a strong *system* of education that guarantees good choices to all students must be developed. As we have seen in high-performing nations around the world, key to success is the creation of a *teaching and learning system* that not only prepares all teachers and school leaders well for the challenging work they are asked to do, but it ensures that schools are organized to support both student and teacher learning, and that the standards, curriculum and assessments that guide their work encourage the kind of knowledge and abilities needed in the 21st century.[41] The elements include:

- **Supports for children's welfare**, so that they can come to school ready to learn. In the current U.S. context, this can be advanced through community schools that offer wraparound services and other integrated supports that research shows support stronger attendance, achievement and graduation rates, as well as productive connections to families and communities.[42]

- **Supportive early learning environments**. In California and Los Angeles, this could be accomplished by expanding the successful TK program to serve all 4-year-olds and creating a more coordinated approach to early childhood care and education for zero to 3-year-olds.[43]

- **Equitably funded schools which provide equitable access to high-quality teaching.** Beyond the state's Local Control Funding Formula, districts should allocate funding to schools based on student needs and staff schools that serve the highest-need students with experienced and well-prepared teachers by offering strong leaders and attractive working conditions.

- **Well-prepared and well-supported teacher and school leaders,** enabled by strong clinical preparation in high-quality programs, including district residencies that train educators well

for a local context in which they will stay, along with mentoring, job-embedded professional learning in collaborative work environments and opportunities to contribute to school decision making.

- **Schools organized for in-depth student and teacher learning,** with time and structures for experiential, inquiry-oriented learning grounded in the new standards; performance-based assessments; and teacher planning and collaboration time. These schools can learn from one another within networks that share knowledge.

At the heart of the challenge is creating a system of schools worth choosing in which all children are chosen. Moreover, children need to choose and be chosen by a good school that serves them well and is readily accessible to them, including a high-quality neighborhood public school. This can be accomplished within public education systems if there is a clear focus on building capacity in all schools, creating collaborative learning opportunities and supporting school diversity to match students' needs, rather than focusing on competition that creates winners and losers. To support choice within a system of good schools, it is also important to be sure that all families have easy access to detailed information, convenient transportation, and open enrollment processes that include all, rather than excluding those with greater needs.

As John Dewey wrote more than a century ago in *The School and Society, "*What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy…Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself." [44]

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Charter Schools and Competition-Based Reform:
Lessons and Recommendations for LAUSD

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Introduction

When our children attend public schools, we as parents, citizens and taxpayers expect those schools to prepare them for successful lives as productive citizens. We also ask those schools to play a central role in our democracy, to prepare each new generation to sustain and improve our society. In addition, we desire that our schools are not only equitable, but also deliver quality inputs and results. Our public schools, then, must serve as a "private good" and a "public good."[1] Designing a complex education system also involves maximizing the goals of efficiency, quality, equity and choice, as well as social cohesion—bringing us together as a society.[2]

These multiple and sometimes-competing requests placed on public schools have driven a wide variety of policy initiatives. These include test-based accountability systems connected to school-turnaround demands and resource-focused reforms like the Local Control Funding Formula in California.[3] They also include specific interventions like class-size reduction initiatives, and market-based policies like charter schools and vouchers creating choice, competition and private management of schools.[4]

In considering the strengths and weaknesses of these and other ideas to achieve the multiple goals we hold for our public schools, policymakers and the public are able to turn to research evidence. This evidence helps us understand not just whether an idea "works," but also how each idea can be used as a policy tool to achieve some or all of the many goals we are pursuing.

In this White Paper we focus on school choice, a type of competition-based reform. We examine the potential of these reforms and how they can fit within our larger system of schools.

The Landscape of School Choice Reforms

School choice options in urban areas include magnets, pilot schools, intra-district choice, inter-district choice, charter schools, conventional vouchers, tax credit vouchers, education savings accounts and homeschooling.[5] At the high school level, school choice can also include curricular choices that students can pursue to prepare for college or career.[6] In school districts like Los Angeles, a portfolio-management approach attempts to use choice schools to cultivate a high-quality mix of different types of schooling

options.[7] In other urban districts, like New York City and Detroit, market-oriented strategies exist within a context of mayoral control of schools or the eradication or weakening of elected school boards.[8]

Looking specifically at charter schools, we see that about 2.8 million U.S. students were enrolled in charter schools as of fall 2015 (the most recent year with official data), with charter school authorizing legislation now in 44 states plus the District of Columbia.[9] This is 6 percent of total public school enrollment. But the numbers are considerably higher in some areas. In California, charter enrollment in 2016-17 was 9.7 percent of total public school enrollment.[10] Almost a quarter of the LAUSD's students attended charters (154,705 of the district's 633,621 students).[11] Across the board—in Los Angeles, California and nationally—the enrollment trends for charters show consistent annual increases, reflecting coalitional strategies from foundations, advocacy groups and policy makers to increase charter school numbers over the last decade.[12]

Connected to this growth are a number of complex dynamics, to which school systems must attend, between charter schools and district schools. For example, charter school enrollment can place financial strains on schooling systems, whose leaders must decide how to respond to the loss of enrollment in ways that best serve families who stay in district schools. Also, there is significant movement of students from district schools into charter schools, and back to district schools. This movement can create disruptions, as well as strains on planning and on finances, especially since evidence indicates many schools and school systems are spending money on marketing and recruitment,[13] at the expense of investment in the teacher labor force or in classroom resources.[14]

Other charter-growth issues involve governance, funding and accountability. Each charter school or charter network maintains its own governing board that oversees local school and management organization policy. Each state's funding system also varies, as do the funding mechanisms used by each charter school or network, with many charter schools receiving significant private revenue from philanthropies. This means that some charter schools are on stronger fiscal footing than the district schools surrounding them, while other charter schools are financially strapped.[15] Their boards make independent decisions about how to raise this money and how to allocate funds, admit or expel students, and design personnel policies.[16] These boards and their leaders navigate the oversight and accountability provided by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) as a charter authorizer in ways that can be either collaborative or contentious.[17] As LAUSD seeks to ensure a high-quality, equitable, and strong system of public schools, the role of charter schools in that overall system can thus be complicated.

Why School Choice and Charters?

School quality depends on many factors: teacher experience, training and support; class size; stability of leadership and of the teaching staff; academic support for students; a curriculum that is challenging

and engaging; and a host of other factors that depend on resources and design.[18] To an alarming and troubling degree, these factors disfavor lower-income communities of color. Whether looking at opportunity gaps or achievement gaps, these communities are disadvantaged by the inequalities in our system.[19] Many families in these communities are justifiably seeking an alternative.[20]

School choice systems have the potential to break the link between residence and school.[21] A child might be able to attend a school in a different, more advantaged community. Another child might attend a nearby charter school or private school operated through a different system and therefore potentially offering greater opportunities to learn. It is easy to see why many families might welcome options beyond their under-resourced or otherwise problematic neighborhood school. Another family might embrace school choice because it allows a match between the school and a child's interests or learning style.[22]

Looking back at the original rationales for charter school reform in particular, we also see a desire to empower local teachers and community members to innovate, free of restrictive provisions in existing collective bargaining agreements and of restrictive and even dysfunctional school-district bureaucracies.[23]

How Choice and Charter School Reform Play Out

The research on test score outcomes, comparing voucher or charter schools with district schools, tends to show little if any differences on average.[24] But those averages can hide a great deal of variation within the choice marketplace.

School choice engenders three types of competition: between schools, between parents, and between systems. This is true of charter schools and more broadly of choice-based policies. Competition between schools involves each school doing its best to enroll students, with seemingly successful schools having full enrollments and even waiting lists. But all students are not equal in these competitions; a school is in the best position if it can enroll students with higher test scores, more opportunities to learn outside of school, few special needs that require additional resources and limited disciplinary difficulties. Lower costs, fewer disruptions and better academic outcomes help schools thrive in a choice environment. For this reason, charter schools have used a wide variety of mechanisms to shape their enrollment—from pushing students out through multiple suspensions to advertising aimed at favored groups to counseling out students with special needs.[25]

In a marketplace where schools compete for students and compete more strongly for favored students, a great deal depends on the customers—the parents or guardians. An efficacious parent who knows how to work within the choice system will generally outcompete parents without these resources and skills. Children of these parents gain an advantage over other children.[26]

The school choice marketplace, therefore, has these two weaknesses: potential students who are differentially attractive as enrollees, and parents who differentially work the system on behalf of their

children. Children who are relatively advantaged are more likely to become winners in this system versus children with greater needs and with parents who cannot advocate for them as effectively. This raises the serious equity concern of a stratified marketplace, with correspondingly stratified opportunities and outcomes. Meanwhile, competition effects have sometimes resulted in more expensive and challenging students being left behind or concentrated in schools often designated as "failing."[27]

In the long-run, school choice advocates envision a cycle of improvement, with competition between schools driving progress across the board (or driving lower-quality schools out of business). The evidence of this happening, however, is slight, with some of the lowest-quality schools—known as cyber- or online-schools—often thriving financially.[28] In the meantime, looking at charter school reform in particular, we see that the quality distribution is at least as starkly variable as the quality distribution for district schools.

Can School Choice and Charter School Reform Achieve Our Goals?

How does school choice, and charter schools in particular, fare in our efforts to advance education as both a private good and a public good—and our efforts to maximize the goals of efficiency, quality, equity, choice and social cohesion? Fundamentally, school choice reforms are based on the twin beliefs that (a) competition will drive efficiency, and (b) empowerment through individual rights and options will result in equity and excellence. This logic, at least, captures all of the above goals except social cohesion. Moreover, choice advocates contend that by treating education as a private good, we empower individuals to act in ways that cumulatively benefit society and thereby further education as a public good. Because our nation is a collection of individuals, a policy that facilitates the capacity of each person to act to their individual benefit will correspondingly advantage society as a whole, the argument deduces.

But to realize the potential of choice to advance these goals – particularly equity and the public good –choice policies must seriously confront the stratified marketplace described above. Without forcefully addressing inequalities in the marketplace—in society and among schools—it is difficult to imagine how the stratification could be substantially reduced. Even efficiency aspirations have become problematic, given the existence of parallel educational systems and of the need to open and close schools within a broader "portfolio" of schools.

Recommendations

In this section, we include two sets of recommendations. The first is focused on developing a healthy charter school sector. The second turns to evidence-based, district-level, school improvement approaches that are not grounded in competition.

School districts and democratically elected school boards have a responsibility to hold charters and contractors accountable, particularly in their role as authorizers. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform offers a series of useful recommendations, focused on transparency and accountability.[29] In addition, Professors Julie Mead and Preston Green set forth 10 equity-focused recommendations for charter authorizers,[30] five of which we emphasize here as particularly important for the LAUSD to consider in its authorizer role:

1. *Require that charter school applicants make clear how the school will broaden, not replicate, existing opportunities for struggling populations of students in the community or communities intended to be served by the school.*

2. *Require charter school applicants to attend explicitly to local contextual factors, particularly identified achievement disparities, graduation rate concerns, suspension and expulsion issues.*

3. *Require charter school applicants to detail disciplinary codes and procedures and require a focus on positive interventions and supports.*

4. *Consider publishing a request for proposals (RFP) for charter schools to address particular persistent problems related to equitable outcomes as identified by local data analysis.*

5. *Require detailed recruitment plans to ensure that the school targets and attracts a diverse student applicant pool representative of the broader community in terms of race, socio-economic status, disability status, gender and limited English proficiency.*

Regarding this fifth recommendation, we also recommend clear monitoring with consequences for lack of diversity. Finally, we add a recommendation specific to the California context:

6. *Monitor the fiscal and operational effects of charter schools on LAUSD. Insist that charter school boards abide by the Brown Act and provide transparency in their budgets and admissions processes.*

While such rules governing the charter school sector will help the LAUSD become a more equitable and inclusive school system, a thoughtful charter school policy will do little to address the larger set of opportunity gaps facing many of the district's students. Whether or not a child attends a charter school, she may not have access to a high-quality preschool, she may be without good health and dental care, her parents may have no stable employment, her housing situation may be unsure and transient and segregated, and her neighborhood may have few enrichment opportunities after school or over the summer.

Achievement gaps arise out of these opportunity gaps, and responsible policy makers cannot avoid the reality that closing achievement gaps means seriously addressing these multiple obstacles.[31] The core instructional role of schools is certainly important. With strong supports for students and their

teachers, a challenging, research-based, whole-school curriculum can engage students in academic, socio-emotional and civic learning. As part of this effort, students cannot languish in schools with inexperienced and poorly trained teachers. Just as importantly, teachers must understand families' cultural or linguistic backgrounds and must approach those backgrounds as assets to be built upon. School improvement must also move past ineffective "turnaround" approaches that result in even more upheaval and faculty churn.[32]

But policy makers must also invest in improving the social and economic conditions in which schools are embedded – meeting the social, emotional, medical and other needs of students and families. Full-service, wraparound supports should include health services for children and families (adequate psychologists, nurses and social workers), and vocational and educational resources for adults.[33] Inclusive school cultures must be welcoming, avoiding policies that push away students with special needs or whose behavior presents difficult challenges.[34] Discipline systems like Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports and Restorative Justice can minimize those behavioral issues and reinforce healthy behaviors.[35]

Deep and lasting school improvement will require partnerships with multiple community-based organizations that have a demonstrated track record of successfully providing particular wrap-around services. We recommend that, as part of the LCFF process, the LAUSD maintain a district stakeholder decision-making council that is carefully and deliberately designed to be inclusive -- composed of school leaders; a demographically representative cross-section of teachers, students and parents; mental health professionals; district representatives; and key community-based, union and city leaders. The council should be engaged in deliberating about the appropriate place for charters in the district's portfolio of schools and considering the potential fiscal and equity effects that further charter school growth might generate. The council would also be charged with reviewing and selecting school-wide wraparound services that are particular to different communities' needs, and reviewing and selecting research-based, school-wide professional development resources for teaching and learning (e.g., ongoing training in trauma-informed practices).

While charter schools and district portfolio approaches aim to give individual, efficacious parents the ability to find a good school for their children, the reform we outline here is systemic. The district has the responsibility to provide an equal educational opportunity to each student, even if that student does not have the most effective parental advocate. Equity is a community concern; it requires more than enabling individual parents to exert choices within a market.

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Building an Equitable and Excellent System of Schools

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The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) provides families a wide range of school choices—nearly 300,000 students attend schools of choice, ranging from magnets, to charters, and pilot schools.[1] Charters are the largest sector of choice options—with 163,720 students in 300 schools—the largest charter enrollment in the country (see Figure 1 below). Charter proponents would like to double that number.[2] Others express concerns about quality control with additional charter schools.[3]

In this brief, we explore the experiences of other charter-dense districts to draw out lessons focused on: What challenges have they faced? How have they addressed those challenges? What might LAUSD learn from other districts' experiences? And, ultimately, how might LAUSD focus on making all schools worth choosing and having all children chosen by good schools?

**Figure 1: Top 10 (and Select) Districts with Highest Number of
Charter School Students, 2016-17**

Rank	District	State	Charter Enrollment	District-Run Enrollment	Total Enrollment	Charter Enrollment Share
1	Los Angeles Unified	CA	163,720	476,260	939,980	26%
2	New York City	NY	102,960	946,170	1,049,130	10%
3	Philadelphia	PA	64,270	134,130	198,400	32%
4	Miami-Dade	FL	62,280	294,610	356,890	17%
5	Chicago	IL	59,270	319,400	378,660	16%
6	Detroit	MI	50,460	44,890	95,350	53%
7	Houston	TX	51,240	56,100	97,340	53%
8	Broward County	FL	46,750	225,380	272,130	17%
9	New Orleans	LA	44,380	3,520	47,900	93%
10	District of Columbia	DC	41,490	48,510	90,000	46%
16	Denver Public Schools	CO	18,170	72,430	90,590	20%
31	Boston	MA	13,250	53,160	66,420	20%
NA	Sacramento	CA	6,820	40,770	47,590	14%

Source: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. 2017. A Growing Movement. America's Largest Charter Public School Communities. Twelfth Edition. Washington, DC: Author.

The table includes the top 10 districts in terms of number of charter students as well as Denver, Boston and Sacramento, which are discussed in this paper.

Our brief draws lessons from the experiences of other charter-dense urban districts that have grappled with the distinct challenges and governance issues that arise as an increased proportion of students enroll in charters.[4] We focus on educational equity in new schools; ensuring equal access to all schools of choice; maintaining diversity and inclusion; and ensuring that existing schools provide a high-quality education. For each, we outline effective strategies districts employed to meet those challenges, as well as the difficulties they faced. Lessons from these districts show that charters can provide greater choice; but charters can also limit access and provide low-quality educational options—especially when little attention is paid to scaling or systems. We further find that charters are not the only strategy for expanding choice; many districts have done so within district schools.

A Primer on Charters

Charters are publicly funded, privately operated schools. Like district schools, charters are funded primarily with taxpayer dollars and, in California, are meant to serve all students regardless of language, ethnicity, prior achievement, or learning challenge. However, charters often attract private funding beyond what they and district schools receive from public funds. Some are run by education management organizations that can be non-profit or for profit.

Charters offer no silver bullet for student success. There is no guarantee that students in charters will perform better than their peers. A consistent finding of research on charters is the great variation in their educational outcomes, with some charters outperforming other district schools; some doing worse, and others exhibiting similar outcomes.[5] However, in some charter school sectors—notably virtual schools and distance learning schools—students perform significantly worse than other in other charters and in district public schools.[6]

Quality learning opportunities, not governance structure, make high-quality schools. Students learn in safe, supportive, and challenging learning environments under the tutelage of well-prepared and caring adults.[7] Although operating under different governance structures, both charters and district schools can provide such high-quality learning environments.

There are many types of charter schools. Some charters are closely affiliated with the district system; others operate independently; while others are part of a network of schools that may span many districts. Some charters are brand new schools and some are conversions of existing schools.

Charters are only one way of offering families greater choice. Magnet schools, autonomous pilot schools, small learning communities, and schools for advanced studies are other options—as are high-quality neighborhood schools in districts that offer choice to all families.

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Lesson 1: Make All Schools Worthy of Being Chosen

Charter status, on its own, says nothing about school quality. Simply creating charters does not guarantee that they will all provide high-quality education to all their students. Nationally, educators have a mixed track record of starting new schools or converting old ones—whether charters or regular district schools—in terms of student learning and other indicators of progress.[8]

The lesson from other urban districts is that managing the creation of many new schools is quite challenging—especially in the case of charters, which—by definition—operate autonomously. Research suggests two strategies for addressing the quality of new and existing charters: building a common accountability system and maintaining a strong authorization and renewal process.

Build a common accountability system. The first step toward monitoring and incentivizing quality is transparency—districts need to create common and accessible accountability systems. Such a consistent approach allows families, as well as district and charter school educators, to track performance of all schools (regardless of their governance structure), enabling fairer comparisons among schools.

In addition to increasing transparency around student outcomes, opportunities, and the distribution of resources, common accountability systems can also be a tool to inform district decision-making and to support continuous improvement. Creating a system of high-quality schools requires districts to use data for improvement, not punishment. As New Orleans has demonstrated, when the central strategy for improvement is school closure, the result can be an insufficient supply of high-quality schools and a disruptive shifting of students from one poor-performing school to another.[9] Denver provides a promising approach—there the district uses its School Performance Framework to identify high-quality schools and strategically replicate them, while also identifying schools in need of intervention, support, or closure. Chicago's School Quality Rating Policy, similarly, provides a robust snapshot of both academic outcomes and school climate inputs to better differentiate between challenged schools.[10]

Maintain a strong charter authorizing and renewal process. Maintaining quality control in the authorization process is an especially important tool for districts to employ as they consider charters. Failure to do so can have dire consequences. For example, in Philadelphia, where the rapid expansion of charters took place with little oversight, many charters misused funds. [11] Detroit, which has expanded charters rapidly to serve over 50 percent of its student body, also struggles with quality. (Detroit has the lowest National Assessment of Educational Progress scores in the nation.)[12] In three states with relatively lax oversight laws—Arizona, Ohio, and Texas—charter school students consistently underperform district school comparison students in both reading and mathematics.[13]

In contrast, Massachusetts has taken a much more deliberate approach to the authorizing and renewal process. The state, which is among the highest scoring in the nation, has created a multi-step rigorous

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application and review process—that involves local educators as well as state department officials—with final decisions going to the state board. Its closely-regulated charters outperform regular district schools.[14]

LAUSD strives to promote authorization and renewal of high-quality charters. It does this by focusing on performance-based accountability, as well as collaborative professional development opportunities between the district and its charter schools. However, LAUSD is not the sole authorizer of charters in the district boundaries. Charter schools not approved by LAUSD can turn to the L.A. County Office of Education for authorization, and if denied by LACOE, can apply to the state board of education. LAUSD then has limited authority over those charters authorized by other bodies. Moreover, if the number of charters expands rapidly, the challenge of maintaining quality control grows as well. Lessons from other districts suggest that a deliberate and well-structured process for considering new schools is necessary. New Orleans, for example, found that maintaining quality control, or any control for that matter, decreased with rapid expansion.[15]

A strong regulatory process also allows districts to strategically use their charter authorizing and renewal role to assess the supply of schools across the district to target specific neighborhoods for new schools. For example, Denver considers neighborhood need in the chartering process.

Lesson 2: Ensure Access to High-Quality Schools for All

Charter schools are meant to offer additional choices to families; however, if charters are not subject to well-implemented rules regarding quality, open access, and retention of students, certain families may be excluded from full and equal participation—and thus "choice" may actually exacerbate racial, ethnic and economic disparities. For example, when New Orleans rapidly expanded its charters in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, poor and minority students ended up far underrepresented in the best schools.[16] Philadelphia's expansion of charters led to greater economic and racial segregation.[17] In fact, nationally, charters are more racially and economically segregated than public schools.[18] Across the country and in LAUSD, special education students, especially those with the most severe disabilities, are less likely to be enrolled in charters.[19] In LAUSD, students with special needs constitute 11 percent of all students enrolled in district schools and just 7 percent of students enrolled in charter schools.[20]

The reasons for the uneven participation of different groups of students in charters are many. In some cases, not all parents have access to the necessary information to make an informed decision in a timely manner. In others, the charter application and admission process is too complex and daunting for many families. Transportation can also be an issue—as families may simply not be able to get to the schools they want to choose. Regardless, no family should be consigned to a low-quality option.

At the same time, schools may communicate to parents that the school does not have the capacity to meet the needs of certain students. Because of accountability and financial pressures, all schools—

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district and charter—have incentives to attract and keep the highest achieving, lowest-cost students, a practice referred to as "creaming." But because of their separate admission processes and/or criteria, charters in many districts can cream more easily than traditional public schools.[21] Research on New Orleans' charter school system found that while some schools provided legally-required services to special needs students, other schools dissuaded parents from enrolling their students.[22] In California, 20 percent of charters were found to restrict access for high-need students.[23] Research has described a taxonomy of approaches that charter schools use to structure their student enrollment, including the location of the school, branding and marketing, and application processes.[24]

Three district practices have been found to be particularly effective at promoting equal access to high-quality options. These include standardizing the enrollment process to level the playing field, expanding and customizing the dissemination of school choice information, and creating support and incentives for all schools to accept and educate special needs students.

Standardize the enrollment process. A number of districts, including Denver, New Orleans, Oakland, and Camden, NJ, have instituted a unified and open enrollment system that includes both charter and regular district schools. The goal is to allow families to go through one district-created portal and process to apply to any school of choice. Families submit an application for each student and rank their students' top preferences. The district then matches students to schools based on students' preferences and available space, in some cases giving priority to students who live nearby or have a sibling currently enrolled in the school.

Such systems are meant to provide all parents equal access to all schools and to prohibit selectivity and favoritism. They can be difficult to implement well, however, in part because some charter operators argue that common application systems undermine their autonomy. For example, while Denver has succeeded in getting all charters and district schools to participate in its common enrollment system, New Orleans has not. There, charters in what is known as the Recovery School District are required by law to participate. Orleans Parish School Board-operated schools, new or conversion charter schools, and schools accepting vouchers for eligible students participate voluntarily. After a number of years of uneven participation, as of the 2015-16 application cycle, 89 percent of New Orleans' public schools participate in the centralized enrollment process.[25] For such systems to be effective, all schools must participate.

Expand and strengthen the information flow to parents. Effective systems of choice require consistent and clear information for families. To meet this need, some districts have proactively built robust, accessible information systems for families to use when choosing schools. In Denver, for example, the district provides parents and students with a number of resources to help them research their choice options, including a SchoolMatch tool that helps parents find schools with particular characteristics they are seeking such as language services, before- or after-school programs, special subject emphasis,

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and college and career readiness programs and a SchoolFinder tool that helps families locate their neighborhood schools and understand the overall system of choice.[26]

In Boston, each family receives a customized list of school choices based on the family's home address. The list includes every school within a one-mile radius of the family's home and nearby schools that have the highest levels of performance and growth. Students pick their top choices from their customized lists, and then the district uses an algorithm, similar to a lottery, to assign students. English learner students and students with special needs have access to schools on their home-based list, as well as program options in a wider cluster. Data show that the plan, which the district began implementing in fall 2013, is beginning to reduce disparities between charter and district schools in the number of English learner and special education students.[27]

However, like common enrollment systems, creating effective information and communication efforts is challenging. In the second year of New Orleans' efforts to create a clear and common process for applying, about half of the students attending failing schools did not apply at all in the first round, which meant that they were defaulted into the less desirable schools that had availability in the later rounds.[28] The implication is that districts cannot have a fair system of choice if some families do not have the information to make a choice. In New York, with a district-wide system of choice that includes charter, specialized and other district schools, the district is working with researchers and community-based organizations to study more effective ways to support and even personalize guidance to parents to help their children find the right match.[29] The leadership recognizes that simply "making information available" at school and websites is not sufficient.

Create support and incentives for all schools to enroll and educate special needs students. There are myriad reasons why charters tend to have a smaller proportion of special education students than other district schools. Parents of students with special needs are less likely than other parents to choose a charter when their child first enters school. Research in Denver and New York City found that parents often perceived that their children were ineligible for enrollment in charter schools.[30] Research in New Orleans found that some schools dissuaded parents from enrolling their students.[31] In cases where schools did enroll special needs students, parents reported that teachers did not have sufficient training or credentials to provide appropriate instructional support for students with special needs.[32] Ensuring that all children have access to all schools (charter or not) and reaching out to families when they first choose a school may be especially promising strategies.[33]

New Orleans has sought to shift the incentives for schools to serve special needs students through a flexible special needs funding formula, coordinating cost-sharing across the district through a citywide exceptional needs fund, and creating financial incentives for schools to expand their special education offerings.[34] New Orleans' new funding formula allows the district to distribute dollars to schools based on the level of service a student needs, differentiating funding where a student's disability diagnosis

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requires additional support. Schools can also tap New Orleans' citywide $1.4 million exceptional-needs fund for students whose special education costs exceed $22,000 a year. "New Schools for New Orleans" provides grants to high-performing charters to support their ability to serve students with special needs and also provides professional development support to charter school leaders to help them prepare their teachers to serve students with special needs.

LAUSD has committed itself to serving all students with disabilities, including students in charter schools.[35] But a significant gap remains between district and charter schools. The lessons from other charter-dense districts strongly suggest the need for proactive steps. Boston's open enrollment system accords preference to special education students to give them a nearby choice. New Orleans restructured its funding formula to address disincentives to serving all students. Leaving the market to work on its own is not sufficient and will not resolve the problem of under-enrollment of special education students in charter schools.

Lesson 3: Promote Diversity and Inclusion

Once a school has enrolled it students, attrition can become a problem. As the number of charter schools has expanded around the country, districts now must grapple with the problem of large numbers of students being suspended from or counseled out of charters. These are often students who are perceived as having disciplinary problems or other issues that make it difficult for them to succeed in a particular charter school's environment. For example, in Washington, DC, 2011-12 data showed that charters suspended 50 percent more students than did district schools (14 percent versus 9 percent).[36] An equitable system requires that students be treated fairly, regardless of their school. No public school should be able to jettison students simply because they are perceived as challenging to educate.

To promote diversity and inclusion, other charter-dense districts have created clear and transparent structures and guidelines that all schools—regardless of governance arrangements—must follow. Two particularly promising practices are requiring all schools backfill slots when students leave and creating common disciplinary guidelines across all schools.

Require "backfilling." If traditionally disadvantaged students are counseled out or families choose to leave a school, that school's student body can change appreciably, particularly in schools that do not "backfill," or replace exiting students. For example, in one study of charter schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, 60 percent of the students entering charter middle schools had left by 8th grade—and those who left tended to be lower achieving and come from lower-income households than their peers who remained.[37] To address this issue, many districts –including LAUSD—require that schools backfill when a student leaves. That is, charters—like other district schools—are required to replace students who leave with other students from their waitlists (or students just entering the neighborhood or district). Denver

manages the process of backfilling by maintaining centralized waiting lists. While this strategy does not ensure the maintenance of diversity, it is a step toward fairer enrollment practices.

Create transparent and standardized disciplinary guidelines and continue to meet students' ongoing learning needs. In response to the data showing relatively high rates of suspensions and expulsions in many charter schools, Washington, DC created a transparent reporting system that includes "School Equity Reports" for every school—charter and other district schools—which show suspension, expulsion, and mobility rates. When data reveal that a school has especially high rates of suspensions and/or expulsions, the DC Public Charter School Board holds a "board-to-board" meeting with the school's board chair, members of the school's board, and the school principal to discuss steps the school might take to address the problem. Schools that do not make progress are at risk of non-renewal. Early research shows marked declines in suspensions and expulsions.[38] For example, while expulsion rates vary across DC charter schools, the overall expulsion rate among charters has dropped from 14.5 percent in 2011 to 9.1 percent in 2015, comparable to the DC district school expulsion rate of 10 percent in 2015.[39]

New Orleans—again in response to disparities in expulsion and suspension rates between charters and other schools—also created a common district-managed process. Any school that seeks to expel a student must bring the case to a centralized administrative body that uses a common set of guidelines to make the final decision; this practice has moved the needle on equity and transparency for students and families regarding discipline practices.[40] New Orleans' centralized process also includes an expulsion hearing in which the hearing officer, in collaboration with the student's family and school, create a plan to address the student's behavior and work to ensure the student receives appropriate educational placement in an alternative school, a new school, the expelling school on probation status, or homeschool.

Systems that ensure fairness, however, are easier to design than to implement. Early on in New Orleans' charter expansion process, not all schools participated in the common disciplinary system. The Sacramento Unified School District, likewise, designed a system of "student study teams." The plan was that whenever a student was being expelled from a charter, a district staff person would meet with the charter school staff and family to discuss the reasons for the expulsion and identify other options. This process was meant to ensure the student was placed in a school that matched his/her needs. It also placed greater transparency and accountability on the charter to publicly justify its disciplinary practices. However, not all schools wanted to participate, and with a change in district leadership, the plan was never implemented.

Lesson 4: Leave No School Behind

In some charter-dense districts, neighborhood schools are "left behind." Charters often have access to more resources than neighborhood schools, thanks to philanthropic dollars, special facilities financing

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mechanisms, and start-up grants. These schools, some with new facilities and external resources, can become more attractive to parents. Moreover, as a greater proportion of schools go charter, there are fewer resources to support the district's central office—increasing the "tax" on the remaining district schools. As a result, neighborhood schools become less attractive to teachers and families alike and, in the worse cases, turn into "dumping grounds" for students the charter schools do not want.

To ensure that regular district schools are not left behind as charters are established, other charter-dense districts have promoted strategies for improving all district schools. These include creating a portfolio approach that treats all types of schools equally, focusing on stable and high-quality staff for all schools and expanding choice to a broad spectrum or all schools in the district.

Focus on the improvement of all schools. As charters expand, districts around the nation have found that they need to focus on both ensuring that the new charters are high-quality options for families, as well as strengthening other district schools. Denver's portfolio strategy includes charter schools, neighborhood schools, and innovation schools—district-run school that have more autonomy than other district schools. The district's "Collaboration Compact" drives equitable funding and access for all schools, and strives to replicate the most effective schools of all kinds.

Promote high-quality, stable staffing and reduce teacher attrition. Research has found high teacher attrition rates at charter schools, which in some cases are twice the rate in district schools. For example, in Florida where the number of charter schools has doubled in recent years, charter school teachers have more than twice the attrition rate of traditional school teachers.[41] Some districts have found ways to leverage the professional capacity of teachers in some schools for the betterment of all schools. Boston, for example, has conducted joint professional development trainings for teachers in all its schools to improve instruction for underserved students, including English language learners, special education students, and black and Latino males.[42]

Broaden choice in school districts. As districts expand their charter sector, they often find it effective to broaden the choices families have among all district schools. LAUSD already does this with its magnet, pilot, and autonomous schools, which have a strong track record of success. New York City has long had a tradition of small school options throughout the district, many not charters, with strong and long-lasting impacts.[43] Denver has its innovations schools. Boston has its Pilot Schools. In each case, the district is seeking to broaden the variety of educational opportunities offered to families and to do so through a range of governance agreements. Such a portfolio approach can provide school leaders greater flexibility, provide parents greater choice, and keep the focus off governance structures and on school quality, where it belongs. As districts consider the expansion of choice, they should consider the full range of options, not just the charter option.

Conduct a clear and detailed analysis of the fiscal impact of charter expansion. When students move from regular district schools to charter schools, dollars follow them. However, the actual costs of

running a district does not decrease by the same amount, due to a number of fixed costs, including the salaries of central and regional administrators, safety, maintenance, and building costs.[44] Particularly in light of LAUSD's current budget deficit, the district should consider conducting a fiscal impact analysis to estimate the potential negative fiscal impacts of additional costs associated with charters. Without appropriate fiscal management, the remaining district schools will see fewer dollars per pupil reaching the classroom. Data from MGT of America's LAUSD fiscal impact study showed an estimated $591 million annual cost and revenue loss to the district, mostly from declining enrollment lost to charter schools.[45] LAUSD should inform any further consideration of charter expansion with rigorous modeling of the direct and indirect costs of expansion at any scale.

Summary

Since the inception of charter schools over a quarter of a century ago, we have seen many changes, both positive and negative. At their best, charters can provide more families access to high-quality school options. But the potential for high-quality educational options is not a guarantee. Lessons from other districts show that charters can limit students' access and provide educational options that are low-quality and lack sufficient oversight and support. District experiences also provide evidence of multiple roads that increase access to high-quality options for parents within the regular district system—as LAUSD has already shown with its magnets and New York City has shown with its small schools of choice.

Focus on educational equity for children, not governance structures for adults. The key question should be how to create high-quality learning environments for all children. And, the answer cannot be a simplistic one that addresses governance structure instead of quality public education for all students. For example, are there certain subgroups of students who are underperforming? Are there certain neighborhoods where families do not have high-quality choices? Subsequent questions should then ask how might we best meet those needs? Answers to these questions surface strategies that improve educational opportunities, such as the need for more bilingual services or greater training and recruitment of special education teachers. Narrowly-framed questions that ask how many charters we should have are focused on adults and their preferences for school governance—and should never take precedence over substantive questions addressed at meeting student needs for a quality education.

Charter expansion can provide greater opportunities, or it can restrict access, typically for the neediest students. We have learned from other districts that creating systems and communication methods that truly provide equal access to all students is extremely challenging. Simply opening up the "market" to parental choice tends to favor those families with the most social capital, rather than those whose children lack quality choices. The focus has to be on ensuring that all students have high-quality schools—not simply creating options with the hope that the free market will improve education for all students.

Create transparency at every stage so that outcomes, opportunities and resource allocation can inform decision making for all families. Across the country, we have learned that for districts to maintain a healthy portfolio of school options, parents, community members, and policymakers need ready, consistent, comparable, and easily accessible information on all schools. Such information should include admission processes, enrollment patterns, finances, student outcomes, and disciplinary practices and results.

Build a system of public schools that meets all students' needs. For a system to work effectively, all students need high-quality schools; and all schools must be of high-quality. No neighborhood should lack an effective school for parents to choose. Creating such a system requires a razor-sharp focus on understanding student and school needs and then investing in teachers and leaders to build their capacities to create great public schools and serve all students.

In the end, Los Angeles needs all of its schools to be worth choosing and all of its children chosen by good schools.

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The Los Angeles Charter School War and the Peace Dividend

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From Popular Innovation to Wedge Issue

In the space of a decade, charter schools in Los Angeles morphed from a highly popular innovation to a political wedge issue. One's favorability toward charters has become a political litmus test for school board elections, and efforts to regulate them have become front-page news. Plans to replace traditional, district-run schools with charters have been characterized as bringing the district to a tipping point. The question is "tipping to where"? In the case of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), "where" depends on how the ongoing battles over charter schools intersect with two realities.

First, the nation's second largest school system is in the midst of profound institutional change. LAUSD is not a failed school district. It is not an unchanging monolith. It is an institution that is struggling to reshape itself, moving from early 20th Century assumptions about how to organize teaching and learning to a form better suited to our times. Often it does this unknowingly, because for the most part people within LAUSD have a strong institutional culture but a very weak institutional memory. They don't spend a lot of time trying to understand how they got to where they are.

Second, the politics surrounding the school district are dysfunctional. Simply put: the politics we've got won't get us the schools we need. Instead of crisis resolution we have gridlock, obscenely expensive trench warfare, and politics that turn our attention away from solutions that are staring us in the face. Because charter schools have become the wedge issue in politics, it is through the politics surrounding them that a new district will emerge. This short paper places the current charter school wars in historical context and suggests a way forward.

The Progressive Era Heritage

There was a revolution in American government in the first two decades of the 20th Century, and the Los Angeles public schools were one of its victories. Before 1903, schools in L.A., like those in most big cities, were creatures of often-corrupt city politics. What are called the Progressive Era reforms sought to take running schools out of partisan politics and into the realm of a professionally managed public bureaucracy. College training and licenses were required for teachers and administrators. Civil service rules governed their hiring, not patronage. Superintendents and other top administrators

were appointed rather than being elected. The school system was almost entirely separated from city government and mayoral control, and school board elections were separated from those for city council.

By the 1920s, Los Angeles public schools became the epitome of Progressive Era reforms. The schools created a complex, integrated hierarchy that provided a wide array of social services as well as elementary and secondary education. High school enrollment and graduation soared in the pre-World War II years, and the school board of community elites mirrored the ethos of the local business elite. It was considered the Best in the West, a school district that others could emulate, and did.

Challenging the Old Institution

Like many big city school systems, Los Angeles experienced wrenching demographic changes in the years following 1950. In the space of 50 years, a student body that had been 85 percent white and mostly middle class became nearly 85 percent students of color, many immigrant, mostly poor.

At the same time, the City underwent equally dramatic social and economic changes. Its manufacturing economy collapsed, many of the largest corporations were bought or merged. The business elite lost its iron grip on the City's politics. By the 1990s, Los Angeles again became the port of immigration, and the City's schools filled with immigrant children, just as they had a century earlier.

The school district's loss of political legitimacy has been largely a function of its inability to adequately respond to these changes, particularly racial diversity and desegregation. Desegregation lawsuits and racial politics, which began in the 1960s, were followed by student activism, collective bargaining, and a property tax limitation revolt.

Heroic Reform Efforts

There have been heroic efforts at system-wide reform. From 1993 to 1999 a classic big city coalition of corporate chiefs (mostly from businesses that no longer exist), community voices, and the head of United Teachers Los Angeles produced an elegant plan, called LEARN, to radically decentralize the district, give power and voice to teachers and principals, and to support schools with professional development.

As Robert Wycoff, the president of ARCO petroleum and LEARN's chair, said when he presented the plan to the school board in March 1993, LEARN was not a micro level blueprint for fixing schools. "Instead," he said," it is the beginning of a new school system."

When I told former (L.A. City) mayor Richard Riordan that I was going to write about the LEARN reforms, he responded, "That's easy; LEARN failed." It's true, LEARN did not transform the school district as its

supporters had promised. But the important thing to remember about LEARN is not that it failed but that it almost worked. It was an audacious plan.

Before LEARN withered in the late 1990s, more than half the schools in the district signed up for the autonomy and training it offered for teachers and administrators. In many ways, LEARN was the parent of the current charter movement and innovations within district-run schools, such as pilot schools.

I know why LEARN failed. It didn't fail for any of the reasons that people point to. It wasn't the union, even though there were LEARN opponents within United Teachers Los Angeles. It wasn't recalcitrant administrators, although there certainly were many of them. It was the incapacity of LAUSD to implement and sustain reforms that defeated LEARN. The district had been hollowed out.

The old institution of public education, which had been put in place in 1903, when the school district was separated from city government, was built on the assumption of high trust and the schools' freedom from external interference. In Learning from L.A., we tell the story of how, beginning in the 1960s, the Progressive Era institution of public education in Los Angeles was discredited, delegitimized, and ultimately hollowed out to the extent that it lost the capacity to undertake substantial reforms.

For three decades, what would be called "a perfect storm" of court cases, teacher unionization, tax limitation measures and legislative activism moved the money and momentum for education policy to Sacramento and Washington. After Proposition 13 removed its taxing authority in 1978, the school board had no fiscal capacity. And after board members were elected from districts rather than citywide, they began to see themselves as representatives of a specific constituency rather than the whole city.

When LEARN collapsed in 1999, many of its supporters followed another way to create school autonomy: charter schools.

Cases in point: Virgil Roberts was a civil rights attorney who supported the plaintiffs in the L.A. desegregation case. He was part of almost every school reform effort in the 1980s and 1990s. He's now on the board of Great Public Schools Now. Judy Burton was the Assistant Superintendent in charge of implementing LEARN. She went on to the head the Alliance charter group. There are scores of others.

1. Financial Weakness

The hollowing out of the district's capacity is made worse by LAUSD's perilous financial condition. A blue ribbon review panel called together by former Superintendent Ramon Cortines projected a $333-million budget deficit by 2017-18 and a $600-million deficit by 2019-20, driven primarily by pension and health care costs.

The report concluded, "Thus, if the District desires to continue as a going concern beyond FY 2019-20, capable of improving the lives of students and their families, then a combination of difficult, substantial and immediate decisions will be required. Failure to do so could lead to the insolvency of the LAUSD and the loss of local governance authority that comes from state takeover."

Charter schools add significantly to the fiscal threat. Enrollment drives revenue in California, where stable property taxes make up only a small part of the schools' revenue base. And over the last decade, LAUSD has lost 100,000 students, significantly more than the entire student population of Long Beach. About half the decline is attributable to changes in demographics: aging families and a decline in immigration. But the other half represents students who have left district-run schools for charters, 50,000 of them.

2. Permanent Crisis Mongering

In the last chapters of Learning from L.A., we declared LAUSD to be in permanent crisis, essentially a condition in which the district is repeatedly declared to be failing and in which there are no long-term winners in the battle over its direction. How did we get that way?

During the 1999 school board campaign, the Los Angeles Times asked candidates whether the district was in crisis. All of the challengers, including Yolie Flores and Caprice Young, said yes. Of the incumbents, only David Tokofsky agreed. Of the incumbents, only he survived.

The lesson was clear: crisis mongering can get you elected. It's been a campaign tactic ever since.

Since 1999, school board elections and superintendent selections have divided self-styled "reformers," who favor charter schools and tough-minded relationships with United Teachers Los Angeles from what might be called "incrementalists," who believe that the district is making progress and can best be improved by creating stability to work the existing district management.

Others have likened the battles between the two sides to trench warfare, and they are not far off. The battles have been vicious and enormously costly. Although it is impossible to total the cost because of the amount of dark money behind school board campaigns, it is reasonable to assert that LAUSD board contests in the last decade have been the most expensive in the history of the republic.

The board majority has shifted back and forth and this, in turn, has led to instability in the district's top leadership, not only the superintendency, but also among the second and third level administrative staff. Meanwhile, charter schools have continued to grow.

Charter Schools Emerge, Grow

In 1992, just as the LEARN reforms were beginning inside LAUSD, Gov. Pete Wilson signed SB 1448, the second charter school law in the nation following Minnesota's. Its author, Gary K. Hart (D-Santa Barbara), described it saying, "We are trying to break out of the bureaucratic, legalistic mode that is so frustrating to many people." LEARN's sponsors had said much the same thing.

From the outset of LEARN, there were those in its leadership who believed that decentralization and autonomy within the district would naturally lead to schools later seeking charter status, but the LEARN plan never mentioned such a metamorphosis.

3. Charters in LAUSD

In 1993, the year after California's charter law was passed, LAUSD had one independent charter and six "affiliated charters," schools granted operating autonomy while remaining in the district. Together they enrolled 3,069 students.

In 2016-2017, there were 225 independent charter schools and 54 affiliated charters. Together, they enroll 154,000 students, the largest charter school enrollment in the country. Indeed, charter schools in Los Angeles would constitute the second largest school district in California

and the 17th largest school district in the United States, about the same size as the Dallas (Texas) Independent School District (See Table 1 below).

Most of the independent charter schools are operated by charter management organizations (CMO), the Alliance for Public Schools with 12,241 students and Green Dot Public Schools with 10,013 students being the largest of them.

In addition to charters, the district includes several unconventional operating and governance arrangements for schools, many of which are "choice" schools in the sense that their students do not necessarily reside in the neighborhood surrounding the school.

Figure: 1 Charter School Growth and Enrollment

	Independent Charter Schools	Independent Charter Schools Norm Enrollment	Affiliated Charter Schools	Affiliated Charter Schools Norm Enrollment	Total Number of Charter Schools	Total Norm Enrollment
1992-93	0	0	0	0	0	0
1993-94	1	1057	6	2,012	7	3,069
1994-95	3	2,107	7	3,578	10	5,685
1995-96	3	2,219	9	6,466	12	8,685
1996-97	4	3,354	9	6,726	13	10,080
1997-98	4	3,434	10	8,002	14	11,436
1998-99	5	3,598	16	11,280	21	14,878
1999-2000	7	4,137	26	18,800	33	22,937
2000-01	10	4,910	26	21,426	36	26,336
2001-02	13	6,111	26	21,806	39	27,917
2002-03	24	9,164	26	21,887	50	31,051
2003-04	41	19,782	8	5,476	49	25,258
2004-05	58	23,827	10	6,408	68	30,235
2005-06	76	29,105	10	6,331	86	35,436
2006-07	93	34,764	10	6,307	103	41,071
2007-08	114	40,658	11	6,860	125	47,518
2008-09	137	51,087	11	6,999	148	58,086
2009-10	150	60,643	11	7,270	161	67,913
2010-11	171	69,935	12	8,281	183	78,216
2011-12	179	82,788	19	14,109	198	96,897
2012-13	185	89,112	43	30,080	228	119,192
2013-14	196	95,381	52	41,571	248	136,952
2014-15	211	101,060	53	41,979	264	143,039
2015-16	221	107,142	53	41,555	274	148,697
2016-17	225	111,559	54	43,094	279	154,653

Source: LAUSD Charter Schools Division

There are also unique operating arrangements, such as The Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, which enrolls 14,000 students in 18 schools. LAUSD operates magnet schools, pilot schools that are essentially in-district charters, and schools with a variety of self-governing options. About a quarter of the students within the LAUSD boundaries go to classes in other than traditional attendance-zone defined schools.

4. The Charter Wars

In September 2015, Los Angeles Times reporter Howard Blume disclosed a $490-million plan to create 260 new charter schools, which would create a school system in which the majority of students attended charters. The effort headed by the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation created a new, sharp

political line. Although the scope of the plan has diminished and the Great Public Schools Now organization has included district magnet schools in its scope of benefactions, the idea of a chartered district has become a political front line.

As I wrote at the time, "this effort is not a gracious attempt to rescue students from 'failing public schools' or to provide an innovative learning experience. It's an effort to transform the century-old institution of public education." As the Broad plan says, "Thanks to the strength of its charter leaders and teachers, as well as its widespread civic and philanthropic support, Los Angeles is uniquely positioned to create the largest, highest-performing charter sector in the nation. Such an exemplar would serve as a model for all large cities to follow." To no one's great surprise, a massive counter-attack followed. As expected, the fight has spread from Los Angeles to statewide politics, and, as this is written, the legislature is considering bills to more heavily scrutinize charter approvals.

It is reasonable that philanthropists would support charters. Founders of charters are, by definition, entrepreneurial and they fit perfectly with the contemporary thrust of venture philanthropy. By investing in charters, philanthropists, some of whom were greatly disappointed by efforts to work within LAUSD, can see where their investments go and can judge whether they are paying off. Charters are an easier, more sure, investment than trying to change a large public school district directly.

But adding more charters doesn't constitute a plan for public education, even if all schools become charters. With the possible exception of New Orleans, every effort I know of to use philanthropic money to blow-up, take over, and kill the old culture of a public school system has failed.

A case in point: Dale Russakoff's book, "The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's Public Schools?" tells the story of Newark and Mark Zuckerberg's $100-million gift. It should be required reading to anyone with a checkbook and public school reform hubris. So, while it is not unreasonable that charter schools are attractive to philanthropists who are weary of trying to reform big city school districts, it is deeply irresponsible for charter school advocates not to specify the kind of school system that emerges from the endgame of their charter school expansion plan. The Broad plan talks about a tipping point. Tipping to where? At a minimum, the charter community should step up and specify how it thinks the market in schooling would work. Every deregulated industry I know of turns into a price-fixing oligopoly that gives lousy service and beats up on its customers. Think about how California fared with the Texas price fixers during the electricity crisis or how much you enjoy flying on one of the four airlines that control 80 percent of the market in the United States.

5. Charters are Parasitic

On its face, the Broad plan calls for replacement. It contains not a single sentence about how the existing school district would benefit, except perhaps through the spur of competition. But replacement is not benign. It leaves behind a school district less capable of transformation,

more obsessed with fulfilling its statutory duties with fewer resources. To recall Economics 101: in periods of decline, marginal revenue—what school districts get per student—falls faster than their costs.

For many who call themselves school reformers, replacement is just dandy. The sooner that we can rid ourselves of school boards, union contracts, old fashioned due process job protections, and requirements for transparency, the better, the logic goes. But there's a problem that will quickly confront those who want to vastly increase the numbers of charter students in Los Angeles. Charter schools are parasitic.

Like mistletoe and Spanish moss, they depend on the health of their host to keep them alive. Only because LAUSD is at least semi-healthy can it maintain a charter schools office, process applications, have some small measure of quality control over renewals and operate the schools to which students return when they don't fit with a charter school's program. Public district schools also absorb students when a charter or charter management organization fails.

When there is no district, or not much of one, charter schools have to reinvent one, and it is the process of school district reinvention that make the New Orleans example most interesting. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina 10 years ago, New Orleans has become nearly an all-charter district. The early years were of necessity spent building and making individual schools work. The current challenge in New Orleans is to rebuild the system of schools, and both sides of the charter school war in Los Angeles could learn from their effort.

Charter advocates have a clear self-interest in seeing that the district's finances are solid. They may point fingers at fiscal mismanagement within LAUSD. Indeed, the recent independent review panel report indicates that the district has nearly 65,000 employees, more now than

before the enrollment decline. But a financial default by the district would greatly affect charter financing and operations, too.

Even if the California Legislature did not intervene to restructure the district, perhaps voiding existing charter agreements in the process, a financial overseer appointed by the state would gain broad powers over how and when funds were spent. Investing philanthropic dollars in charters would become riskier and so would the prospects for raising funds for any charter or district reform plan.

So, in the end—or maybe in the beginning—it makes sense for the charter advocates to use their business acumen and political clout to see that the district itself is fiscally healthy before opening more charter schools.

6. Expanding Charters v. Improving the District

One of the lessons from school reform efforts in other cities is that it is very difficult to expand charter offerings and improve district-run schools at the same time. Newark, New Jersey's, reform scheme tried to do both, but it left Cami Anderson, the superintendent brought in to implement district reforms, with a hopeless task. Charters were disproportionately attracting "the choosers."

Despite demographic similarities, the populations attending district and charter schools are different. "[P]arents who are savvy and proactive about their children's education—the kinds of parents who give their kids a head start on their schooling—are more likely to find out about charter schools in the first place, attend their meetings, enter the lotteries for admission and then help their children succeed at those schools," said a Los Angeles Times editorial.

The effects of more motivated students and families moving to charter schools has implications that go beyond losing attendance-based state and federal revenue. As the editorial said, "another important question as the number of charter schools grows is what the effect will be on the culture of schools and on their achievement levels as more motivated parents and their children abandon district schools."

In Russakoff's The Prize, Anderson calls chartering "the lifeboat theory of education reform." She added, "I told the governor [Chris Christie] that I did not come here to shuffle the deck chairs on the Titanic. I did not come here to phase the district out." She told the mayor and state superintendent, "Your theories [of chartering and district reform] are on a collision course."

In Washington, D.C., Superintendent Kaya Henderson said, "I think we are now at a point where the citizens in the city are saying, 'How do these two systems work together because it doesn't make sense to us?'"

We've known about the active, choosing-parent phenomenon for decades. The 50-year rush to the suburbs was as much fueled by a search for better schools as it was for better housing. And every major city in the U.S. exhibits a flight of the professional middle class to private schools. Although the overall private school attendance in Los Angeles is quite low—it was about 10 percent in 2000—in some upper income neighborhoods it exceeds 50 percent. In New Orleans, the laboratory for the charter school experiment, a quarter of the city's children attend private schools, and those schools are 50 percent White compared to the district and charter schools which are 92 percent students of color.

The "chooser" issue will be particularly important as the demographics of Los Angeles change. In a reversal of the trend over the past half-century, the core of Los Angeles is becoming popular as a place of residence for the young and well educated. The critical question for

LAUSD is whether its schools will be attractive to them or whether they will shun district schools in favor of charters or private schooling. The idea of "common schooling," an American hallmark since the early 19th Century, hangs in the balance.

The Peace Dividend: A Design for a 21st Century School System

I haven't calculated the cost of the charter school wars. It may be impossible. The peace dividend lies in what might be possible, but isn't now. Because the current battle lines in the charter war perpetuate stalemate, a productive peace requires creating a new goal, so that the question becomes how to design a 21st Century school system rather than whether the old system should have more or fewer charters.

While the gap between how school systems are designed and the performance we expect of them is most apparent in urban schools, but it exists everywhere. Most reforms—including most charter schools—tinker within the existing learning system of classes, semesters, lessons, and memory recall tests.

Instead, California and Los Angeles should be a world leader in personalization and adaptivity, delivering educative content directly to students. But the possibilities of designing new learning systems have not been made sufficiently vivid to gain political champions and supporters.

Neither the charter school expansion advocates nor those pushing back against them have publicly acknowledged the need to create a fundamentally different school system than the one put in place a century ago. But pivoting away from debating more or fewer charters and toward designing a truly modern school system provides a window for a political breakthrough if someone had the moxie and political clout to take advantage of it.

At the end of Learning from L.A., we suggest some policy levers that might move the huge school system toward reinvention. Given a decade's hindsight, I'd amend those ideas with the following design principles:

1.   Continue Decentralization

In 1967, prodded by the U.S. Department of Justice, the District began to plan in response to its changing student demographics. What was called the Planning Team produced a major reform plan with four elements—decentralization, grassroots involvement, higher standards for all and greater variety and choice—found in virtually every subsequent plan.

Though reform plans and superintendents have come and gone, the trend toward more decentralization continues. In addition to more than 250 charters, the school district has three brands of semi-autonomous schools: 49 Pilot schools, 24 Extended School Based Management schools, and 21 Local School Initiative schools. There are also 23 Magnet schools. A 21st Century LAUSD should build on this trend.

2. Build Networks, Not Little Hierarchies

LAUSD has been less successful in decentralizing its management structure. The numbers of local district offices, and the powers assigned them, have waxed and waned over various administrations. Generally, new superintendents tend to centralize management as a means of asserting their authority and control, and those with more experience tend to decentralize operations.

The failure of LAUSD to successfully decentralize its operations has given rise to repeated calls to break up the district. Smaller hierarchies have advantages, but they are not the only plausible future for the nation's second largest school district. Consider, for a moment, the inherent operational and political advantages of network style organizations.

Operationally, large, integrated civil service hierarchies were idealized as the "good government" form of public schooling in the early 20th Century, and LAUSD became one of the most complete and best-developed example of this Progressive Era idea. And it just kept getting bigger, growing as the city grew and absorbing surrounding school districts until 1964.

But computer technology and experience with organizations such as cooperatives, franchises, and loosely coupled cellular organizations point to the operating advantage of 21st Century network design. Largely autonomous subunits link with one another to provide support, training, idea generation, and economies of scale.

Network Design

Network design is one of the ways that LAUSD can effectively decentralize, a goal that school reformers in Los Angeles have chased for four decades. The basic idea is to devolve as much operating authority to individual schools as possible, then let the schools link with one another in networks.

Network style organizations represent a way to merge LAUSD's trend toward autonomous schools and its struggle to decentralize. Five years ago, I thought that LAUSD would recognize the inherent logic of what it is becoming and organize around it. But the battle about and with former Superintendent John Deasy intervened.

The district needs to be legally enabled to follow this developmental path by creating legally autonomous networks of schools. Legal autonomy is important because it would remove the self-governing status from the favor or disfavor of an incumbent superintendent or school board. (This is what happened with the network idea in New York City, which was overly identified with the Bloomberg-Klein administration.)

The logical geographic form of an autonomous network would be a high school and its feeder schools, something like the clusters that the 1990s reform LEARN envisaged. But there are non-geographic

forms, too. A cluster could form around a neighborhood or a pedagogical idea, like New Tech Schools or Big Picture Schools. Functioning clusters already exist within some charter management organizations, and the autonomous cluster idea would provide them a link to LAUSD as a kind of holding company.

Given legal authorization, the District could entertain petitions to form autonomous clusters from teams of existing school managers. It could entertain petitions from charter management organizations. It could encourage and support groups of teachers to develop self-managing schools. There is experience about how to do this, and how not to, in the recent Public School Choice initiative.

Advantages of Networks

Evolving LAUSD into autonomous operating units offers several advantages. First, the networks could be smaller and more nimble than the proposed school districts. Historically, breakup plans envisaged five or six districts, creating a series of 100,000 student districts, a size thought to be well beyond the economies of scale for schools.

Second, borrowing from charters and other innovators could take place without requiring teachers and administrators to leave the school district, its employment security, fringe benefits and pension plan. By privileging innovation in the charter sector through philanthropic support, we have essentially told educators that to be an innovator you must first put your job and the financial security of your family on the line.

Third, autonomous networks could be created gradually, as people are capable and willing to form them. History tells us that trying to move all the pieces of LAUSD together is difficult, as the recent history of mandating that all high school students take a college-ready "A through G" curriculum reveals. The autonomous network idea can serve as an aspirational goal, one that allows training and development, team building, and commitment among the school staffs involved rather than ritual compliance with a central office mandate.

Fourth, the autonomous network idea would allow grassroots connection between schools and communities to deepen without the cumbersome governance arrangement of a multiplicity of elected school boards, such as Chicago tried. Grassroots participation would also extend to immigrant families, whose members would not necessarily be citizens and thus be eligible to run for office or to vote.

3. Create a Big Tent

Los Angeles needs an organization that makes all its publicly financed schools work together. Experience in New Orleans, Newark, Washington, D.C. and other cities indicates that there needs to be systemic coherence.

Increasingly, charter-friendly writers and activists, such as Andy Smarick, are coming to the conclusion that simply adding more charters doesn't fix a city's education system.

Writing in the Fordham Institute blog, Smarick lauds Washington D.C.'s charter sector, but sees the overhanging systemic issue. "We have two sectors [charter and district], scores of operators, and hundreds of campuses, but we don't have a coherent system of schools," he writes.

If groups of schools gained autonomy, what would LAUSD become? It would still be the public school district for Los Angeles and the other municipalities where its schools are located, but it would operate more as a coordinating institution than a conventional school district.

A Portfolio

LAUSD would be an operating school district. It would run some schools directly. Others would be run by charters, CMO's, groups of teachers, by university partners or the teachers union. Like a public pension fund or a private investment trust, LAUSD would authorize the best schools it could, and it would nurture and grow new schools.

"Portfolio of schools" has been applied to this idea, but that phrase has picked up negative political baggage associated with outsourcing and for-profit providers. I think that's the wrong image and an inaccurate description.

The network idea is more bottoms-up: groups of schools, geographic or not, that want to work together. They build capacity and then gain permission for autonomous operation from the district.

LAUSD would retain oversight capability, and it would have sufficient power to alter or deny network agreements and restructure low-performing networks. But it would not be a "day trader" opening and closing schools because of test score dip or rise; it would operate more as an urban farmer. (It's interesting to recall that the Public School Choice program quickly morphed into an effort built around cooperation and assistance rather than competition.)

All the schools would have the same accountability rules for outcomes. The data systems for all schools and networks would be compatible. They wouldn't have to be the same system, just operate on the same data conventions and specifications.

Autonomous networks would be reviewed periodically, perhaps every five years in an examination that was paired with accreditation. But the district would retain no managerial or operating authority over the autonomous schools or the schools within them.

An Incubator of New Schools

LAUSD would be an incubator of new schools and educational practices. In this way, charters could better serve as research and development laboratories for the larger district, one of the intentions that the founders of the charter movement had for them. Partnerships with universities and charters could be built around innovation rather than routine service delivery or rudimentary professional development; those would be the functions of the autonomous networks.

Collaboration with private, for-profit organizations might become beneficial rather than toxic. Think, for a moment, how the ill-fated relationship between Apple, Pearson and LAUSD might have worked if the arrangement was designed to develop and test new modes of learning instead of imposing an inadequately developed system at an impossible scale.

Quality Control Agency

Third, LAUSD would become the quality control agency for public schooling in Los Angeles. Consistent with the requirements of the state Local Control Accountability Plan, it could monitor the development and execution of plans before handing them off to the county office, as the statute requires.

Real accountability means good metrics and going beyond them. Creating the conditions for active learning and borrowing of best practices from school to school, from teacher to teacher, is much different from finding a perfect curriculum and mandating everyone to use it. Real accountability is as much process as it is an endpoint rating.

4. Design with Extreme Empathy

When I interviewed Tim Brown, CEO of the design firm IDEO, about the process of rethinking systems, he said, "The first step is building empathy for the stakeholders in the system." In a school system, that means starting with the students and working out. Any idea that does not successfully motivate a student will ultimately fail.

In order to focus on students, the adults need to get beyond their self-serving partisan scripts. Stop the mantras that charter schools are the province of "billionaires and privatizers," or that "older teachers are inherently grifters, only in it for their pensions" or "charters are saving kids from failing public schools." There are no saints in this war, only interest groups, and real differences about those interests. The moralizing evoked over the last 20 years is helping no one.

Los Angeles needs a real design studio where people can check their ideology at the door and work at being hard on the problem rather than vicious to one another. That may be one of the roles that partnership organizations, such as the L.A. Compact, should play. Start with the lives of real students,

not statistical profiles. Follow them through the day and week. Understand their context and families. Learn how they process information in school and outside. Then think about how to do school better. Build prototypes rapidly. Try them out. Don't try to create universal solutions.

5.   Solve Structural Problems

Part of building to last involves solving big structural fiscal problems that endanger any reform or transformation problem at LAUSD. It's important that political and legal attention be directed toward solving the pension problem, funding special education, and making the Local Control Financing System work.

Because the problems are so contentious, some special structure is probably needed. The high-level commission created by former Superintendent Cortines, painted an alarming picture of the district's vulnerabilities, as have previous internal reports. None of these has been sufficient to spur action. The state needs to create a body with sufficient authority to solve the pension problem.

6.   Create a New Learning Infrastructure

Some years ago, I started looking at new forms of learning. The harder I looked, the more I realized that the way out of permanent crisis was a new version of education: make investments in it and build political support around those ideas and investments.

The good news is that we have it within our reach to break down the batch processing system that the Progressive Reformers brought to us from industrial manufacturing a century ago. Public education is now in an unusual situation in which relatively small investments in learning infrastructure can have substantial impact in terms of capacity building and systems changing.

What I call Learning 2.0 is partly about technology, but mostly about how humans do their work. It recognizes that students are the real workers in this system: see Design with Empathy, above. It's about personalization, adaptation and continuous improvement. It's about rapid prototyping of new ideas rather than waiting for a textbook publisher to run the gauntlet of state approvals. It's about empowering teachers as intellectuals.

It's about building a learning infrastructure that is available to every student, public or private, charter or district, extending the schoolhouse into the community and into the home. Bringing new production ideas to Los Angeles is not as difficult or abstract as it may seem.

Move Beyond Batch Processing

Our predecessors in the Progressive Era, circa 1903, created the first full version of public education. If education were software, it would be Learning 1.0, a batch processing system creating age-graded

schools, a scope-and-sequence curriculum, and the enduring Carnegie Unit system of counting credits toward high school graduation. Most everything else followed: standards, tests, school rankings.

But the batch processing system has severe design limitations. If your learning style doesn't fit within the batch, tough luck. The same problems arise if you learn slower or faster than most students, or if the standard curriculum doesn't excite you.

The good news is that we have it within our reach to break down the batch processing system. Radical personalization is now possible. Public education is now in an unusual situation in which relatively small investments in learning infrastructure can have substantial impact in terms of capacity building and systems changing. Partly because of Internet technology, we have the capacity to create learning 2.0, the next full-scale version of public education, and it is possible to do so without the political costs of frontal attack on existing interests.

Students as the Real Workers

Recognizing that students are the real workers, it provides them the tools they need to learn, when and where they need them. Providing learning tools to students stokes their motivation. For example, just providing students clear information about standards and learning objectives is likely to help them self-direct. A student at Jefferson High School told me, "I'm a sophomore; I should be a junior, but I messed up last year, didn't get my work done. Now, (I'm in a personalized program and) I know how to take responsibility for what I do." There is a lot of freedom to learn in different ways within Learning 2.0, but it's not permissive.

Help English Learners

LAUSD might prototype such a student motivating system with its English learners. Suppose that Los Angeles' philanthropists came to understand that adding another 100 charter schools wouldn't help very much, but that building a learning infrastructure for English learners would.

I am not a second language educator and won't dive into the details of a learning system for English learners, but just from a design perspective it would have three elements:

First, it would get information directly to students and their parents. I've spent time in classrooms where a student's teacher is aware of what progress a student is making, but where the student is unaware of what they needed to do to move up the achievement ladder to be reclassified as English fluent.

Gaining the coveted "reclassification" status is extremely important for students. The data clearly show that students who begin school as English learners and are not reclassified by the fifth grade face grim

prospects in school. But reclassification means more than learning English; it means mastering the EL teaching and testing system, which has multiple hurdles. Just as professional middle class families understand that getting a child into a selective college means more than studying hard in high school, EL students and their parents need to know the procedural steps and hurdles involved.

A sophisticated version of this system would have it connecting with a school and district student information system, but it would not have to start out with such a connection.

Second, a learning system for EL students would provide direct and supplemental instruction.

Mobile devices, such as phones and tablets, are extremely efficient delivery mechanisms for supplementary instruction, vocabulary building, training the ear to the nuances of language, and even speech instruction.

Third, the EL system should work to allow students to test their own achievement and get formative feedback. A parallel system should be built at the teacher level, and, as with the student systems, should be made modular and customizable. Teaching resources, networking and professional development should be available on demand for teachers.

None of this need start from ground zero. There are both open source and proprietary products that can be skillfully combined without falling prey to the problems of the Apple/Pearson/LAUSD iPad contract.

Conclusion: Why Don't We Claim the Peace Dividend?

The politics of charter schooling have produced ugly and debilitating warfare. Neither party to the war grasps the larger issue of an institution in transition. There is a large peace dividend to be claimed, but there is no political will or apparent incentive to do so. That's bad.

Los Angeles once had a large, traditional big-city alliance of business, civic and labor leaders brought together to reshape the school district. I believe it is time to revisit that idea.

Public Schools for the Public Good:
Building an LAUSD Grounded in the Principles of Deeper Learning, Student Centeredness, Equity, Inclusivity, Democracy and Collective Responsibility

Jeannie Oakes, UCLA & Learning Policy Institute

Los Angeles is at a critical turning point in its long journey to develop a school system that realizes the incredible potential of this City and its diverse residents. In Los Angeles, and across the country, public schools have long been an essential force in preparing the next generation to live well, contribute to community life and build the country's social and economic vibrancy. Over the years, graduates of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) have used the opportunities provided by a strong public education system to become well-educated, innovative problem-solvers who have helped guide the city and the nation through unpredictable times.

However, not everyone attending LAUSD schools has been so fortunate. The system has been one with winners and losers, providing an outstanding education to only a fraction of students. Although such a system never realized the promise of educating all children well, it might have sufficed in a labor-intense, manufacturing society. Today, however, as knowledge explodes, the pace of change accelerates, and the City and the world become more complex and unpredictable, our well-being depends more than ever on public schools. But today, we need a system to develop all people, not just some, into highly competent and caring community members who are willing and able to solve pressing social, political, economic and environmental problems. Such an education system is a collective necessity.

Much Must Change

- The values that underlie schooling undermine our collective need to educate all students well—individualism, competition and merit support the view that a good education is a private good, available only to a deserving few.

- The way we continue to operate schools like industrial factories is completely out of sync with what we know about teaching and learning. The current model harkens back to assembly-line and batch-processing manufacturing, with teachers as line workers, and management that has become increasingly bureaucratic.

- Even the way we've done school reform has failed. We've borrowed from business and industry—using performance metrics to rate and rank schools by narrowly defined short-term "results" and providing "consumers" with information to help them choose among factories that are competing for their "business."

This approach has failed to redress systemic inequities, promote a culture of higher expectations for all, or yield higher levels of readiness among graduates. Moreover, reforms based on choice move schools even further away from being democratic, social institutions firmly embedded in the public sphere. Clearly, making education reflective of the strong and vibrant relationship between democracy and schools will require dramatic shifts in education policy and practice. It's not a question about whether we have "charters" or "regular" public schools. Neither overly bureaucratic public systems, nor a privatized choice system will bring the dramatic changes we need. This seems to me like the fundamental challenge facing Los Angeles.

Vision and Values

That's why Los Angeles leaders might find useful and inspiring the approach being developed by the Partnership for the Future of Learning—a group of national and regional funders and a diverse group of leaders they have allied with. The Partnership has set out to refocus reform efforts on five key principles – each widely accepted, and none particularly controversial or innovative on its own. However, in combination, these principles can move the nation away from both the educational status quo and the dominant reform frame of having schools compete and having families choose. dominant reform frame of having schools compete and having families choose.

Let me describe each of them a bit more, expanding on what they imply for schooling.

Deeper Learning

First is providing deeper learning that cultivates academic competence, higher order thinking skills and commitment to learning, and that readies young people personally and socially for responsible adulthood. This means that all young people have the opportunity, resources and relationships to develop a rich, interwoven braid of knowledge, intellectual and social skills, emotional capabilities and mindsets they need to craft their own lives and contribute to the collective good. To weave such ropes, students must have an active role, working together with teachers to engage with and apply rigorous knowledge, develop key skills and make learning connections with their own communities and culture.

Student-Centeredness

To support deeper learning, we also have to change teaching, so that it is in line with the science of learning and research on how young people develop and build skills. Learning opportunities must be more active than passive and more social than individual. Assessment must look far more like doing "real work" than like typical tests. Student interests, knowledge and culture must be valued. Learning settings must look more like apprenticeships than classroom instruction. That means that the roles of both teachers and students change. Teachers guide students in an ongoing process of creative production, helping them learn to select information, judge its quality and use it in varying combinations for real purposes. Students get their hands on knowledge. Think about the differences between spoon-feeding learners versus teaching them to "cook."

Equity and Inclusion

Equity requires us to confront the reality that some communities are filled with opportunities to learn in and out of school – time, experiences, relationships with knowledgeable and caring adults – while in others, these opportunities are few and far between either in school or out. The first requirement of equitable education is to connect all communities to strong, reliable schools, with sufficient resources and opportunities, augmented with the supports that students need to access them fully. But a robust commitment to equity also demands inclusiveness (e.g., deliberate steps to connect curriculum and instruction to diverse students' histories, cultures and communities); and agency (empowering under-served students, families and communities to become equal partners in education).

Democracy

Near the founding of our republic, public schools were established as an essential bedrock of democracy. Today, democracy isn't a focus of either the content or the process of schooling. We need schools that place a priority on preparing young people to address increasingly complex social, economic and political issues that democracies around the world face. Making students the drivers of learning is not only integral to learning itself, but also the best preparation for being active and engaged in civic life. Communities must also reclaim public schools as key democratic institutions – a role that has been put at risk by both the status quo and by recent reforms. Schools must be shaped by communities, in partnership with professional educators. Of course, one of the toughest problems that schools solve is the isolation of young people by both economic status and race. This limits the extent to which they can prepare to participate in and wisely guide a diverse democracy.

Respect and Collective Responsibility

Finally, it is impossible to build learning environments characterized by deeper learning, student-centeredness, equity and democracy unless the education system builds and insists on relationships of respect and trust and recognizes that all of us—policymakers, educators, communities and families—

share the responsibility for educating all young people well. Policymakers can't be primarily enforcers; they must also be enablers who craft policies, structures and resources that provide educators and communities the support and space to work effectively and harmoniously together. Teachers can't be conceptualized as workers along an education assembly line. Instead, we must begin to think of them as skilled masters of a craft. Parents can't be reduced to "customers" whose main role is to choose the "best" school for their own children. Rather, they share responsibility for helping to create and support great schooling for all of the community's children. Cities and communities, including grassroots groups, must be full partners in this work.

A Transformed System

An LAUSD based on these pillars would develop policies to support capacity-building, continuous improvement and meaningful connections between schools and communities, rather than focusing primarily on compliance and sanctions. Such policies would focus on four key elements, each of which is essential to a transformed educational system:

1) a focus on *meaningful learning*—that is, learning that is exciting, engaging and prepares students effectively for the world they are entering. For example, policies could generate robust, locally-designed assessments, such as curriculum-embedded performance tasks, which allow students to inquire, investigate, collaborate, present and defend their ideas, as well as to think critically and be creative – and that provide more information about their learning progress and needs;

2) *professional capacity*—that is, a system built to ensure knowledgeable and skillful professionals committed to all students and their learning, who work in contexts that support meaningful, equitable learning and individual children's needs. For example, create time for teacher collaboration and opportunities for teacher learning through individual and school-wide lesson study, action research, peer observation, professional learning communities and other learning opportunities.

3) *sufficient resources, wisely used*—that is, an adequate and equitable funding system that allows communities to allocate resources so that they effectively promote learning for all students while meeting the needs of each local school. For example, construct local indicators of school quality, resource equity and learning opportunities that provide regular information on what students are receiving as well how well they are doing, and use the data to drive greater equity.

4) *connected communities*—that is, shared responsibility based on relationships between educators and communities that enable the use of local knowledge in the educational process and that foster democratic, public participation in schools as democratic institutions. For example, establish community schools (and other high-quality school and community

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partnerships) to create adult education opportunities, wraparound services, expanded and enriched community-based learning opportunities beyond the regular school day and in summer.

Los Angeles is poised to put such principles and policies into practice. You have all of the ingredients—a committed superintendent, union leadership focused on educational justice, a chamber of commerce dedicated to education for the public good, supportive and engaged universities and incredibly strong and smart community activists. And, you have an impressive history of accomplishing things together.

READINGS

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The Role of Community Schools in the Pursuit of a Democratic Public Education System

Sylvia G. Rousseau, USC

In a democratic society in which all students are equally entitled to quality education, school choice is equitable only when the first choice available to every student is a quality school within reasonable distance from her or his home.

The panoply of school choice and school options offered to families in low-income communities of color has exacerbated, rather than reduced, the societal inequities perpetuated by generations of inequitable schooling in America. The avoidance strategy of offering school options and choice instead of confronting root causes of longstanding inequities in children's opportunities to learn violates in multiple ways the democratic principle of equal rights for all: 1) many magnet programs and some charter schools require students to travel long distances from their own communities in pursuit of quality schooling, while students in more affluent have access to quality schooling in their own communities; 2) options or school choice programs often overlook or dismiss assets in low-income communities of color, which can be harnessed to enhance schooling for their youth; 3) options and choice programs, by design, serve a few select students while leaving large numbers of other students behind; 4) options and choice schools frequently divert resources away from public schools in low income schools of color, leaving those schools further weakened. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in July 2017, in issuing the results from nationwide study of schooling in the U.S., concluded, "even the best charters are not a substitute for more stable, adequate and equitable investments in public education."

Community schools recognize that, although rigorous curricula and the practice of evidence-based pedagogies are essential elements of quality schooling, conditions in communities contribute to the quality of education available to children. Community conditions also contribute to students' readiness to learn. Therefore, community schools are committed to creating a level playing field of conditions on behalf of all children, regardless of the socio-economic status of their communities. Community schools recognize the necessity of working to mitigate inequities in communities, as well as those in schools. Rather than continuing traditional school practices and policies that attribute disparities in student academic outcomes to erroneous perceptions of the intellectual inferiority or moral turpitude of residents in low-income communities of color, community schools focus on creating community conditions that all children need to thrive and learn. Community schools call for a departure from schooling

that has given privilege to middle class or affluent White students, while systemically denying other students their rights.

Past reform efforts have focused mainly on conditions inside schools, without adequate attention to conditions outside the school that have significant influence on children's growth and development. Although some schools and districts have created relationships with entities in their communities or serving their communities, overall, schools have viewed low-income communities of color as impediments to students' readiness to learn, offering few assets. Relationships between individual schools and communities, particularly in low-income communities, remained tangential, fragmented, and often temporary with little impact on students' opportunities to learn. Meanwhile, middle class and affluent communities retain their capacity to support quality schools and the children who attend them.

Community-school partnerships operate from an understanding that meeting the basic physiological, emotional, social and intellectual needs common to all children is essential to children's wellbeing and development. Needs identified in Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (1943, 1962, 1987) remain widely accepted as common to all humans, thus affirming the truism that all people are created equal and entitled to equal rights, regardless of economic, cultural or racial differences. Although all children require air, food, shelter and water, these basic needs are not equitably met in all communities. Neither do children in some communities experience safety, which Maslow also identifies as a critical factor in all humans' wellbeing.

Research has demonstrated that the stress associated with extreme poverty reduces a child's ability to think (Berliner 2013). Children growing up in under-resourced communities are more likely to experience repeated exposure to environmental hazards, community violence, changes in the dynamics of family life, job loss, instability and economic deprivation (Evans, 2004), (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Maholmes & King, 2012; McEwen et al., 2015, cited in Lipina, J. & Evers, K. 2017, January). Children are affected by these experiences. Community schools attribute many of these events in children's lives to systemic discrimination in housing, health care, employment, wages and housing; thus, they work to eliminate these root causes.

A Stanford University's Graduate School of Education study involving more than 200 million test scores found a high association between districts with large numbers of low-income students and their lower academic performance. Using 16 different measures (Rabinovitz, 2016) found racial difference combined with the proportion of students who are poor to be a critical association leading to large disparities in students' opportunities to achieve academically. Reardon's (April 2016) research links racial segregation to unequal allocation of resources among schools. In schools where over 75 percent of the student body is eligible for free and reduced lunch, academic performance is embarrassing low. Heuer and Stullich (2011) found that 48 percent of high poverty schools receive less money in their local school than do low poverty schools. Reardn (cited in Rabinovitz, 2016) suggests that racial segregation is inextricably linked to unequal allocation of resources among schools. Policies that do not address this root cause pf nearly permanent inequities will fail to remedy racial inequality.

Decades of data on multiple measures demonstrate a relationship between academic outcomes and conditions in students' communities. Students growing up in middle class and affluent communities where they experience adequate health care, access to nutritious food, adequate housing, safe streets and family income adequate to meet their families' needs, on average outperform students whose communities are not able to provide these resources. They attend schools that offer preparation and access to advanced classes, college admission and college completion. Schooling in these middle class or affluent communities places these students on a life trajectory of position, wealth and decision-making power that is passed on from generation to generation. In this sense, schools reproduce the social order (Bourdieu, 1990). For instance, the median wealth (assets accumulated over generations) of White households was 13 times the median wealth of Black households in 2013. Similarly, the median wealth of White households is now more than 10 times the median wealth of Hispanic households (Kochhar & Fry, December 2014).

Partnerships in community schools engage businesses, talented individuals, natural resources, technology and communities themselves harness a variety of resources to provide the conditions necessary for children to thrive and learn. These partnerships have the potential to change the national discourse on education from what is wrong with children of color and low-income families to what can go right with all children under the appropriate conditions for advancing their human potential. Perhaps the national discourse on education can shift from notions of an achievement gap to an understanding of the opportunity gap. Improving conditions for learning presents a democratic and humane alternative to overdoses of remediation and intervention programs, which have demonstrated limited effectiveness and reinforced faulty perceptions about people of color and people from low income communities.

Partnerships on behalf of the common good elevate reframe communities to a status comparable to the Great Community that Dewey (1927) considered an essential element of a democratic society. They value the community for its assets despite the many challenges they face of high unemployment rates, generations of inferior schooling opportunities, low wages, inadequate health care and mass incarceration of their youth. They are often rich in culture, resiliency, hard work and love for their children. Cultivating these assets can give rise to the Great Community that Dewey (1927) described as the place where interactions among its members allow residents to make their wants and needs known and work together to create the conditions that support every child's right to learn.

Partnerships between schools and communities strengthen parents' ability to hold schools accountable for implementing policies and practices that meet standards of excellence on behalf of all children. Moreover, when families, schools, religious organizations, child care and other entities close to the child work collaboratively they increase their individual impact on children to a powerful collective impact (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). The community schools' concept of building multiple partnerships to support children's multiple needs is consistent with studies that show surrounding children with multiple and

varied supports increases their access to learning. Research in the neurosciences and social sciences demonstrate that children's readiness to learn can be optimized through innovative interventions in child-care centers, schools and homes working together.

Community schools take measures to enhance conditions in communities as a critical element of improving schools. They advocate opening school facilities beyond school hours and partner to provide wrap around academic, social/emotional and health supports that often extend to the entire community. After-school programs, internships and community service opportunities enable students to develop rigorous cognitive skills within the context of their own communities(LPI). They learn to love their communities and see themselves as contributors to it.

Findings from a study of existing community schools conducted by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) (Oakes, J.; Maier, A.; & Daniel, J. (June, 1017) shed light on some of the early outcomes associated with community schools. In Cincinnati, which implemented community schools districtwide, the racial and socioeconomic achievement gap shrank from 14.5 percent to 4.5 percent. One school in Baltimore Results show that schools in Cincinnati shrank the racial and socioeconomic achievement gap from 14.5 percent to 4.5 percent. A community school in Baltimore moved from a ranking of 77th in the city to second.. The state of Kentucky moved from one of the worst performing states to outperforming half of all states. The findings demonstrate the efficacy of family and community collaborative engagement with schools; integrated supports to students and their communities; collaborative relationships around teaching and learning; and extended school hours for learning inside and outside the school walls.

This brief review of the merits of community school partnerships and practices carries a caution. The ideology of *separate and unequal* has become so normalized in U.S. society that it is difficult to detect the many ways it affects communities and schools - even partnerships designed to eradicate it. School choice, currently in vogue, is in many ways, the current version of avoidance and substitution practices. Further, attention to communities and conditions for learning does not substitute for students' rights to well-resourced public schools where all students experience teachers well prepared to teach students from racially, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; rigorous and culturally rich curricula; and research-and evidence-based pedagogy. Guaranteeing this right requires rethinking how schools are structured around funding, use of time to ensure that redefinition of parent, teacher, student and administrator roles within the context of the school. Hopefully, adoption of the community school model is a step in that direction.

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LAUSD and English Learner Policies:
Unlocking Opportunities for More Equitable Education

Patricia Gándara, UCLA

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) faces a number of challenges in educating its English learner students, but it also faces some unique opportunities. One fourth (25 percent) of its students are classified as English learners (EL) in 2016-17, although this seriously underestimates the actual number of students who continue to require support in becoming academically proficient in English, as at least 65 percent of students are the children of immigrants (kidsdata.org) and therefore usually speak another language at home. Until now, the district has been seriously hampered in meeting these students' needs by a misguided law that made it difficult if not impossible to educate students in their primary language. That law (Proposition 227) has now been effectively overturned and the district is free to utilize the full range of program options to educate English learners. Of course, this will require many more bilingual teachers.

The district also faces a challenge with respect to concentrated poverty and disadvantage among its English learner students. Two thirds of LAUSD students qualified for free/reduced price lunch in 2015 (kidsdata.org). And, LAUSD suffers from extreme segregation of its students, especially those who are poor and do not yet speak English well. For example, in 2013 the typical EL student was in a high poverty school and exposed to only 3 percent non-Hispanic White students (Ayscue, 2016). EL students in the district are extremely segregated and the courts and the Congress have made it increasingly difficult to desegregate schools. A recent Supreme Court decision (*PICS*, 2007) declared it illegal to consider race in attempting to racially desegregate schools! Add to this, the city of Los Angeles suffers from an acute housing crisis, with skyrocketing rents and fewer and fewer places for low-income families to live so that overcrowding in neighborhoods as well as schools is an increasing problem for many low income families.

However, LAUSD also has some extraordinary resources. It has a rich diversity of cultures and languages. Although 74 percent of its EL students speak Spanish as their primary language, Korean, Tagalog and Armenian, among others, have a visible presence in the City's schools. LAUSD also has an unknown, but substantial numbers of teachers, counselors and administrators who are or have been credentialed bilingual teachers, and another percentage of individuals, including paraprofessionals, who could be credentialed bilingual teachers if given the opportunity and support. LAUSD also produces hundreds of new high school graduates with the Seal of Biliteracy every year. These new graduates are prime candidates to become bilingual teachers.

Los Angeles' rich cultural and linguistic diversity can be translated into new advantages for both English learners and native English speakers and into desegregation efforts that can enrich our schools and neighborhoods. In addition, building on the attractiveness of dual language schools may help Los Angeles confront some of the problems of gentrification of immigrant neighborhoods.

A Vision for the Future

Both developmental bilingual education (which develops biliteracy for EL students) and two-way dual language programs (developing biliteracy for *both* ELs and native English speakers) have been shown conclusively to yield better outcomes in English proficiency and English language arts than English only programs for ELs (Umansky & Reardon, 2014; Valentino & Reardon, 2015; Steele et al, in press). Moreover, dual language programs also come the closest to closing achievement gaps (Genesee et al, 2006). And, of course, these programs produce bilingual and biliterate individuals with a host of advantages for all participants, including cognitive, social and economic, to name a few. For example, Latino students who are biliterate are significantly more likely to go to college, and to four year colleges than those Latino students who lose their Spanish language skills (Santibañez & Zárate, 2014).

While developmental bilingual education programs can produce superior outcomes for students with a primary language other than English, two-way dual language programs can also produce more integrated classrooms, bringing ELs and native English speakers together in one place. Nonetheless, desegregating schools inevitably means transporting some students from one place to another. We have seen that strong dual language programs attract middle class and English speaking parents who are willing to do this and who might not otherwise be candidates for desegregation efforts. However, many low-income parents are not able to transport their children to schools outside the neighborhood, providing them with fewer choices and ultimately limiting the numbers of two-way programs that can be mounted.

Although gentrification of inner city neighborhoods normally causes displacement of lower income families and exacerbates the housing crisis, the siting of strong dual language programs in such areas can help to address this problem and desegregate both neighborhoods and

schools. The key is cooperation of city planners in regulating gentrification in such a way that allows development of more expensive housing while also maintaining *a guarantee* for longer term residents (2 years or more in residence) that they can remain in their same homes without a rent increase or fear of a tear down, and maintain their children in the local school. New residents can also feel confident about enrolling their children in strong local schools with dual language programs. It is worth mentioning that many analysts (e.g., Briggs, 2006) have concluded that in order to achieve real equity in schooling outcomes, housing policies must be shaped to support education policies as housing segregation is directly linked to school segregation and quality.

The demand for dual language programs is far greater than their supply. And, one reason for this is the limited number of highly trained teachers to staff the programs. However, as noted, LAUSD has the potential to attract and train many more of these teachers.

But specific policies would need to be put in place. LCFF funds that are generated by English learners can be directed toward building the corps of bilingual teachers. Some examples are:

(1) fund the coursework and training of aspiring bilingual teachers (e.g., paraprofessionals) already working in the schools;

(2) provide financial incentives for already credentialed bilingual teachers to update their skills and re-enter bilingual classrooms

(3) Build high school to college pathway programs for potential bilingual teachers, such as pre-teaching high school magnet programs that are linked to local colleges. These can also include paid internships at the high school and college levels.

(4) In addition to regulating gentrification (and the consequent overcrowding), visionary housing policy can also include a housing guarantee for teachers. In the Los Angeles housing climate, few incentives could be greater for a potential bilingual teacher than a guarantee of good housing near where one worked. And few policies would contribute more to the well-being of the City than securing strong teachers for the public schools.

In sum, bilingual and dual language programs not only hold the promise of more effective instruction for English learners, and the myriad advantages of bilingualism and biliteracy for all students, they also can be tools to help desegregate schools and neighborhoods. The two major impediments to realizing this promise are (1) inadequate numbers of well-prepared bilingual teachers and (2) housing policy to support education policy. However, neither of these impediments is beyond our ability to address, and suggestions are provided for how we might go about doing this.

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"One City, All Kids": Creating a Collaborative Public Education System for All of Los Angeles' Students

Jennifer B. Ayscue, UCLA

Introduction

"How can we make this the best for all of our kids?

The charter schools are not going to go away, and the public schools are not going to go away. So, let's figure out how we make this all work for the betterment of our children."

—Business Community Leader

Educators, families and community members across Los Angeles care deeply about the City's students and the education that students receive. Despite this common concern for the welfare of students, division permeates the City. In particular, there is a clear divide between charter schools and the district's traditional public schools, a divide that does little to serve the students of Los Angeles.

Drawing on the experiences and perspectives of a broad range of education stakeholders in Los Angeles, this study describes the City's current education landscape, as well as possibilities for the future. In doing so, this study explores differing views of the purpose and impact of charter schools, problems of charter and district coexistence, possibilities for forging a collaborative shared education system, and ideas about how to move forward. Our study design is based on the premise that by understanding how various Angelenos from different sectors frame the present issues, we can begin an open conversation about the future and how to make education in Los Angeles "the best for all of our kids."

Study Design

A planning team comprised of members from UNITE-LA (an affiliate of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce), UCLA, In the Public Interest, the Advancement Project and the Learning Policy Institute identified potential participants who then received an email from the

President of UNITE-LA/Executive Vice President of the Los Angeles Area Chamber requesting their anonymous participation in the study. In an effort to balance the representation from different sectors, two additional rounds of requests were made. Of the 31 invited respondents, 22 agreed to participate,

yielding a response rate of 71 percent. All who indicated interest in the study were interviewed. The 22 participants represent the following sectors: charter schools and charter associations (9), community organizations/advocacy organizations (5), foundations/philanthropic organizations (4), business (2) and labor (2). Participants from Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) are deliberately not included because the purpose of the study is to inform LAUSD; therefore, we do not need to tell LAUSD what they already know or believe.

Interviews were conducted by an independent researcher from UCLA. Interviews occurred over the phone and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. All interviews were confidential; that is, only the UCLA researcher knows the identity of each participant and each participant remains anonymous in this report. Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol, allowing the interviewer to ask a standardized set of questions but also to explore other topics as they arose. Questions explored the following topics: current and ideal roles of charter schools and their relationship to LAUSD and district schools, anticipated challenges in moving from the current to the ideal, benefits of the ideal, areas for collaboration, resources and support needed to move from the current to the ideal, accountability measures that would support the ideal and the extent to which Los Angeles possesses the will and capacity to move toward a collaborative education system. Using Dedoose, a qualitative software analysis program, the UCLA researcher coded all interview data. Based on an initial analysis, the UCLA researcher developed a framework for the findings and sought input from members of the planning team. This report has been reviewed by members of the planning team.

Different Views of the Purpose of Charter Schools and Their Impact in Los Angeles

Participants hold very different views regarding the purpose and role of charter schools in Los Angeles, which result in various perceptions of the impact of charter schools on the education system more broadly. All participants agree that charters create choice, but they disagree about the purpose of choice. In addition, some stakeholders believe that charters are innovative and collaborative, while others believe that charters are jeopardizing the public education system through privatization. These differing views are not easily reconcilable, and those holding each perspective are suspicious of the others. Each side has the power to damage the other, but neither has the power to construct a workable system on its own.

Choice

Although all participants agree that charter schools create choice for students and families, they disagree on the purpose of choice. Choice is understood as: 1) a *principle* of freedom; 2) a *strategy* for providing alternatives to individual students in low-performing schools; or 3) a *structural mechanism* for system-wide improvement through competition.

A principle of freedom. Half of the 22 participants, including representatives from all sectors except labor, view choice as a principle of freedom. They see charters as fulfilling the "right" to choice, especially for low-income families who would otherwise have no choice. A charter leader explains, "It's giving back to parents the right to choose where they send their kids to school." As a result of the expansion of choice through charters, the district has also expanded other choice offerings, ramping up magnet schools and continuing to support pilot schools.

A strategy for providing alternatives to individual students in low-performing schools. In addition, almost half of participants, representing all sectors except labor, view the purpose of choice as providing an alternative to district schools that are not meeting students' needs. Those who hold this perspective see charters as targeting students who have been left behind, often low-income students of color. A community organization leader describes, "In South Los Angeles, charter schools have helped to address the concerns of a lot of parents of color, especially African American parents and Latino parents more recently, who were greatly concerned that their home schools were not meeting the academic needs of their students and were not providing them with a rigorous curriculum that can prepare them for college." In addition, some participants view charters as attracting middle-class families who might have otherwise left LAUSD altogether.

A structural mechanism for system-wide improvement through competition. Finally, a handful of participants hold the perspective that charters create competition that drives improvement in the system as a whole. The leader of a charter association explains, "Through a mix of collaboration as well as constructive competition, [charters] encourage the traditional public schools to improve as well, so that all kids in Los Angeles and all kids everywhere are better served than they have been in the past." However, there is debate among participants about the degree of success of charters in terms of their own academic achievement outcomes, with those from the charter sector largely claiming their role as "proof points" versus those outside the charter sector noting the varied achievement among charters and their failure to meet the needs of all subgroups of students, especially special education students. Moreover, there is no consensus about the extent to which charters have actually been a catalyst for improvement in the rest of the district's schools. While this competition is framed by the charter representatives as being beneficial for the district, those from the foundation and labor sectors frame it as creating an environment that results in charters creaming the highest achieving and lowest need students.

Innovation and Collaboration

In addition to providing choice, one-third of participants, who represent all sectors except for business, believe that charters are intended to develop innovative educational models to benefit all schools in the system. However, there is a lack of consensus on whether this role is being fulfilled.

Developing and implementing innovations. Interviewees from the charter sector and one community organization contend that charters are innovating. A charter leader describes, "The original intent of the charter schools was to innovate and that does happen." However, participants from other sectors do not believe that to be the case. A labor leader reflects, "They were intended to be innovators, but they have quickly not become that. In fact, what you see is this proliferation of corporate charter schools, which are often times the opposite of innovation. They have a template. They have a command-and-control model that in many ways is even more strict than what people complain about in terms of governmental entities."

Sharing best practices, quietly, across some schools. Half of the 22 participants, including representatives from all sectors except business (which had only two participants), highlight the sharing of innovative ideas as one of the intended purposes of charter schools. Once again, perceptions diverge about whether or not charters are fulfilling this role. A small number of participants representing two charters and one community organization believe sharing across schools does occur. However, since such collaboration is generally perceived as being discouraged, individual schools do it quietly. Charter representatives explain that sharing of best practices occurs among schools within the charter sector more than between charters and district schools because charters perceive district schools as being unwilling to collaborate with them. Conversely, a larger group of interviewees representing two charters, four foundations, and two labor groups describe this as an unfulfilled purpose. A foundation leader explains, "We were hoping that there would be a diffusion of learning and best practices from charter schools to the regular public school system. Quite frankly, we have not seen that."

Privatizing and Jeopardizing Public Education as a Civic Institution

A third and final lens through which some stakeholders view charter schools is that of jeopardizing public education through privatization. Five participants, including representatives from labor and community organizations, share this perspective. A labor group leader states,

"There's a lot of misconception out there that [our labor union] is anti-charter school. We're not. We proudly represent charter educators." However, the participant goes on to explain that "one of the impacts that we're deeply concerned about leads to the whole question about as a civic institution, is LAUSD, and more broadly public education, going to survive? We're concerned about the trajectory that the civic institution of public education has followed in places like New Orleans, Detroit, New Jersey and Minneapolis. We're deeply concerned about that." Clarifying the group's position as one that is not anti-charter, this Angeleno is nonetheless concerned about the potential of charters to jeopardize public education as a civic institution.

Different Views of the Problem of Charter and District Coexistence

Perceptions of How Charters and LAUSD Currently Coexist

Every single participant in the study describes a negative relationship that currently prevails between charters and LAUSD. It is important to note that the respondents do not include anyone from LAUSD. Participants refer to the dynamic in the following ways: strained, poor, contentious, angry, hostile, antagonistic, poisonous, acrimonious, bitter, demonizing, not in partnership, pointing fingers, tribal war, battle, bloodshed, jealous, animosity, fighting, polarization, combat mentality, discord, lack of trust and frustration. A charter school leader says, "I would describe it as all-out warfare. It is a pitched battle for sometimes who can use the most hyperbole about [how] one side is causing the downfall of public education or the other." There is complete consensus that the current relationship between charters and the district is destructive. However, three participants make a distinction between individual relationships, which are often positive, and the system-level dynamic, which is anything but positive.

Further, one-third of participants, including stakeholders from across all sectors, highlight the competitive coexistence of charters and the district as a zero-sum game, which according to a charter CEO creates "an 'us' vs. 'them' environment."

Framing the Prevailing Problem of Charter and District Coexistence

When stakeholders attempt to identify factors that have contributed to or caused this negative environment, the most common explanation is political competition between labor groups and charter associations, followed by structural issues, the role of LAUSD, the role of charter organizations and the focus on adults rather than students.

Political competition. More than half of the key education stakeholders in this study, including representatives from all sectors, cite political competition, primarily between labor groups and charter associations, as driving the problems between charters and the district. A business community leader explains, "The challenges are sort of the positions that everyone has staked out. The labor unions have staked out the position that charter schools are bad, and they're stealing money from the public schools. The people who run labor unions use that attitude to stoke up the anger, and the anxiety, and the action of their members. The charter school proponents often use kind of a different anger, an anger at the quality of the public schools, an anger at how they've been treated by the school board, to raise money and to stir up the emotions of their base. … Everybody's playing to their political and financial base." Participants from across all sectors acknowledge the highly politicized nature of the school board in which charter and labor groups provide financial support for school board races, and board members adhere to either strong pro- or anti-charter stances.

Recognizing the difficulty inherent in penetrating these politics, several participants implore United Teachers of Los Angeles, California Teachers Association and California Charter Schools Association

to reduce their political pressure. A charter administrator acknowledges the role that all of these groups, and others including the media and universities, play in fueling the politics that have created the negative environment. She suggests, "Instead of them driving the politics or driving all the top-down regulations—infiltrated by huge, huge union politics, Sacramento charter politics, Democratic, Republican, all of them, even the media … even universities that are at times perceived as biased—honestly, just back off!"

Structural issues. Participants from across all sectors believe that structural issues contribute to the negative coexistence of charters and LAUSD. They identify several issues that fuel the problems, including enrollment, funding and facilities.

Enrollment. Nearly two-thirds of participants, including representatives from all sectors, highlight concerns with enrollment as a primary mechanism that drives the current problem.

While all of these stakeholders believe LAUSD is displeased with the increasing enrollment in the charter sector as its own enrollment declines, some believe this is healthy competition, while others fear a growing take-over of the public education system in Los Angeles (related to their views on the purpose of charters in Los Angeles as described above). For example, a labor leader describes, "They're [charter schools are] focused on replication and growth. You can see that statement from the charter school lobby. Just the intense focus on growth and market share is of concern to us rather than the original mission of innovation and then bringing those practices back to the school district."

In addition to conflict stemming from enrollment numbers, several participants express the need for a unified enrollment system, explaining that the current lack of information and separate enrollment processes result in inequities. They contend that by creating a unified enrollment system, parents would have access to more information and would be aware of all the choices, making the enrollment process itself more equitable.

Funding. Directly related to enrollment is concern over funding. Ten participants, including representatives from all sectors, attribute the negative dynamic to funding concerns. A labor group leader asserts, "One of the major issues underlying all of this is that there's this mad scramble, frankly, for a half-empty pot of money." Several participants reference the May 2016 report commissioned by United Teachers Los Angeles, "Fiscal Impact of Charter Schools on LAUSD," and a community organization leader explains, "Our community members have looked at that and are tremendously concerned about the continued growth of charters stripping away the financial ability of the rest of the system, of the LAUSD traditional schools, to adequately provide education for all the rest." In addition to the district's financial troubles, other participants highlight the inequitable access to resources between charters and district schools based on the large philanthropic investments in charters, which participants contend is often overlooked but makes a significant difference.

Facilities. Alongside enrollment and funding, a foundation leader explains that "space is always another wedge that prevents folks from talking to one another." The 11 participants who emphasize facilities concerns represent all sectors. They discuss the requirements of the district to provide space to charters through Proposition 39. From the charter perspective, charters are "scrambling" for space, but according to a labor group leader, co-locations that sometimes result because of Prop 39 can damage district schools. The labor representative provides an example of a district school that would like to consider adopting a community school model: "Some of our schools that are looking at a community schools model, some of our public schools, are afraid to do that. They're afraid to open a parent center because they're afraid then that a charter school is going to come in and say, 'We want that space under Prop 39.' I think there needs to be that level of collaboration so that our public schools aren't afraid to open these spaces, aren't afraid that will make them vulnerable to co-location. There needs to be more funding directed towards these needs." Frustration with facilities is palpable from both sides.

Role of LAUSD. According to eight participants, including representatives from all sectors except business (which included only two participants), three key aspects of the way in which LAUSD functions contributes to the problems of coexistence between charters and the district. First, there is too much focus on authorizing and compliance issues and not enough focus on supporting teaching and learning. Second, the large scale of LAUSD is a problem and more site-based decision-making would be preferable. Third, participants suggest a variety of school models that could be beneficial in Los Angeles, particularly community schools.

Focus on teaching and learning instead of authorizing and compliance. Rather than what participants perceive to be too great a focus on authorizing and compliance issues, participants generally believe the district should focus on teaching and learning. For example, a charter leader explains, "Some charter schools feel like the district is going far beyond the intent of oversight laws and regulations to make life difficult for charter schools and charter school families and staff." Instead, a community organization leader implores, "The district has to focus on what they're in charge of, the traditional public schools and improving the quality of teaching. …The school district has more to do to support teachers, to improve teaching and the experience that students have with rigor, intervention, and being challenged. …There's the issue also of increasing achievement in the classroom, and they really have to focus on that and look at what strategies are needed to raise that." Some interviewees suggest that there should be an independent authorizer, not LAUSD, which they believe would result in a more "fair" authorizing process. However, others argue that loopholes in the authorizing process should be resolved such that if LAUSD has authorizing authority, charter schools should not be able to go to the County or State to have their charter granted. Participants also suggest that an independent party should be responsible for charter facilities.

Enhance site-based decision-making. Several participants describe the size of LAUSD as being problematic, stating that it is too big and needs restructuring. A community organization leader

emphasizes the need for site-based decision-making and greater autonomy for all school models, not just charters.

Explore models, especially community schools*.* Finally, participants suggest that LAUSD explore a variety of school models. Several participants, including representatives from charters, community organizations, foundations and labor, highlight community schools as a promising approach. A community organization leader proposes, "We should try to sit down and figure out how to have a system-wide approach that draws on the best models, which I think is probably a community schools approach." Other models suggested by participants include magnet schools, pilot schools, a cluster model, a portfolio approach and small schools. Regardless of model, a labor leader discusses the need for racial integration and a foundation leader highlights the need for socioeconomic integration. Other participants raise the importance of a focus on early childhood education as well as career and technical education.

Role of charter organizations. A few participants, including representatives from the charter, foundation and labor sectors, discuss the ways in which charter management organizations (CMOs) and education management organizations (EMOs) impact the problems of coexistence. Interviewees describe the need for CMOs and EMOs to provide stricter oversight and hold charters accountable. A labor group leader explains, "One of the challenges is the lack of accountability and the lack of oversight. ...Many of these structures that are currently in place—EMOs and CMOs—were never contemplated in the original Charter Schools Act. I think that there has been an end run around even some of the accountability processes that have been set up so that chain charter school operators, large operators, function largely outside the purview of public control even though they're funded by public money."

Focus on adults. Finally, nearly one-third of participants, including representatives from all sectors except labor, underscore the need to do what is right for students rather than the current focus, which they believe is on adults. A business community leader plainly states, "The problem is there's an absence of focus on the students." Concurring, a community organization leader emphasizes, "There isn't a discussion about, "How do we center the discussion on children?'"

Benefits of Addressing the Problem

Participants overwhelmingly believe that transforming these dynamics will reap benefits for students. They also articulate ways in which parents, teachers, school leaders and LAUSD as a whole would benefit, but the primary focus is on the students.

Students. A business group leader conveys the sentiment of many participants, saying, "If we don't find a way to build bridges between the charter schools and the public schools, we are just going to be fighting forever, and the kids lose." Participants explain how collaboration and better relationships

would ultimately benefit all students in Los Angeles, but especially low-income students and students attending struggling schools. A labor group leader highlights the more than 80 percent of students who are either poor, English learners (ELs) or foster youth who would likely benefit the most from improving the current situation. Participants agree that addressing these problems would be beneficial for both charter and district school students.

Parents. Participants also acknowledge how changes to the problems described above would be beneficial to parents by creating greater transparency and enhancing parents' access to information so they are able to make better informed choices. A foundation leader explains, "It's a matter of equity. That is, we certainly would love to see a unified enrollment system because the rules are really different here. Parents have to play by very different sets of rules in charter schools, to pilot schools, to magnet schools, to regular LAUSD schools. It is very, very confusing, and it does not add up to a level playing field."

Teachers, school leaders, and LAUSD as a whole. To a lesser extent, participants acknowledge the benefits that would accrue to teachers and school leaders as well as LAUSD as a whole. Through collaboration and sharing of best practices, teachers could develop their practice. Shared systems might also help district schools and charters with teacher recruitment, a particularly important consideration given the teacher shortage. Finally, by addressing some of these issues, LAUSD could focus more on teaching, learning, and student outcomes rather than on authorizing and compliance issues.

Forging a Collaborative Shared System

Learning Together

Participants eagerly describe a multitude of ways in which charters and LAUSD could collaborate to benefit students. Some aspects of a collaborative shared system rely on collaboration at the school level while others involve district-level efforts. Of the 22 total participants, one participant, while not wholly opposed to collaboration, cautioned against over-reliance on collaborative strategies.

Collaboration at the school level. Participants envision collaborative efforts at the school level that would include shared learning around best practices, student services, programmatic offerings and facilities. Two participants argue that school-level collaboration is not the correct leverage point.

Best practices. Nearly all, 19 of the 22 participants, describe scenarios in which charters and district schools could develop shared learning around best practices, often emphasizing that the sharing and learning would go in both directions between charters and district schools.

Participants identify the following practices around which shared learning could be developed: recruiting teachers and professional development, selecting leaders and leadership development,

data sharing and professional learning communities, curriculum and instruction, parent engagement, operations, fundraising, school design (especially middle schools), quality, special education and ELs.

Student services. Six participants, including representatives from the charter, foundation and labor sectors, also identify several student support services that could benefit from collaborative efforts. Again, collaborating to provide services for special education students is key. Participants also discuss the potential for collaboration around mental health services. For example, a charter school administrator describes, "We end up with a lot of money in this neighborhood … because we are 100 percent Title I, EL, homeless or foster youth. And there's no reason why we can't all come together because we're talking about the same neighborhood, and a lot of times the same kids as they move to middle school, high school. …Everybody chip in to a pool to get a mental health person, to get an MSW. None of us can afford our own one, right?" Participants describe similar approaches to collaboration to provide health services as well as community and social services.

In addition, several participants across multiple sectors underscore the need to provide services to ensure students' and families' physical and emotional safety. They describe the need to collaborate around establishing schools as safe spaces and promoting messages of unity, especially regarding immigration and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). A charter organization leader explains the need to engage with ideas about "how our schools can continue to be safe spaces, civic spaces, open spaces where families can feel like not only are their children being well served educationally speaking, but feeling like they're public institutions in their neighborhoods that will watch out for [their children] and protect them." One participant describes the "Safe Zone Resolution" as a missed opportunity and hopes that future efforts to establish safe spaces will be more collaborative.

A labor group leader discusses the need for collaboration around immigration: "Two parents of charter school students were picked up by ICE either right after they had dropped off their kids or as they were about to drop off their kids. LAUSD has declared itself a sanctuary district, and there needs to be a real discussion about what that means when there are 221 charter schools in the bounds of LAUSD. Does that mean that charter schools are part of the sanctuary? What does that mean in terms of ICE agents on campus and about community mobilization when there's a deliberate campaign to create so much fear that people are afraid to access basic services like education and healthcare? …Collaboration is necessary because these are all our students. Our students are immigrants, [and] … they're at charter schools or at public schools." Similarly, a charter leader states, "There are messages that we can all align around where we are at least providing a minimal amount of reassurance to people who are living in fear right now. I think that we can do that from the very unique places that we all come from and the service areas that we cover."

Programmatic offerings. Alongside support services for students, interviewees suggest that schools could also collaborate on programmatic offerings for students. Three participants, including representatives from charters and one foundation, describe possibilities for collaborative course

offerings, particularly advanced placement courses and electives, as well as extracurricular activities and after-school programs.

Facilities. Although many interviewees identified facilities issues as a mechanism contributing to the current problems of charter and district coexistence, others identified facilities as an area in which collaboration could result in beneficial opportunities. Five participants, including representatives from the charter and philanthropic sectors, envision school-level collaboration around facilities. Some suggest the strategic use of facilities as an area of collaboration and others suggest that in the case of co-locations, perhaps students could intermingle, creating collaborative opportunities for students through shared facilities.

Collaboration at the district level. While nearly all the participants describe multiple possibilities for school-level collaboration, two participants from community organizations argue that school-level collaboration, particularly the idea of sharing best practices among schools, is not the correct leverage point. Rather, they suggest that district-level efforts would be more effective and might include a unified enrollment platform, joint lobbying and legislative efforts at the state level, as well as equitable funding and resource allocation.

Unified enrollment platform. Five participants, including stakeholders from the charter, philanthropic and community sectors, describe the potential of collaboration to develop a unified enrollment platform. A charter organization leader describes, "One of the things that could be done is just look at the needs of parents, the need that they have for information and easy access. Move, for example, toward a unified enrollment platform where parents, who know their students best, can have access to a single-stop enrollment platform and process that matches their students to the top three or four choices … [The process would be] structured in the way that would work best for their children and [parents would] be able to just submit a single application and put their names into a lottery, if you will, or the choice process through LA Unified." Participants emphasize how collaboration in this area would make the enrollment process more equitable and accessible.

Joint lobbying and legislative efforts. A handful of labor and charter representatives identify state-level lobbying and legislative efforts that could be enhanced through collaboration. A charter CEO shares an example in which collaborative lobbying efforts could be beneficial: "We could collaborate on some policy, … for example, the way California treats special ed. We get the same funding whether we have one child or 25 percent, whether we have low severity or high severity, and yet the cost structure in special ed is quite different depending on the number of children, the severity of the needs, but that's not how the funding model works." By presenting a united front, this district-level effort could have greater impact on legislative work at the state level.

Equitable funding and resource allocation. Finally, three participants, including representatives from the labor, charter and philanthropic sectors, identify funding and resource allocation through the Local

Control Funding Formula (LCFF), as areas in which district-level efforts involving charters could be beneficial. A charter administrator suggests that charters and LAUSD "share those resources already existing. If we cannot share it, we can at least put a proposal together. We can beg together. We can lobby together. We can get the Broad money together. We can get the federal money together." Other participants describe additional ways in which collaborative efforts around funding could create greater equity.

A word of caution. Despite the broad support for collaborative efforts at the school and district levels, one foundation leader offers a caution about jumping into collaboration: "Collaboration is hard work, really time-consuming, and isn't always the solution. … It better be the only hammer for that nail. … Every time we do it, it's just very hard to walk that talk. … Let's only do it when it's so evident, it's common sense, it's so clear, this is the only way to accomplish the goal. That's when we should be collaborating. Not because it's window dressing on the set and makes us all feel better, and that's the danger."

Fostering Shared Accountability

One important aspect of a collaborative shared system is a shared accountability system. Participants generated myriad ideas regarding what such a system would entail, ranging from general accountability issues, to dimensions to measure, a common and accessible data platform and action to pursue based on accountability data.

Accountability issues. On the topic of a shared accountability system, participants articulate the need for a shared accountability system in which charter schools and district schools publicly report the same accountability measures. They also call for greater transparency, a clear definition of "sound educational program," support to accompany higher expectations and internal accountability.

Public reporting of uniform standards. Although their beliefs about which schools have more rigorous accountability standards at present vary, participants agree that the same accountability measures are needed for charters and district schools. A foundation leader urges that there be "uniformity, so that both systems are actually using the same accountability measures. … That's what's needed more than ever, more than anything."

From the charter perspective, charters are required to meet a host of accountability measures that district schools are not, and charter representatives suspect district schools could not meet the same standards. A charter leader explains, "There is a perception out there that charter schools are not regulated, and while we do have exemptions from some laws, we have to do all the same reporting that traditional public schools do. Then on top of it, we have this annual review, and this more intensive dive every five years to justify our existence. If there was a level playing field for everyone, I think that would help."

On the other hand, some participants describe other ways in which charters and CMOs should be, but currently are not, consistently held to the same accountability and transparency standards as district schools. They cite several examples, including being subject to the Brown Act, Government Code 1090 and the Public Records Act.

Clarification of "sound educational program." As referenced in the above quote, charters are reviewed every five years as part of their renewal process. While charter representatives generally argue that this process is overly burdensome and district schools would not be able to fulfill the same requirements were they required to do so, other participants focus on the need for uniformity around this process. Rather than personal and political factors governing whether a charter is renewed, a labor group leader declares the need for the district to clearly define the parameters of a "sound educational program" so that the definition can be consistently applied to charters during the reauthorization and renewal process.

Equitable resources and support. Participants acknowledge that while accountability and high expectations are important, support to meet those expectations is also essential. A foundation leader emphasizes the need for "equitable inputs," such as funding and facilities.

Internal accountability. Finally, in addition to having a shared accountability system that would apply to the entire system, a couple of participants emphasize the need for internal accountability so that schools take responsibility for being accountable to themselves. A charter administrator asserts, "There must be internal accountability among all these schools and within each school. The internal accountability has to say, … here are the stakeholders. Do teachers know what the expectations are? Do kids know what the expectations are? Every week, every day. Do administrators know? Do parents know? All these four groups must know, in any given day, what school is about, and what they're supposed to be learning."

Dimensions to measure. Participants across all sectors believe a shared accountability system should measure academic and non-academic student outcomes, school climate and adult behavior.

Student outcomes. In measuring students' academic performance, participants identify the need for the following metrics: growth and proficiency, relative and absolute performance, standardized testing, attendance, retention and graduation. Several participants also underscore the need for collective responsibility for students' overall success, not limited to the time when students are enrolled at one's own school. For example, a charter school administrator explains, "We have to look at the kids' long-range life. It shouldn't be, you're elementary, you look at the elementary goals. You're high school, you look at high school A-G. No. You have to look at all of them, from pre-K through high school through college." In addition to academic measures of success, participants desire a shared accountability system to assess non-academic student outcomes, including character, cultural proficiency, socioemotional learning and empathy.

School climate. Holding schools across the system accountable for school climate is important to many participants as well. In this domain, participants describe the need to assess the extent to which students feel safe and experience a sense of belonging, measures that are assessed on the School Experience Survey. Participants from outside the charter sector raise the issue of measuring exclusionary practices, such as barring students from enrollment or removing existing students through suspensions and expulsions rather than adopting restorative justice practices, contending that charters have "skirted" these issues. Non-charter participants assert that charters do not enroll the same student populations as do district schools and emphasize the need for holding all schools accountable for admitting and providing services for all students, particularly students with disabilities and ELs.

Adult behavior. Finally, participants acknowledge the need for measuring the behavior of teachers and leaders, not just students. A business community leader states the need for "accountability of behavior, not accountability of results in our schools." According to a community organization leader, this would require a "tool that pushes us to think differently about our work."

A common and accessible data platform. Alongside the question of the components of a shared accountability system, three participants, including representatives from charters and community organizations, also point out the importance of a common and broadly accessible data platform that enables comparison across all publicly funded schools in the region. Representing a shared perspective of many participants, a charter leader says that accountability measures should be "more transparent and easier for parents to understand." A community organization leader suggests that because LAUSD authorizes the charters, the district should also take some responsibility for their outcomes. That is, "the State should include charters that have been authorized by the district in an evaluation of the district because right now the State accountability systems don't really incentivize districts to own the success of charters. … The adversarial tenor of the relationship of district and charters is something that has to shift for us to get the maximum impact. One way to shift that is to let the district own the success of charters, which they don't currently do."

Action based on accountability data. In addition to developing shared accountability metrics for the system, six participants, including representatives from charters and community organizations, describe another key aspect of a shared accountability system as taking action with teachers and schools based upon the results of those metrics. Participants suggest that a strategy for school closure or "radical change" is needed. A charter CEO says, "I feel like there's a fair amount of accountability in the sense of measurement, but the question is, … [after] we've done the measuring, now what happens? Are we making hard choices if the school is not measuring up to that level? Accountability isn't just the measurement side, but it's actually making changes and being willing to make difficult decisions based on the data that we find. I think that's where things really break down." In addition to action related to schools, a community organization leader suggests that teacher-related action is sometimes needed: "There needs to be better systems than we have currently of teacher evaluation … to identify teachers that aren't doing well and to move them out."

Moving Forward

Challenges

Participants anticipate several challenges to forging a collaborative system, including the continued growth of the charter sector and consequent erosion of and instability in district enrollment as well as ongoing facilities conflicts on both shared and discrete campuses.

The need for sustained leadership and vision is also a challenge. Participants underscore the need for leadership at the district level and are optimistic about Superintendent Michelle King's stance toward facilitating collaboration. However, the historical lack of stability in district leadership is a concern that participants believe could be detrimental to this process.

In addition, political infighting among powerful bodies jockeying for position and influence—district leadership, the school board, labor unions, the California Charter Schools Association, rival CMOs, Great Public Schools Now, other philanthropists and political funders and many more—creates barriers that would need to be overcome. Pleading with these groups to "back off," many participants believe that without a commitment from these groups to support collaborative efforts, it will be difficult to accomplish much change.

Finally, the scope of the task is daunting to several participants who contend that LAUSD's large size and governance structure is problematic. As such, they encourage the development of local leadership and an eventual restructuring of the district to make this task more manageable.

Resources and Support Needed

In considering how to develop a collaborative system-wide approach to education in Los Angeles, participants recognize the need for both resources and support, including a neutral facilitator, cross-sector collaboration, political leadership, funding, vision and support with implementation.

Human capital. Participants are adamant about the need for a neutral facilitator to guide this process, someone who does not have any special interests. Possible ideas for facilitators include members from the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, UNITE-LA or United Way.

Although there is not a clear consensus about who should be driving these efforts, including varied perspectives that the right leverage point is the superintendent, principals, parents and community members, there is agreement that cross-sector collaboration and strategic engagement from many stakeholders is necessary. Participants identify the following people or groups as important parts of the process: LAUSD superintendent, local district leaders, LAUSD school board, district school and charter leaders, parents, students, community organizers, business community, foundations, media

and universities. The L.A. Compact, a partnership among 23 leading L.A. organizations and institutions including education, business, government, labor and nonprofit sectors, was held up as an example of the type of cross-sector collaboration that is required.

Several participants also recognize the need for political leadership. In particular, participants suggest that leadership from the mayor would be beneficial for developing a collaborative system of education in Los Angeles.

Financial capital. In addition to human capital, participants also acknowledge the need for financial capital from the philanthropic community and voters. Participants suggest that funding could be sought from the California Community Foundation, Weingart Foundation, The Gates Foundation, The Walton Family Foundation and The Broad Foundation. However, some participants caution against requesting financial support from organizations that are typically pro- or anti-charter, which would include some of the foundations listed above. Additionally, a community organization leader emphasizes the importance of financial support from voters: "L.A. County has really stepped up on issues of parks and homelessness. … We as residents are investing back into our neighborhoods—parks and homelessness being two examples. I think we need to look at schools. LAUSD really needs to exude confidence in voters. … We [can] come together as a community to ask L.A. County voters to invest in LAUSD. I think we're going to have to, at some point."

Shared vision. With people engaged and funding secured, participants believe it would be important to create a shared vision, which they acknowledge will require courage, a sense of urgency and radical change. Such a vision could be based on the various common refrains, or advocacy messages that participants expressed, such as, "These are all our kids." Expanding on this idea, a foundation leader notes, "It's very apparent that folks move across the system. Some people start public and then move to charter. Some teachers start in public schools and then have formed their own charter schools. And I'm sure the movement goes the other way." Participants consistently urge that next steps prioritize "what's right for kids, not adults." Other participants describe the need for a shift in focus, away from the divisive rhetoric that separates charters and LAUSD. In fact, a community organization leader suggests that rather than fighting among one another, the focus should be on fighting poverty, which is the true root of the problem in Los Angeles's education system: "Ultimately charter schools aren't the problem. The union's not the problem. The district's not the problem. Poverty is the problem, and as long as we focus on charter schools and the unions and the district and the bad teachers and the bad principals, it just takes our eye off the ball, and the ball is poverty. So that's what I'm trying to solve."

Perseverance. After a shared vision is established, the hard work of implementation will begin. Participants discuss the need for space and the opportunity to build trust and develop relationships. They also emphasize the need for time and a sustained effort. A charter leader contends that it will require "grit to stick with it because it'll take years. It's not an, 'Oh, let's meet and have a promising

practices session and everything's going to be fine.'" Interviewees suggest that pilot testing the ideas, perhaps involving LAUSD's Innovation Office, might also be important.

Will and Capacity

Participants disagree on whether Los Angeles has the will to move forward with a collaborative education system. However, there is complete consensus that the capacity to do so already exists in the city.

Will. Whether Angelenos from different sectors have the will to create a more collaborative system-wide approach to education is controversial. Some participants from charters and foundations assert that the will exists at the school level but not at the policy level. For example, a charter leader explains, "If I am just talking about district officials and district employees, and charter school leaders and employees, I think that the will is there. I think when you get up again to the policy level, or political level, clearly the will is not there." Conversely, some participants from the charter sector believe charters have the will but the district does not. Still others, including participants from three charters, two community organizations, and one foundation, believe that the district, guided by Superintendent Michelle King, is beginning to develop the will. A charter organization leader comments, "While I am very encouraged by Superintendent King's posture about encouraging best practice and changing the tone and the language for how both sectors speak to each other, and I think that's absolutely on the right path, I think we're still a far cry away from necessarily realigning resources and making the structural changes necessary so that the district can reorient its efforts."

A smaller group of five participants representing charters, community organizations, foundations, and business do not believe that the will exists in the charter or district sectors. A charter leader contends, "I don't know if it's possible in this climate. … It's really hard to engage with people who are saying things about you that are so despicable. … It's just a divisiveness, which is I guess is endemic of this point in our society, but it's tough to bridge that divide. … It's kind of like saying, 'How do we get Democrats and Republicans to start talking again?'"

Capacity. Regardless of their disagreement on whether the will for collaboration currently exists, all participants believe Los Angles has the capacity to create such a system. A business community leader represents this consensus position: "I believe L.A. has the capacity to do whatever it has the will to do. So, it is not the capacity that is limited."

What Participants Did Not Say

In reflecting on the comments of participants, it is noteworthy that two potential visions for the future of LAUSD were not part of the conversation. Not a single participant described a vision of an education system without any charters nor did anyone express desire for a system that is exclusively charter.

While it is not possible to determine exactly why no one suggested these potential structures, there are many possible interpretations of the absence of these ideas. First, the absence of these visions suggests that there is an overall acceptance that charters are part of the City's educational landscape. Second, it is possible that there is not a clear anti-charter stance in opposition to charters; instead, those who appear to be "anti-charter" might in fact be opposed to some aspects of how charters operate and the impact that the charter sector has on the system as a whole but not to the idea of charters as one of many choices in Los Angeles. Whatever the reason, the fact that none of the participants envisions a system that has no charters or that is exclusively charter indicates a need for Angelenos to work together to determine how charters and LAUSD can together meet the needs of all of Los Angeles's students.

Suggested Next Steps

It is evident that key education stakeholders representing various sectors in Los Angeles are passionate about serving all the City's students. Despite the current, negative dynamic between charters and LAUSD and the many points of disagreement among participants, Angelenos express an unwavering commitment and strong desire to critically examine the current system, make changes and move forward with a system-wide approach in the best interest of students.

Several steps are necessary to lay the foundation for this process. It is essential to identify a neutral facilitator who can guide the process. Further, it is imperative to engage stakeholders from many sectors. By bringing all these people together in a neutral atmosphere, it will be possible to begin the work of developing a collective vision for a system-wide approach that serves all of Los Angeles's students.

As a charter organization leader asserts, "There's absolutely no way to make people love each other. The only thing that we can do, all together, is to create the opportunities for collaboration and help people take that first step across the line toward each other and in the service of children. We have to be able to continue to create those opportunities, call out the polarizing intent of certain factions, and continue to support, publicize, and celebrate the collaborative efforts. … We can and will change the tone and tenor of the city."
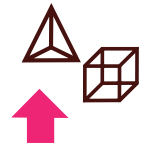
We Choose All: Research to Inform Public Education in Los Angeles

Summary Recommendations

The We Choose ALL research briefs highlight the need for public actions and public policies which will support a system of public education in Los Angeles that chooses all. The summary recommendations deliver a set of seven proposals for next steps.

- Create forums for leaders of district and charter schools to regularly discuss core design principles of a system that chooses all.

- Create a "Network of Innovative Schools" (including community schools, magnet schools, early learning centers, expanded school based management model schools, local initiative schools, pilot schools and charter schools) in which educators who are committed to a system that chooses all incubate, support, and share best practices.

- Create a cross-sector forum with representatives of labor, business, community organizations, university partners, City and County governance, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), charter schools, etc. to explore opportunities for joint advocacy around conditions necessary for all Los Angeles students to succeed, such as quality early childhood education, supportive child welfare policies, decent and equitable school funding, sanctuary for immigrant families and more.

- Establish common rules and shared data collection protocols for school enrollment procedures, transfer policies and discipline practices (with special attention to the experiences of racial/ethnic sub-groups, English Learners and special needs students) and encourage all publicly funded schools serving Los Angeles children and youth to adopt these standards.

- Develop a common, unified enrollment system for all public schools serving Los Angeles children and youth that adopt the shared standards specified above.

- Monitor and issue an annual public report on: a) The impact of charter school growth on the fiscal health of LAUSD schools and the well-being of Los Angeles neighborhoods; b) The demographic composition of all district and charter schools; c) Formal outcomes of all district and charter schools, including student academic achievement, graduation rates, post-secondary enrollment and persistence and civic and community readiness.

- Establish a task force at the State level to review and strengthen charter school authorization, oversight and renewal so that these processes support the goal of a system that chooses all.