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Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation

Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.

PRESENTATION BY

Dr. Douglas Trelfa

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Topic: LAUSD Reorganization Plan - The Multiple District Plan

September 7, 2000

Vice Chair Lucente introduced Dr. Douglas Trelfa.

Dr. Trelfa began his presentation of the Multiple District Plan using overhead slide transparencies, which illustrated the district reorganization. The reorganization presented eleven districts - one mission. The benefits are anticipated to be:

1. improved student achievement
2. increased instructional leadership
3. better parent/community access to schools
4. more customer service in the Central Office, and
5. improved accountability and usage of resources.

There have been complaints from the public that the LAUSD has not been responsive to the parents or the community. LAUSD needed to provide local communities with more control and access to the schools. The following indicates the challenges facing LAUSD:

1. (about half) of the students are learning English as a Second Language
2. many schools are severely overcrowded due to a facilities crisis
3. a shortage of fully "credentialed" teachers, especially in needy schools;
4. problems with professional development; this is due to excessive turnover; and
5. the community's distrust of the district.

Dr. Trelfa stated that the reorganization had three fundamental changes: the first was to change the Central Office. The second was to create local districts. The objective was to maximum decentralization with a businesslike, senior management structure. The third was to focus on reading.

Organization of the Central Support System shows the Superintendent with eleven local district superintendents reporting to him. These eleven are the highest paid, certificated, teacher credentialed in the district

Commissioner Stoke remarked that the organizational chart doesn't show the functions that flow under the

eleven superintendents. Dr. Trelfa responded by saying that this would be explained later in his presentation. Dr. Trelfa continued illustrating the budget implications of the Multiple District Reorganization. It was determined that 834 people would be moved from 450 North Grand and reassigned to other offices within the local districts. This meant shifting \$84M in costs to the local districts.

The change in creating eleven local districts gives them the budget authority and determination over the expenditure of money. There were three functional units in the local district that were set up; e.g., instructional support, school services and business services. The districts are in charge of instructional implementation for school services training in daily school operations. There is a need for central accounting, and central business services, but some of the maintenance and operations could be located in the eleven local districts.

Commissioner Crowley asked where the budget power vests, in the Board of Education (BOE) or within the eleven sub-areas. Dr. Trelfa responded that at this time the BOE has the approval authority for the budget; they do it based on central budget numbers and projections. The money is allocated to local districts, and within those parameters the local districts can spend, even though they are not entirely autonomous.

Commissioner Abel interjected that he would like to comment that the budgetary power resides in Sacramento, in the collective bargaining agreements, which are being negotiated now. The rest is not relevant to power shifts and reorganizations. It is the thrust of the description of the Cortines Plan; it is not in the power of the BOE to do. It is not a radical shift; in fact it sets up some competitions that are quite difficult to implement.

Commissioner Abel continued that he has served for two years on the School Bond Oversight Committee. LAUSD says we have to get out of the academic and facilities' crises because the status quo is not working. The LAUSD finds it difficult to be the author of its own solutions. The State budget allocations are almost 90%, which include memorandums, understandings and agreements with legislators as to how the money will be allocated. Then the collective bargaining agreements, which are being negotiated now, will be the template if all this works out. Superintendent Romer is a totally different person from Superintendent Cortines, with a totally different orientation. Superintendent Cortines picked the eleven-district superintendents. Superintendent Romer doesn't have control of his team, or the structure and budgetary authority to provide the incentives and disincentives to work. This may result in the unwinding of the largest public institution in the basin with dramatic consequences for the things we all care about.

Commissioner Thompson interjected that over the last six months he had spent a lot of time, in various ethnic communities of Los Angeles County. These communities are interested in either charter schools or vouchers.

Commissioner Abel stated that a lot of solutions would be presented. A \$2,500 voucher is a simple solution. The parochial schools are above capacity, and they have a talent shortage. The notion that the private schools are going to get by on \$2,500, to replace the \$10,000 per capita cost to build the schools, and \$8,000 of academic costs is not realistic.

Dr. Trelfa stated that the intent of the LAUSD plan was not to claim a money savings, but rather a shift in resources. The public and the media's interpretation of LAUSD was that they could save money by slashing costs.

Commissioner Rew mentioned that several years ago he heard Mayor Daly at the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The Mayor got the state legislature to approve a bill, which replaced the Chicago BOE and turned the schools over to the Mayor. Mayor Daly hired the Superintendent and staff. At this conference Mayor Riordan embraced what Mayor Daly had done in Chicago. When Mayor Riordan returned to Los Angeles, the media was broadcasting the same information that had been presented at the Chicago Conference of Mayors. Commissioner Rew asked Dr. Trelfa if he could see the connection, and the supposed success of Mayor Daly's actions.

Dr. Trelfa responded that the LAUSD was aware of this situation. However, the current plan has been

implemented and has not been altered by Superintendent Romer. Another point is that Chicago doesn't look as good as it did two years ago.

Vice Chair Lucente said that the Economy and Efficiency Commission works with different agencies and a huge bureaucracy at the County of Los Angeles. What struck him about this presentation was how choosing these eleven subdistrict superintendents in two weeks were being absorbed by the district? Dr. Trelfa answered that the Multiple District Plan was implemented, July 1, 2000. A lot of districts are still figuring out their spatial logistics. Hiring is incomplete.

Commissioner Thompson asked how to get around Commissioner Abel's issue that the money is controlled by the state? Dr. Trelfa commented that if LAUSD had not reorganized the districts they would have faced a Secessionist Movement.

Commissioner Abel stated that there were new rules issued, and the eleven districts would be working under the same state funding structure and for the most part, the same collective bargaining agreements. If LAUSD wants to take this on, more radical restructuring is needed than what is being presented. The BOE is talking about what they can control, but the BOE doesn't have an audience who listens.

Dr. Trelfa commented that LAUSD has divided the valley into three districts: A, B and C. There are problems with the valley constituents saying that they wanted more districts. The districts were set up according to the number of schools, locations, the number of students, and racial/ethnic diversity. They focused on reading at all levels and adopted the open court system that is a research based instructional set of tools, including textbooks and assessments. Scripted lessons were given to teachers in the elementary schools. LAUSD has chosen to focus on reading in the early grades, hoping that some of the other areas of learning will improve as well.

Commissioner Fuhrman asked if there is an increase in reading scores of around fifteen points within the next two or three years, would that pacify much of the community's dissatisfaction? The underlying cause seems to be that the schools were failing on the basic level and the children weren't learning anything.

Commissioner Abel interjected that the schools were on target, but were below standard. A parent is not interested in the long term, their children will be out of school by then. The LAUSD is 85,000 seats short. There are year round programs where the children don't get access to all of the programs because the teachers are there for only two quarters. It also means busing greater distances. It is evident that reading is only one of the dynamics. Dr. Trelfa stated that he agreed that it is a problem, but he also feels that if there are improvement in test scores this will be a plus in the public's eye.

Commissioner Abel stated that he thinks it would be great if the mayor would provide us with more focus and specificity. The economic vitality of this region needs to be underlined, and the solution needs to be recharted in Sacramento. We don't know what the collective bargaining agreements are going to come out with this summer, the BOE has been weakened and does not have a capacity to take back control in these negotiations. It may take a huge failure for people to really restructure LAUSD.

Commissioner Stoke asked what consideration has been given to using the same facilities from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. during the day to resolve the facilities crisis? Dr. Trelfa remarked that LAUSD couldn't build schools very quickly, therefore is studying this option.

Commissioner Abel stated that the approval process for LAUSD to get funding and a facility sites was beyond imagination. LAUSD needs to build one hundred schools, they have brought in professional people. However LAUSD is facing lawsuits. They can not even get in line to be funded, and it is a "first come first served" funding mechanism for the statewide allocation. Developers in Oxnard and the northern counties take the farmland and turn it around and they are finished. LAUSD on the other hand is in a strangle hold trying to get its environmental clearances and control of these properties. Commissioner Sylva reiterated that just because test results are improving, that is only an objective form of testing signifying what students are accomplishing. LAUSD needs the facilities.

Dr. Trelfa added a final comment, that LAUSD understands the issue is not just about test scores. The District has a facilities crisis. The problems are numerous: the LAUSD bureaucracy, the constituents, the state. In crisis mode you have to move quickly, but LAUSD is not able to do that because of red tape. What is required is thinking and then implementing - the extended school year, dual sessions, and on-line learning. These are issues that LAUSD are going to be facing in the next five years.

Vice Chair Lucente thanked Dr. Trelfa for his presentation. Dr. Trelfa then closed by stating that he learned a great deal in the course of making his presentation to the Commission.

[Return to Top of Presentation](#)

[Return to Agenda](#)



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