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JAMES P. HONAN
ROBERT B. SCHWARTZ
JENNIFER M. SUESSE

Long Beach Unified School District (B): Working to Sustain Improvement (2002–2004)

On June 17, 2004, Christopher Steinhauser returned to his office after visiting the third annual retreat for Long Beach’s high school principals in nearby Laguna Beach. While driving north on Interstate 405, Steinhauser realized that his second year as superintendent of Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) was nearly complete. Though a statewide fiscal crisis had forced LBUSD to make some tough choices during 2002–2004, Steinhauser was enjoying his new job. “I love challenges,” he said.

There is a lot of work ahead to do what’s best for Long Beach’s kids, but I believe that the pillars of our organization are stronger than ever. The work of the past decade evolved without a formal plan, because we concentrated on the shared goals and objectives at the heart of each initiative. I have worked at LBUSD for my entire career, and in the past two years, we haven’t missed a beat. We will continue to build on our strengths.

Building On a Decade of Reform (1992–2002)¹

In September 2002, Steinhauser succeeded highly regarded Superintendent Carl Cohn, who led LBUSD from 1992–2002. During Cohn’s tenure, the district and city rallied together to face many challenges including growing diversity, economic adversity, and threats to public safety. Cohn worked with the LBUSD Board of Education to foster a new type of governance relationship. Together they developed a series of “Board initiatives” designed to address the district’s goal of “raising standards of dress, behavior, and achievement.” Major initiatives included adopting a mandatory K-8 school uniform policy, implementing standards-based K-8 instructional reform, ending social promotion, laying a foundation for high school reform, and developing partnerships with local institutions of higher education.

¹ See PELP No. 04-006, “Long Beach Unified School District (A): Change That Leads to Improvement (1992–2002),” for additional information about district reform efforts.

Research Associate Jennifer M. Suesse prepared this case under the supervision of Professors James P. Honan and Robert B. Schwartz. This case was written to be used in conjunction with PELP No. 006, “Long Beach Unified School District (A): Change That Leads to Improvement (1992–2002).” Cases are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

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Steinhauser served as Cohn's deputy for three years prior to his promotion. Together they worked to transform the role of the central office by linking departments more closely with classroom-level instruction. Centralized instructional support functions were integrated into the elementary, middle, high school, and research offices, and special education was redesigned to provide more direct services to sites. An office of curriculum and professional development was also reestablished following severe cutbacks in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, which then developed high-quality professional development activities for principals and teachers to ensure that standards-based instruction was implemented consistently across the district. During the 1990s, LBUSD also partnered with the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Panasonic Foundation, and the Long Beach Educational Partnership to advance its change efforts. In 2003, the Broad Foundation recognized LBUSD's achievements by awarding the district its Broad Prize for Urban Education.²

Steinhauser Takes Charge

After his unanimous selection as superintendent by the five-member Board of Education (henceforth referred to as "the Board"), Steinhauser and LBUSD confronted changes in California's financial and educational climate. The state's rising deficit, caused by both changes in the economy and the energy crisis, led to severe funding shortfalls for public schools. These financial pressures were exacerbated by changes in student enrollment, which also impacted available funding. Relations with many key stakeholders also changed during Steinhauser's first two years on the job due to new Board membership, new teacher's association leadership, and retirements from the central-office. Steinhauser planned to use these challenges as an opportunity to streamline central-office administrative functions and improve organizational communication. Meanwhile, LBUSD was working hard to maintain its momentum in improving student achievement at the elementary and middle school levels. Steinhauser's biggest priority, however, was "fixing the high schools." He considered high school reform to be the most difficult and important task facing all urban public school districts across the nation and was determined that LBUSD would take on this "last frontier."

Financial Pressures

Enrollment changes After more than 20 years of rapidly increasing student enrollment, the growth in enrollment at LBUSD began slowing in SY03.³ District records revealed that fewer new kindergarteners were entering LBUSD, while transfers into district high schools continued at a steady pace. In SY04, 97,560 students attended the district's 95 schools. Of these students, 49% were Hispanic/Latino, 18.6% were African-American, 16.9% were white (non-Hispanic), 9.7% were Asian, and 5.8% represented a wide range of other ethnic groups including Filipino and Pacific Islander. Thirty-three percent were learning English as a second language, 65% received free or reduced-price lunch, and 8% were enrolled in special education.

State budget shortfalls Ongoing state budget shortfalls were a major concern for LBUSD, since 90% of its general fund (accounting for 64% of the district's total revenues) was disbursed from the state (**Exhibit 1** details SY99–SY03 district financial information). After three consecutive years of forced reductions totaling \$42 million, cutting an additional \$15 million in SY04 proved especially

² In 2002, the Broad Foundation began awarding this \$1 million annual prize to one urban school district judged by education leaders and a review board to be making the greatest overall improvement in student achievement while at the same time reducing the performance gaps between income and ethnic groups. A report from the National Center for Educational Accountability documented Broad's evaluation of LBUSD. See <http://www.broadfoundation.org> for more information.

³ PELP cases use the convention "SY" to designate, in this instance, school year 2002–2003.

difficult. Under Steinhauser's leadership, LBUSD convened a committee of 52 stakeholders including administrators, teachers, and other community members to review the budget in a series of 10 meetings during the winter months. The group collaborated to set priorities, which included avoiding direct cuts to school sites and layoffs, while also preserving class-size reduction at all levels. After California voters approved a statewide school bailout bond in March 2004, dodging the need for more drastic cutbacks, the budget committee presented its proposal to the Board. The Board accepted the committee's recommendations, with three minor changes.

"Even though we've had to cut \$57 million in the past four years," Steinhauser said, "nobody hangs their head around our offices. People are still working hard, and we have avoided layoffs." District administrators agreed. "But," one noted, "we're tired, we're burnt out, and everyone feels like they are on the chopping block." Chief Business and Financial Officer Tomio Nishimura added that budget reductions since 2000 had "left funding for classrooms and related resources untouched, as the district had restricted cuts to school site support, instructional support, and general administrative support services." Nishimura then explained LBUSD's approach to budget cutting. "If you were to view the district's organizational structure as a series of concentric circles," he said, "classrooms would be in the innermost circle. Should further cuts be required in SY05, we will move slowly inward. I would expect pupil support services [e.g., counselors, nurses, psychologists, librarians] to face careful scrutiny along with site support staff." Looking back at the process, Steinhauser remarked:

We turned over every rock in the organization and looked carefully at any department whose budget grew out of proportion to changes in enrollment. Even though I thought I knew a lot about budgets, the budget process took an inordinate amount of my time this year. There were some hard choices to make, and we found some places that had been ignored for too long. In the end, we met our goal, and the fiscal challenges did not take away our focus on doing what's best for kids.

Looking ahead, Nishimura predicted that the tough times were not over:

While the voter's approval of revenue bonds and a gradual improving of the state economy have possibly negated the need for draconian cuts, we are nonetheless receiving less from the state than we'd like to now. Our charismatic governor has managed to strike "deals" with major budget stakeholders, and we are holding on to the promise of a full recovery within the next few years. Given California's reliance on personal income and sales taxes to fund education, however, I expect we'll be on a roller-coaster ride for years to come.

Stakeholders across Long Beach hoped the state would make a strong economic recovery. Some worried, however, that California was considering a new school funding policy based on a weighted student formula.⁴ LBUSD strongly opposed this approach to school funding. "Allocating resources to sites according to a weighted student formula would destroy Long Beach," said Steinhauser. "All our work has focused on equitable treatment for *all* of our kids. Since the state can't give us any more money, people would see this as robbing Peter to pay Paul. It would distract our principals and create huge problems in the community."

⁴ This proposal was based on *Making Schools Work*, by William G. Ouchi (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003). See PELP Case No. 005, "Pursuing Educational Equity: Aligning Resources at San Francisco Unified School District," for one example of the weighted student formula in use.

A Changing of the Guard: Evolving Stakeholder Relationships

Board turnover Following nearly a decade of consistent Board leadership, major membership turnover ensued just as Steinhauer took charge at LBUSD.⁵ A few months prior to Board President Bobbie Smith's retirement, Smith received a standing ovation at a downtown luncheon celebrating Long Beach's education systems. Steinhauer told the assembled group, "Our achievements at LBUSD did not occur by accident. They happened because of visionary leadership by our Board of Education." While Steinhauer was sorry to lose Smith and her colleagues, he was delighted with the results of the April 2004 election when both candidates Smith endorsed were selected. "It is a seamless transition," he said. "The only change is that we have had to adjust our workshop times to accommodate those new members who hold full-time jobs. Instead of two separate meetings, we now have our closed sessions before the committee meetings, which makes for a very long day." By the start of SY05, four of the five Board members had less than four years' experience. This was a dramatic reversal for Long Beach, where Board members' average tenure had exceeded 10 years only two years earlier. While most LBUSD officials were optimistic about the new Board members, some found the rapid turnover a bit unsettling. Also, for the first time in recent memory, men would hold a majority of the Board seats.

Strained relationship with TALB Although relations with its clerical workers' union remained strong, LBUSD faced difficulties in its relations with the Teacher's Association of Long Beach (TALB) during SY04. After nearly 10 years of mostly productive interactions, new TALB leadership and the budget crisis created new tensions. Between SY02 and SY03, TALB's 5,500 members elected a new executive director and a new president and brought in a new assistant executive director from the California Teacher's Association (CTA). In the fall of 2003, when LBUSD opened annual salary negotiations for SY05, they could offer no raises and proposed modifications to the teachers' health benefits package. TALB rebuffed the district's offer, and negotiations stalled. During the impasse, one veteran teacher commented, "We are entering into a new age of distrust, where there is increased militancy. This is unheard of in our district. There are some debates about how to pay for health care, and I don't know how it will play out." TALB's president, Tony Diaz, added:

Our relationship with the district has been good, with the exception of a few misunderstandings during our recent bargaining sessions. Some of our teachers have voiced frustration with top-down decisions and feel we are lacking parity between teachers and administrators. On pieces of more recent reforms we have had some issues; however, we've also had collaboration and good success. I feel there is a lot to be proud of.

After two days of mediation in February 2004, the health-care issue was resolved with a compromise. Teachers would accept a new health plan administrator after a one-year transition

⁵ The changes in Board membership began when Board member Bonnie Lowenthal was elected to the Long Beach City Council in 2000. Her Board seat remained vacant for nearly 10 months before residents elected Suja Lowenthal, her daughter-in-law and a government relations officer, to complete her unexpired term. Educator Karen Polacheck retired in 2002 after 14 years of Board leadership, and her seat was filled by businessman James "Jim" Choura. Then, in early 2003, legendary Long Beach educator Ed Eveland died suddenly after more than 50 years of service to LBUSD, including nearly 11 on the Board. In her published tribute to Eveland, Board President Bobbie Smith wrote, "Ed had a grand vision for what school could be: school uniforms, the Classical High School, the end of social promotion, higher standards for all kids from all backgrounds." Eveland's supporters were relieved when retired LBUSD principal Jon Meyer assumed his seat in a special election. Finally, Smith, a popular and respected African-American Board member, retired at the conclusion of SY04 following 16 years of Board leadership. Smith's endorsee, fellow African-American and Dean of Long Beach City College Dr. Felton Williams, won easily in the April 2004 elections. Incumbent Meyer ran unopposed and was reelected. Of the old guard, only 14-year Board veteran Mary Stanton, who represented the city's northern district, remained.

period. By the end of SY04, the new CTA representative left Long Beach and TALB was reorganizing and hiring a new executive director and staff leadership. Steinhauser reflected on the events:

In recent years, I think some rank and file members felt that TALB was too cozy with the district. So they chose leaders who had a different philosophy, which was not always based on the collaborative approach we've come to expect in Long Beach. During the impasse, a few teachers called me personally to ask if some of the negative things they were hearing were true. "Is it really that bad?" they asked. It was frustrating to deal with misinformation when we were working so hard to handle the state budget shortfall in the best way for kids and for teachers. Throughout the process, I directed the staff to stick to the high road. No matter what, we will always treat people with respect and be open and honest in our communication.

"Our teachers work so hard," concluded one Board member. "We were disappointed that we were at odds with TALB this year, but it was understandable given that tight financial times have prevented us from offering raises for teachers in the past three years. I think we must find a way to provide increases next year. We look forward to working with the new leadership."

Central-office retirements At the central office, Steinhauser made relatively few changes to the organization in his first two years as superintendent. Most of Cohn's team remained in place, though the SY04 district organizational chart showed some consolidation (see **Exhibit 2**). When Cohn retired, Steinhauser asked Dorothy Harper to become deputy superintendent. Due to financial restraints, Harper continued to supervise the K-8 and middle schools in addition to her new responsibilities. Steinhauser, who had worked with low-performing elementary schools prior to his promotion, added an administrator to the superintendent's office to oversee those sites. Assistant Superintendent Karen DeVries was then responsible for all 51 elementary schools, which included 16 year-round sites, by herself. The net result of the various retirements and reassignments was that LBUSD had 10 fewer senior management slots overall.

Despite these changes, stakeholders from across the district described the transition from Cohn to Steinhauser as "smooth." Eyes were focused on Steinhauser, however, when Nishimura and Harper approached retirement in SY04. Teachers, principals, and district administrators alike said, "Dorothy will be impossible to replace," and noted that Harper was the district's highest-ranking African-American leader following Cohn's retirement. Steinhauser involved both TALB leadership and the two Board budget committee members in interviewing external candidates for Nishimura's replacement. In addition, Lynn Winters, who ran the LBUSD research department; the public information director; at least two high school principals; the chief financial officer; the special projects director; and the elementary superintendent were nearing retirement (either early or regular), though none had announced specific departure dates.

Administrative Refinements

Promotions Throughout the spring in 2004, Steinhauser wrestled with the quandary of reorganizing responsibilities among existing staff. Given the budget crunch, he knew he would "have to do more with less." His decision to promote DeVries to the deputy position, which was announced at a Board meeting in early June, took some by surprise, though upon reflection, administrators agreed the choice was logical. Steinhauser and DeVries had been close colleagues for over a decade, working together to supervise elementary schools and in the special projects office. Steinhauser's choice to create an assistant superintendent of middle schools and Head Start was more unexpected. While combining the preschool programs with middle schools seemed unconventional, his selection of Head Start Director Gwen Matthews for the role was well received. Harper's deputy superintendent and middle school responsibilities would be divided among DeVries, Matthews, and

Steinhauser. Finally, Steinhauser promoted an internal candidate to become the assistant superintendent of human resource services. Administrators noted that all three of these newly promoted officials, like Steinhauser, had once been LBUSD elementary school principals. "Chris is working to put his stamp on the organization," noted one district official. Additional promotions and reorganization announcements were expected throughout the summer. As Steinhauser looked back on his own first steps toward filling vacancies, he said:

One thing I learned from Carl is the importance of having two and three people deep. Just like a football team. Your first-string players could get hurt and your second-string players could get hurt, and then what have you got? So, I keep a mental map all the time of the checkerboard—where people are, where they're going. Before I started, I told the staff that we would have to downsize. That was a given. But, I kept my cards close to my chest as I thought about the promotions. Looking ahead, I think the overall system will benefit from some realignment. But, change is hard for some people. I can handle change, but I have to remind myself to be clear and not move too fast.

Implementing Baldrige Leaders across the district also noted that Steinhauser had a more "operational focus" than his predecessor. For example, with support from the Broad Foundation, he was implementing a districtwide process for continuous improvement, called the Baldrige System for Performance Excellence.⁶ Using feedback received through the Baldrige process in SY04, Steinhauser decided to decentralize some student support services (which included services ranging from attendance and expulsions to nurses and gang intervention specialists). DeVries was asked to supervise a reorganization of the information services branch in SY05, which would involve data systems from both the instruction and business sides of the house. Winters and her technology staff would support DeVries. Finally, Steinhauser continued Cohn's practice of one midweek meeting for senior staff, though he made slight modifications to the schedule to ensure that a small group of key leadership team members could meet privately on a biweekly basis.

Opinions among the senior staff were divided regarding the Baldrige system. Some felt that it would facilitate communication. One administrator commented:

I like that Chris is trying to implement a more uniform system for collaborative planning. He places emphasis on training us to communicate in a systematic way. It is helpful for me to know what my colleagues' priorities are, and I know that Chris also likes that this process forces us to model for sites what we are always asking them to do: to give and receive feedback about organizational performance.

Other administrators were frustrated with the Baldrige process and "jargon." They pointed to the district's ongoing struggle to bring a service orientation to the information services, purchasing, and payroll departments and questioned the system's ability to yield genuine improvement. Some officials worried that communication systems across the organization were weak, and they were skeptical about Baldrige as a solution to this "bigger issue." In response to this debate, Steinhauser said, "I don't care what we call it, but I want there to be a process in place by which people set priorities according to what their clients want."

⁶ The Baldrige system aims to provide a systems perspective for understanding performance management. For more information, see the Baldrige National Quality Program Web site at <http://www.quality.nist.gov>.

Ongoing Instructional Reform

Amid the changing context and with fewer hands in the central office, Steinhauser and LBUSD staff aimed to sustain their focus on improving instruction for students in Long Beach. Every year, more schools met their state academic performance index (API) targets: 63% in SY01, 69% in SY02, and 83% in SY03. In contrast, only 78% of schools statewide had similar success in SY03. LBUSD was committed to continuing and extending the reform efforts that began during Cohn's era at all levels: elementary, middle, and high school. From SY02 to SY04, the district reallocated some of its central resources and staff to focus on Steinhauser's high school priority.

Sustaining K-8 Improvement

Elementary: seeking self-sufficiency Elementary students made slow but steady progress (**Exhibit 3** includes California Standards Test [CST] elementary results). Then, in SY04, the California education code mandated that schools use a state-adopted literacy curriculum. For LBUSD, this meant that 59 schools implemented a complex new curriculum called Open Court.⁷ Deputy Superintendent DeVries remarked:

Schools felt, rightly so, that this was a totally top-down mandate. We didn't ask for input, we just expected people to start using this new curriculum, as required by the ed code. As we got to know Open Court better, we discovered that this was an exceptionally strong curriculum which integrated many previously separate literacy components into a single package. But, the program was not particularly strong instructionally, which was frustrating for teachers. Finally, at a meeting this winter, I told our principals and teachers: "Use this curriculum, but continue to make good instructional decisions in the Long Beach way." By the end of the year, principals reported that many of their best teachers made the program work for their students and themselves.

While the Open Court implementation strained the elementary system, two examples illustrated that teachers remained committed to improving instruction at the district. First, due to a decline in elementary enrollment, LBUSD wanted to expand the number of classrooms offering full-day kindergarten. Full-day kindergarten had been a long-standing district goal. Though TALB initially resisted the proposal, after some tough negotiations TALB and Steinhauser agreed to establish an automatic waiver process that would ensure that teachers could volunteer for all-day teaching duties. Both sides agreed that this was a step in the right direction. The elementary schools also piloted the implementation of a districtwide, standards-based report card in SY04. Though voluntary, 85% of teachers participated.

DeVries had her hands full with these projects, since she also retained responsibility for supervising and evaluating the K-5 principals as well as managing their monthly professional development offerings. At "key-results walk-through" meetings, principals visited classrooms at one another's schools and then reviewed "key-results" data highlighting student progress in various subject areas. Some principals also included teachers in walk-throughs. To handle the increased workload, DeVries selected 12 "lead principals" to manage key-results meetings with their peers. She commented:

⁷ Technically, schools could select from a state-approved list of curricula, but California's education code specified that schools receiving program improvement, immediate intervention underperforming, or Reading First funds use Open Court. This affected 51 K-5 and eight K-8 schools at LBUSD, though in keeping with past district practices, one high-performing school applied for and received a waiver.

This was my sixth year supervising the elementary schools, and a group of my principals agreed to take on new responsibilities. Initially, I made this change in survival mode. Losing the intimacy of working with Chris and then my director due to budget cuts was hard, but the lead principals worked out well. These 12 principals were outstanding, and they were accountable to each other in these meetings (though lead principals do not evaluate their colleagues). By the end of the year, principals said that they wanted to keep this system in place. I guess it's not always bad to have scarce resources, because it forced me to rethink things. And, now that the "lead principals" are established, I'm less worried about taking on all the new responsibilities that go with the new deputy position.

Middle schools Like the elementary schools, middle schools also worked to institutionalize many of the improvement practices launched during Cohn's tenure as Harper moved toward retirement in SY04. Student performance on the CST was mixed (see **Exhibit 4**). Before she left, Harper established a strong focus on both leadership and literacy at the middle school level. She involved an outside consultant in designing professional development for teachers. The middle schools also implemented principal walk-throughs in conjunction with monthly principals' meetings, which supported the literacy focus. Principals and department chairs were learning how to recognize and develop good instructional technique for all classrooms.

Though the middle school principals were "devastated" by Harper's departure, they were optimistic about Matthews's appointment. Prior to Dr. Matthews's appointment, Bancroft Middle School's principal, Debbie Stark, stated:

Our best hope would be that Dorothy will mentor whomever supervises the middle schools. Dorothy has so much wisdom and institutional knowledge, and she was a buffer for her principals. She protected us and encouraged us to take risks, which is an essential component of really moving schools forward. As a middle manager looking at the changes in the central office, I hope that the district will find ways to continue supporting principals' risk taking in this new context, when money is tight and accountability is strict.

Steinhauser's Mandate: A Focus on High Schools

Background Many LBUSD principals and district leaders perceived high school reform as a formidable challenge. The district served over 26,000 ninth- through twelfth-grade students at six comprehensive and eight alternative high schools. Enrollment at each of the six comprehensive high schools exceeded 4,000 students, and each campus was under the collaborative leadership of two "co-principals." Each high school offered unique programming ranging from academic magnet programs to freshman academies to a classical high school, and some students and teachers at each site were organized into smaller learning communities. As in other districts across the nation, the culture in Long Beach's high schools was subject focused. Most teachers were organized in departments and were trained and certified in a subject area (as opposed to the general elementary certification, which often included coursework in teaching literacy).

During the 1990s, LBUSD had encouraged ongoing, small-scale high school reform efforts but concentrated its central resources on improving K-8 instruction. This focus led to improvements in student achievement in the early and middle grades. "Slowly," Steinhauser said, "our reforms began pushing their way up from the bottom. High school teachers began noticing that our K-8 students were entering high school better prepared than before." In 1999, the Board turned its attention to high schools and passed the High School Initiative, which focused on literacy and ended social promotion for ninth graders. When asked about the challenge of high school reform, former Superintendent Cohn responded, "Long Beach loves its high schools, and reforming them is a huge

undertaking even in the best of times. I always want to see Long Beach break the mold and do it the Long Beach way, and I'm hopeful something special will happen."

Every Student, Every Day Since SY02, Steinhauer had supported High School Assistant Superintendent Margaret "Maggie" Webster and the high school principals, who worked to develop the district's plan for high school reform, called "Every Student, Every Day."⁸ Webster and Steinhauer knew that they wanted a reform strategy for all high schools that was based on the standards-based, data-driven approach that had originated at the elementary and middle school levels. Webster worked with George Perry, a consultant who had helped to implement the middle school reform efforts at LBUSD, to begin designing and implementing the reform. Perry recalled, "From the beginning, Maggie wanted the reforms to connect to all the K-8 work we'd done. She also believed that high school reform was for *all* high schools and *all* kids. Her consistent approach had real power." Webster stated:

Though we had the advantage of following on the heels of more than five years of successful middle school reform, that was just our starting point. In order to make the changes we imagined and establish continuity from kindergarten through 12th grade, we were going to have to convince our high schools to make big changes. For them, this reform would mean a different way of doing business. We were going to say that subject expertise wasn't enough if the kids didn't learn. Accomplishing our mission would require so many changes, which we knew would be a huge challenge. So, we needed to get buy-in and create a united effort.

To achieve this aim, Webster established quarterly professional learning communities for the high school principals, which Perry facilitated. These meetings focused on professional development and data analysis. The decision to start with principals stemmed in part from Webster's belief that their participation would "make or break" the district's ability to progress. She said, "We can't expect principals to be instructional leaders without first providing them support and learning themselves." Webster was clear that high school teachers would make no changes in the early stages of reform.

Defining goals By the end of SY04, Webster and the high school principals had articulated and refined four goals for the high school reform:

- Increasing achievement of all students in the core content areas
- Closing the achievement gap by accelerating the learning of the lowest-performing students
- Improving the high school climate and culture among students and staff to support improved achievement
- Building high school leadership capacity to design, implement, and sustain improvement efforts

Together with Webster, Steinhauer, Dominguez, and Winters, who ran the LBUSD research office, the principals also worked to develop a specific set of indicators to measure their progress (see **Exhibit 5**). Some of these indicators emerged from conversations principals had following "key-results walk-throughs," the K-8 practice of visiting one another's schools adopted by the group. "The high schools are becoming data hogs," said Winters. "Now that they are learning how to use our available data, they are keeping our department hopping with requests. Together we are designing a way for them to evaluate their own work on a regular basis."

⁸ "Every Student, Every Day: Responding to the Needs of All Learners" was presented to the LBUSD Board on March 4, 2004.

Early results By the end of SY04, Steinhauser visited Webster and her team as they assembled for their third annual retreat in Laguna Beach. Everyone could see that the high schools were making progress. Academic performance ranged across the schools, but all of the high schools met their statewide performance targets in SY03 and were eligible for the Governor's Performance Award as measured by their API scores (see **Exhibit 6**). A high school principal reflected on the progress of unfolding reforms:

Last year, there was a real emphasis on literacy districtwide. This wasn't just high school, and it was very new, very different. It went against the traditional isolation and proprietary nature of high school cultures. For staff development each month, we walked around to a different department to see what literacy strategies they were using. I remember that we had a conference with PE teachers one day, and a lot of people were dismissive. That was the old mind-set. Many teachers were surprised to see the PE teachers using whiteboards to teach vocabulary and giving handouts. It built respect and validated that this was a push that everyone was doing. And one of the reasons why I think that our high schools did well with results was because everyone was working together and there was a focus.

Data also showed that LBUSD was progressing more rapidly than the state overall in decreasing the numbers of students whose scores on the California English/Language Arts Standards Tests (CST) were below basic or far below basic. While the high schools were proud of their achievements, there was still an urgent need for improvement, with only 35% of ninth graders, 28% of tenth graders, and 27% of eleventh graders scoring at proficient or advanced levels on the CST in SY03. LBUSD also saw a worrisome and persistent gap in academic achievement between white and nonwhite students, mirroring results across the nation. Students who were learning English or those who were socio-economically disadvantaged also tended to score lower on multiple achievement measures.

To address this issue, LBUSD began steadily increasing the number of students taking advanced placement (AP) courses from SY01 to SY04 (see **Exhibit 7**). In SY05, the district planned to expand AP and honors course offerings by 20% to increase the enrollment of historically underrepresented Hispanic and African-American students. LBUSD was putting a number of supports in place, including summer programs and AP teacher training, to help those students succeed. The district was also developing systems to identify students at risk of failing the statewide high school exit examination (which would become mandatory in 2007) by having all ninth and tenth graders take a practice exam in 2003.⁹

At the Laguna Beach retreat, Webster and the principals agreed that differentiating instruction (particularly for those students who were struggling the most), improving attendance, and improving performance for second-language learners would be the high schools' SY05 priorities. One challenge would be to continue this work amid the tough budget environment. Due to financial constraints, Steinhauser suggested cutting high school deans and Perry's consulting contract from the SY05 budget. After the high school principals protested, Steinhauser made some adjustments and reinstated Perry's contract.

⁹ Results showed that 68% of the classes of 2005 and 2006 passed the English/Language Arts portion, while 50%—65% passed the Math portion (46.6% of the Class of 2005 and 59% of the Class of 2006 passed both).

Reflections on Steinhauser's Leadership

District officials described Steinhauser as someone who “loved the details” of instruction and financial management. They characterized his leadership style as both “less questioning” and “more approachable” than Cohn’s. Assistant Superintendent Christine Dominguez said:

Like Carl, Chris spends a lot of time in the community and a lot of time in schools. But, he’s much more hands-on. For example, last summer he taught a second-grade summer school class, because he wanted to understand the new state-mandated Open Court literacy curriculum. Then, during this year’s budget process, he demonstrated his mastery of federal categorical funding, as well as his ability to get input from the community on tough issues. You don’t often see a superintendent getting involved at that level. He really understands both the instructional and fiscal sides of the house.

While some officials commented quietly about how Steinhauser was not a “visionary like Carl,” they also lauded him as one of the “most loved” leaders in the district. One administrator commented on the transition from Cohn to Steinhauser:

We have been fortunate to work with two extraordinary superintendents. Carl gave us our focus on kids and classrooms, where the most important work is being done. Chris shares in this philosophy. However, Carl had never been a site administrator, so he made it clear that he needed us to do our jobs. Chris, on the other hand, knows every detail of site administration like the back of his hand. He doesn’t really need to rely on anyone, yet we know he has confidence in us to do the job.

One LBUSD veteran added, “Carl was a little more top-down than Chris, but they are both instructional leaders. Consequently, the transition felt seamless. The last thing managers needed was an abrupt shift in mission and practice. We anticipate that Chris will be here for awhile. Once our course is set, people will adhere to it. Change is hard, and nobody wants to reinvent everything every year.” A principal added:

A superintendent change is hard on everybody because you’re just used to certain things. In the past two years, our superintendent changed, our Board changed, our union leadership changed, and some of our key leaders are retiring. It’s really hard to say what exactly will happen because so many key things changed at once. I think that left some fear in the organization, so I think we’re all bracing ourselves for what’s coming next. Everyone wonders, “What’s the next big change around the corner?” We all know that we’ll be fine, whatever it is, but nobody likes the uncertainty. Given the way things are, especially with the budget, I just feel a lot more in the dark.

Winters reflected on the district’s future. “Carl had a bold vision,” she said. “How do we keep the vision alive in times of financial retrenchment?”

Looking Ahead

As he continued up I-405, Steinhauser reflected on his first two years as superintendent:

It’s a risk, but I’m putting most of my eggs in the high school basket. It’s where we need to focus our efforts. I’ve kept everything that worked for Carl, and we’re hitting our high schools from the academic side of the house. The Board has been wonderfully supportive. Of course, I never wanted to follow someone who was so successful, but I have the insider’s advantage. I

remember when the principals asked Carl about the pros and cons of being succeeded by an insider, he said, "Well, the con for you is that Chris knows where all the work needs to be done. An outsider would have to do their homework to study and learn the situation. They'd probably miss a beat. Chris can just hit the ground running." And that's what I've done.

But, I've been surprised by some of the politics. Even some of the best and brightest are afraid of change and constructive criticism. And, in a few instances, my faith in mankind has been tested. I've had to learn to pick my battles, and I am still learning how to avoid getting distracted from my main mission: student achievement. For me, the hardest part of the job is the loneliness. I can't share a lot of things with most people. Despite that, this has been fun. There are always new challenges.

Exhibit 1 LBUSD Financial Information SY99–SY03 (\$ million)

This statement includes revenues and expenditures from 14 LUBSD funds, including general, adult, preschool, insurance, cafeteria, and construction funds.

	SY99 ^a	SY00	SY01	SY02	SY03
Revenues by Source					
Local ^b	\$103.937	\$86.489	\$91.511	\$174.010	\$224.429
State ^c	481.287	550.008	617.994	702.749	602.280
Federal Grants	72.122	76.825	86.028	95.496	109.301
Total Revenues	\$657.346	\$713.322	\$795.533	\$972.255	\$936.010
Expenditures by Use					
Direct Instruction ^d	\$334.498	\$377.795	\$441.080	\$466.163	\$478.441
Pupil Support & Site/Central Administration	104.600	112.450	134.727	140.038	132.426
Building Services, Upkeep & Construction	162.060	170.193	190.199	275.782	263.486
Other Expenses ^e	58.710	57.158	62.408	69.925	72.760
Net Transfers/Uses	(2.161)	(2.043)	(2.676)	(2.697)	(2.946)
Total General Expenditures	\$657.707	\$715.553	\$825.738	\$949.211	\$944.167
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	(0.361)	(2.231)	(30.205)	23.044	(8.157)

Source: Compiled by district financial office from LBUSD financial records.

^a Construction bond approved by local electorate in SY99.

^b Local property taxes transferred to the state for distribution. This line includes mostly interest prior to SY99, when bond funds became available for distribution.

^c Includes state (per pupil) appropriation plus categorical program funding.

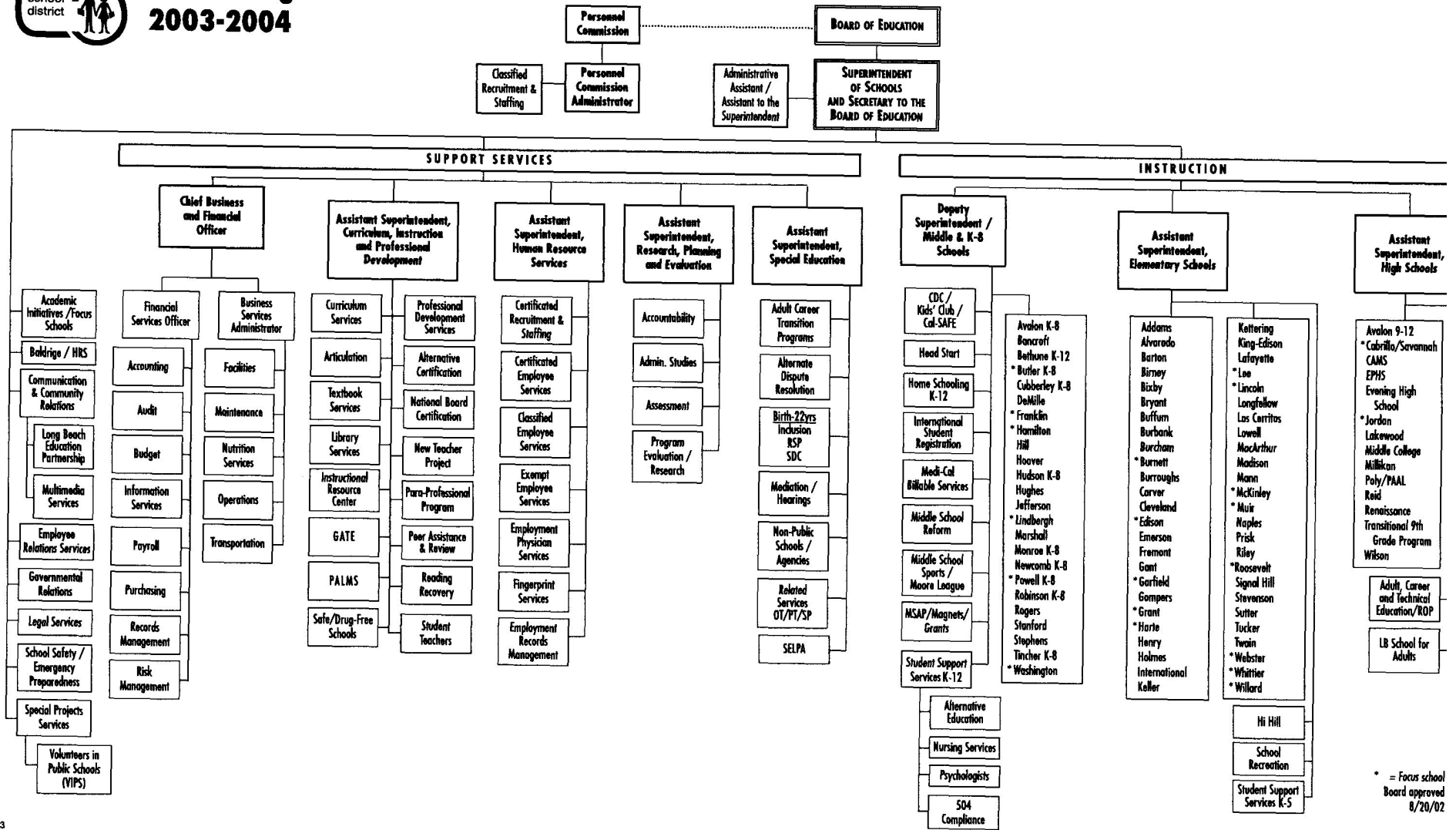
^d Ninety percent of LBUSD's general fund, used for K-12 direct instruction, is funded by the state.

^e Includes books, supplies, contracts, and other operating expenses.

Exhibit 2 LBUSD SY04 Organizational Chart



District Organization 2003-2004

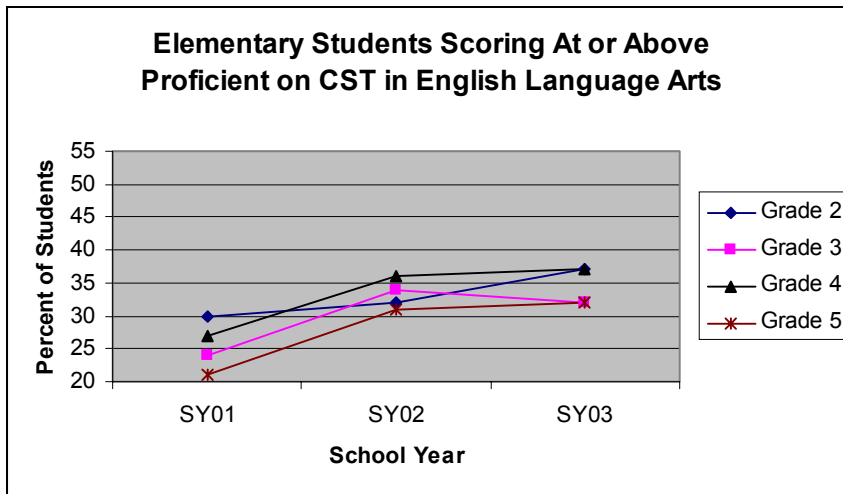


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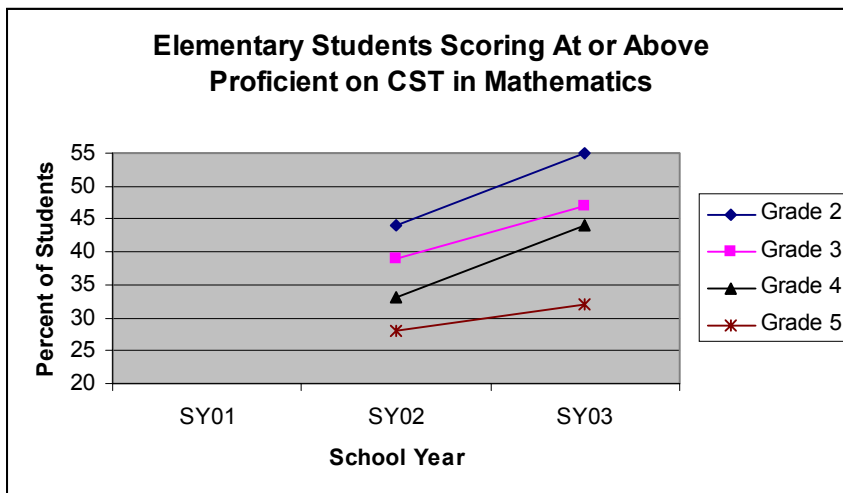
Source: District documents.

* = Focus school
Board approved
8/20/02

Exhibit 3 LBUSD Elementary Performance on the California State Standards Tests



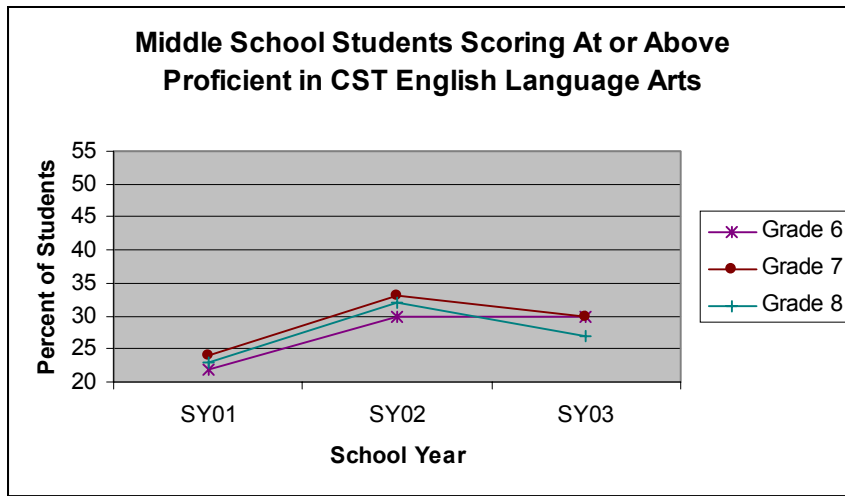
Grade	SY01	SY02	SY03
2	30	32	37
3	24	34	32
4	27	36	37
5	21	31	32



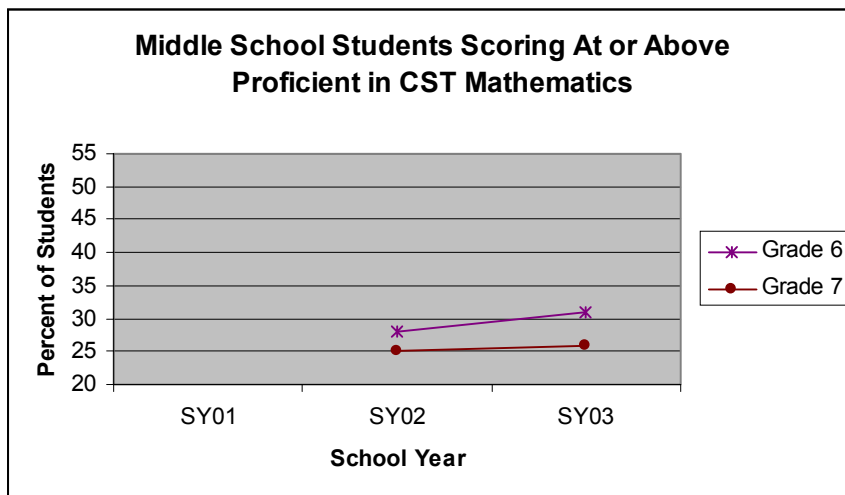
Grade	SY01	SY02	SY03
2	N/A	44	55
3	N/A	29	47
4	N/A	33	44
5	N/A	28	32

Source: California State Department of Education.

Exhibit 4 LBUSD Middle School Performance on the California State Standards Tests



Grade	SY01	SY02	SY03
6	22	30	30
7	24	33	30
8	23	32	27



Grade	SY01	SY02	SY03
6	N/A	28	31
7	N/A	25	26

Source: California State Department of Education.

Exhibit 5 High School Reform Goals and Indicators

Goal	Increase achievement of all students in the core content areas as measured by district and state assessments.	Close the achievement gap by accelerating the learning of the lowest-performing students.	Create a culture and climate among students and staff that support improved achievement.	Build high school capacity to design, implement, and sustain reform and improvement efforts.
<p>Indicators of Success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet or exceed annual yearly progress (AYP) growth targets. • Meet or exceed academic performance index (API) growth targets. • Increase the number of students passing California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) on the first attempt in 10th grade. • Increase number of students scoring proficient on district end-of-course (EOC) exams. • Improve graduation rates while increasing the number of students meeting the University of California A-G requirements. • Increase the number of students enrolled in higher-level courses (i.e., accelerated, honors, and AP courses). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition rates of students out of literacy interventions such as High Point, Linda Mood Bell, Language!, Literacy Workshop. • Reduce the number of 10th- to 12th-grade students needing math intervention courses. • Increase the number of 9th-grade transitional students successfully transitioning to regular HS. • Increase the number of qualified students (midlevel achievers) enrolled in the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) elective course. • Meet or exceed AYP and API growth targets with specific subgroups. • Increase the number of students passing CAHSEE on the first attempt in 10th grade. • Increase number of students scoring proficient on EOC exams. • Improve graduation rates while increasing the number of students meeting A-G requirements. • Increase the number of historically underserved students enrolled in higher-level courses (i.e., accelerated, honors, and AP). • Increase the number of students successfully taking and achieving on college entrance tests such as the PSAT, SAT, and ACT and the ELM and EPT assessments. • Reduce the number of students scoring below basic and far below basic on California Curriculum Standards Tests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase regular collaboration time for teachers in their professional learning communities to discuss lessons, student work, assessment results, and plans for instructional improvement. • Increase the number of students belonging to small learning communities or have regular contact with at least one adult on campus and report increased security, feelings of respect for other students and faculty, and increased academic aspirations. • Improve student attendance. • Decrease the amount of referrals and suspensions and develop processes for assisting students in understanding how to treat one another with civility. • Increase student/counselor contact to create and monitor four-year learning plans for all students. • Increase participation in tutorials. • Reduce dropout rates and improve grade cohort retention. • Increase graduation rates. • Increase parental outreach and satisfaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the type and use of walk-throughs as a process for strengthening the implementation of teaching practices. • Increase the use of looking at student work (LASW) with district-developed protocols. • Empower teacher leaders (e.g., department heads, small learning communities chairs, PLCs, coaches) to examine critical instructional issues (as evidenced by student data) to meet the needs of all students. • Empower assistant principals to become instructional leaders (expectations, responsibilities, and knowledge and skills). • Create structures for continued professional learning to improve and sustain reform (e.g., LASW, principal institutes, time for PLC work, walk-throughs, site-based leadership team retreats, administrative team meetings, PLC Institutes). • Increase and maintain consistency of practices and policies across all high schools. • Increase central-office and curriculum-leader support for high schools.

Source: District “Every Child, Every Day” documents.

Exhibit 6 California State Academic Performance Index (API): Summary of Base Scores

The California Public Schools Accountability Act, adopted in 1999, required the Department of Education to calculate annual API scores summarizing school performance for public schools, including charter schools. Base scores ranged from 200 to 1,000, and the statewide performance target was 800. Scoring methodology was modified annually.

High Schools	<i>SY04 Enrollment Grades 9-12</i>	SY99	SY00	SY01	SY02	SY03^a	Change SY99– SY03
Comprehensive							
Cabrillo	2,658	429	434	424	465^b	502	73
Jordan	4,135	472	484	496	505	528	56
Lakewood	4,393	592	601 ^c	609	622 ^d	664	72
Millikan	4,180	586	595	606	607	662	76
Polytechnic	4,684	635	661	658	655 ^d	686	51
Wilson Classical	4,309	582	623	629	629	674	92
Alternative							
Avalon	241	596	626	654	660	687	91
CAMS	610	909	912	904 ^{c,d}	883 ^{c,d}	929	20
Savannah Acad (Gr9)	478	468	524	531	550	639	171
Others ^e	2,184						
Total HS	27,872						

Source: Reported by the California Department of Education at <http://api.cde.ca.gov/reports.asp>.

^a In SY03, base scores were calculated by aggregating individual student results from the California Achievement Test, 6th Ed. Survey (all content areas) as measured through national percentile rankings; the California State Standards Tests as measured through performance levels in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, history/social science, and science; the California Alternative Performance Assessment (for students with severe cognitive disabilities) as measured through performance levels in ELA and mathematics; and the California State High School Exit Exam as summarized on a pass/no-pass basis. Scores excluded mobile students (those not continually enrolled in the same district from October through the testing date).

^b **Bold text** indicates eligibility for **Governor's Performance Award**. In SY03, qualifying schools (1) met annual growth targets, (2) demonstrated comparable improvement (as defined by the state) for all numerically significant ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroups, (3) raised their overall API score a minimum of five points, (4) raised scores for all subgroups a minimum of four points, and (5) had at least 90% of students participate in STAR testing.

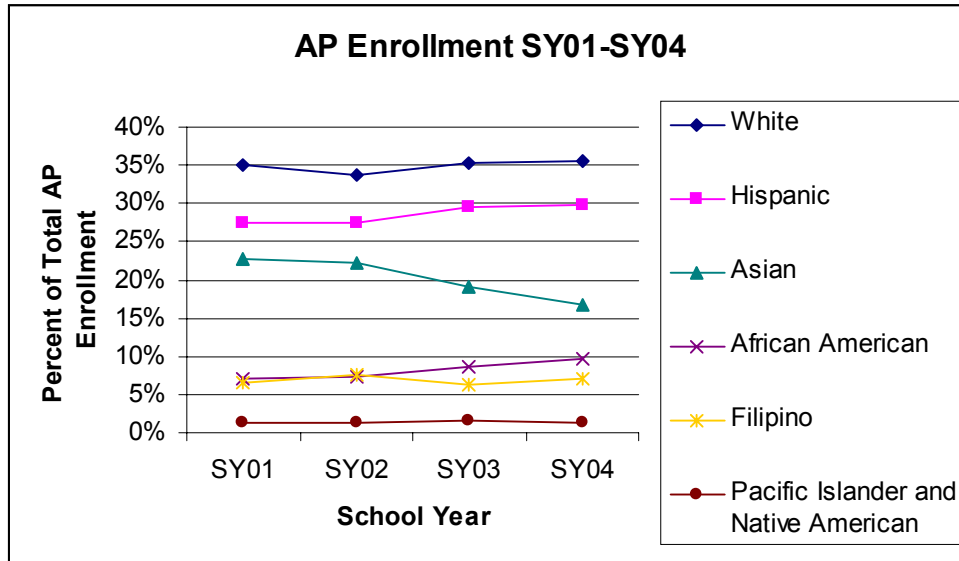
^c All numerically significant subgroups at the school demonstrated comparable improvement.

^d School met its schoolwide growth target.

^e No API results reported for the Educational Partnership HS, Renaissance HS for the Arts, Will J. Reid HS, or the Evening HS. Enrollment calculated from district records.

Exhibit 7 Advanced Placement Enrollment SY01–SY04

This illustrates the number of students as a percentage of total students enrolled in AP courses.



Ethnicity	SY01	SY02	SY03	SY04	Percent of K-12 Enrollment SY04 ^a
All Students ^b	n=2,291	n=2,443	n=2,556	n=2,715	n=97,560
White	35.1%	33.7%	35.3%	35.5%	16.9%
Hispanic	27.3%	27.5%	29.5%	29.9%	49.0%
Asian	22.9%	22.3%	19.1%	16.7%	9.7%
African-American	7.0%	7.4%	8.7%	9.6%	18.6%
Filipino	6.5%	7.5%	6.3%	7.0%	3.4%
Pacific Islander and Native American	1.2%	1.2%	1.4%	1.3%	2.3%

Source: Compiled from district files.

^aEthnicities as reported by the California Department of Education Educational Demographics Unit.

^bThe number of students enrolled in AP courses in each year.