

Town Hall Report

Commissioned by New Mexico First
September 2005

Albuquerque Public Schools' Organization and Structure for Success

A report prepared for the APS Town Hall

Convened by New Mexico First
On behalf of the
New Mexico Legislative Education Study Committee
September 22-24, 2005

Report authored by:

Don Zancanella, Ph.D.
Nancy Lopez, Ph.D.
University of New Mexico

Edited by:

Heather Balas
New Mexico First
320 Gold SW, Suite 300
Albuquerque, NM 87102
505-241-4813

Executive Summary

This background report presents information on Albuquerque Public Schools, including its structure, size, strengths, and challenges. The report was commissioned in preparation for a public, three-day town hall meeting being held September 22 – 24, 2005, during which attendees will discuss whether APS should be deconsolidated or otherwise restructured. The meeting will be convened by New Mexico First, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that specializes in town halls. The event is funded by an appropriation from the state Legislature.

Successful School Districts

The report is guided by the assumption that student achievement is the most important measure for assessing the effectiveness of a school district's organizational structure. To that end, the report identifies several key factors that are common to successful school districts:

- Strong leadership at the district level and at each school
- A shared vision between the superintendent and the school board
- High academic standards for each child
- District-wide curricula that are aligned with instruction and assessment
- An accountability system that holds leaders and staff responsible for results
- Highly qualified teachers who receive ongoing professional development
- Family and community participation
- School reforms that begin in the elementary grades
- Reliance on empirical data – not instinct or anecdote – to gauge success

About APS

With 87,510 students, APS is considered a large school district (31st largest nationally), and it has a series of strategic goals addressing many of the above priorities. APS's strategic goals, developed in 2000, prioritize excellence in student achievement, quality learning environments, and effective systems. The district reports steady progress in these three areas.

APS's structure is comprised of:

- A seven-member board of education elected from geographic districts
- A superintendency team comprised of a superintendent, a deputy of district resources, and two associate superintendents
- A cluster system that subdivides the district into 12 clusters, each comprised of one high school and all its middle and elementary feeder schools
- Two Citizen Advisory Councils (CAC) that provide recommendations to the board and superintendent

Major issues facing APS include:

- **Achievement gaps** between students of different races and incomes, with poorer and Hispanic, Native American, and Black students having lower reading scores, math scores, and graduation rates

- Concerns about **equitable funding**, with some advocates arguing that schools in lower-income areas do not receive adequate resources, while other argue that the current funding formula provides a fair distribution of resources for these schools
- **School overcrowding** and underutilization, with three APS clusters over their capacity for students and the rest under-capacity

Should APS Be Restructured?

Nationally, there has been a series of shifts in perceptions about district size. From 1940 to 1990, the number of school districts decreased significantly through consolidation. Beginning about 1990, however, the idea that smaller-is-better began to become part of discussions about school reform.

- Those who favor large districts point to efficiencies of scale, the ability to offer a wider array of services, and the funding flexibility of a large tax base.
- Those who favor smaller districts argue that they provide stronger communication between district leaders, parents, and students, and that smaller districts are able to make policy changes more easily.

In the case of APS, decision-makers considered deconsolidation in 1993. Research (summarized in this report) was commissioned on potential benefits and drawbacks. Ultimately, policymakers decided not to deconsolidate the district. The issue has been revisited by the legislature more than once since then.

If lawmakers choose to re-open this question, they must assess whether student achievement would likely increase as a result of deconsolidation. APS deconsolidation might take two forms: division into two or more districts along geographic boundaries; or division by grade level, creating an elementary school district, a middle school district and a high school district.

Potential Ramifications of Deconsolidation

If APS were to deconsolidate along geographic lines, officials would have to address several issues: how to meet construction needs for new schools in the growing parts of town; how to meet the regulatory needs presented by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); and how to handle charter schools.

Financially, the APS clusters with the greatest construction needs are on the west side of the city where the student population is projected to grow 7-10% a year for the next five years. Student populations in the other clusters are projected to decline or remain flat. If APS deconsolidated, it is unclear how the west side's construction needs would be met since it would be supported by a smaller tax base.

In summary, discussions about any restructuring of APS must take into account many issues including:

- Is APS currently meeting students' needs, including low-income students?
- Would new districts be financially viable?
- Could new districts meet federal NCLB requirements?

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Preface

This report was compiled in preparation for a town hall meeting about Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). Convened by New Mexico First and by the state Legislative Education Study Committee, the three-day town hall will bring people together to discuss the following question: ***Is the current organization of Albuquerque Public Schools the optimal structure to provide the maximum educational opportunities for students of the district?***

In order to address that question in an informed way, participants attending the town hall are asked to read this report in advance of the meeting. The event will be held September 22-24, 2005 at the Student Union Building of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

The report was authored by Don Zancanella, Ph.D. and Nancy Lopez, Ph.D. of the University of New Mexico, who were commissioned to write it by New Mexico First. This research report is based on secondary sources including: U.S. Census data; APS demographic facts sheets; Legislative Education Study Committee Reports; review of existing peer-reviewed social scientific studies on the relationship between district size, organizational structure, and student achievement; and local newspaper reports. During a six-week period the authors reviewed these materials and, due to time constraints, examined a limited number of existing studies on the relationship between district size, organizational structure, student achievement and successful school districts.

The report was edited and contributed to by New Mexico First Associate Director Heather Balas. Reviewers included:

Barbara Brazil, New Mexico First
Jo Carter, New Mexico First
Michael Davis, Retired educator
Dr. Vi Flores, UNM College of Education
Dr. Everett Frost, President Emeritus, Eastern New Mexico University
Maureen Luna, Goodwin Browning & Luna Securities, Inc.
Dr. Jacki Pieracci Riggs, School Reform Advocate
Evangeline Sandoval Trujillo, Retired educator
D.F. "Duffy" Swan, President, French Mortuary

About New Mexico First

New Mexico First is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that engages citizens in public policy. Co-founded in 1986 by U.S. Senators Pete Domenici (R-NM) and Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), the organization brings people together for two- and three-day town hall meetings. These town halls use a unique consensus-building process that enables participants to learn about a topic in depth, develop concrete policy recommendations addressing that topic, and then work with fellow New Mexicans to help implement those recommendations with policymakers.

Introduction

Albuquerque Public Schools currently serves 87,510 students in the greater Albuquerque area. APS is the 31st largest school district in the nation, and it is projected to grow roughly 1% a year for the next five years. With one district serving so many students, some people are concerned about whether it can remain effective. Key questions being asked by parents, teachers, school administrators, and community leaders include:

- To what degree is APS a successful school district?
- How well is APS meeting the needs of students?
- What steps, if any, should APS take to improve academic achievement by its students?
- How should the district be structured? Is its current structure the right one?
- What is the relationship between district size and student success? (Do students perform better in smaller districts, or do larger districts produce superior student outcomes since they have more resources and a broader tax base?)
- Should the west side of Albuquerque secede from APS and establish its own school district?

These key questions have occupied the public discourse about APS during the past few decades. To help address those questions, this report will:

1. Provide a snapshot of what elements distinguish a successful school district from a failing one;
2. Present major issues facing APS;
3. Review existing research addressing the relationship between district size, organizational structure, and student success; and
4. Review the history of the debate on dividing APS into multiple districts.

Note: The report is guided by the assumption that student achievement is the most important measure for assessing a school district.

Section 1: Effective School Districts

Policymakers across the nation debate about what makes a successful school district. Is it good test scores? Accredited teachers? Involved parents? The following list summarizes common characteristics of district success, as identified by leading educational institutions, including the Council for Great City Schools, the National Association of School Boards, and the National Learning First Alliance.

- **An effective school board** that focuses on policy-level decisions, rather than day-to-day operations;
- **Strong leadership** at the district level and at each school, with systems that empower teachers to contribute to key decisions;
- **A shared vision** between the superintendent and the school board regarding key goals and strategies;
- **High academic standards** for each child;
- **District-wide curricula** that is aligned with instruction and assessment;
- **An accountability system** that holds district leadership, principals, and teachers responsible for producing results;
- **Highly qualified, collaborative teachers** that communicate with one another across grade levels and curriculum areas to invest in *each* student;
- **Ongoing professional development** for all staff;
- **Family and community participation** that enables parents to meaningfully participate in district decisions and in their children's educations.
- School reforms that **begin in the elementary grades**, rather than reforming all grades at once;
- **Reliance on empirical data – not instinct or anecdote – to gauge success**, with data including information on students, programs, and staff.

Vision for New Mexico's Schools

The New Mexico Legislature amended its Public School Code (HB 212) in 2003 to reflect the following priorities:

1. Our founding principle is that **every child can learn** and succeed.
2. Our fundamental goal must be **student success for every child**.
3. Our major priority must remain improvements to **literacy and reading/writing** skills.

4. The key to student success is to have a **multicultural education system** that:
 - 4.1. attracts and retains quality, diverse teachers;
 - 4.2. holds teachers, students, schools, school districts and the state accountable;
 - 4.3. integrates students' cultural strengths into the curriculum with high expectations for all;
 - 4.4. recognizes that New Mexico's cultural diversity presents special challenges at all levels; and
 - 4.5. clarifies the governance structure.
5. We must **prevent teacher shortages**. Public schools will be unable to hire and keep the highest quality teachers unless the state and school districts find ways to:
 - 5.1. mentor beginning teachers;
 - 5.2. intervene with teachers while they still show promise;
 - 5.3. improve the job satisfaction of quality teachers; and
 - 5.4. elevate the teaching profession by shifting to a professional educator licensing and salary system.
6. **Assessment and accountability** is critical and must ensure that:
 - 6.1. individual attention and assistance will be given to students who do not meet or exceed expectations;
 - 6.2. teachers who do not meet performance standards must improve their skills or lose their teaching jobs;
 - 6.3. all public schools annually improve; and
 - 6.4. school districts and the state are prepared to actively intervene with and improve failing public schools.
7. **Governance is crucial**. The system must be accountable from the bottom up, rather than from the top down, so that:
 - 7.1. school principals lead each school, with assistance from local parents and teachers; and
 - 7.2. local superintendents will be the CEO of each district, with responsibility for all day-to-day operations.

Section 2: About APS

In order to assess whether APS requires any organizational changes, one must first understand its current demographics, history, and structure.

APS Demographics

Today, APS has a student population of over 87,000, making it the 31st largest school district in the country. It is among the biggest employers in Albuquerque.

Nearly one in four students across the nation attends a school district that resembles APS. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 20% of students in the country attend districts of 25,000 to 99,999 students and 13% attend school districts of 100,000 or more (NCES, 2003b).

Key APS Stats

Based on data available in September 2005, APS is comprised of:

- 87,510 students, including 52% Hispanic; 36% Caucasian; 5% Native American; 4% Black; 2% Asian; 1% other
- 12,000 staff, teachers and other school personnel
- 129 schools, comprised of 11 high schools, 26 middle schools, 83 elementary schools and 9 alternative schools
- 12 high school clusters (a cluster consisting of one high school and several middle and elementary schools)
- 63 schools providing full-day kindergarten
- 69 schools that are Title I eligible (officially serving disadvantaged students)
- A significant number of students receiving free or reduced lunches, including 57% of elementary school students, 51% of middle school students, and 26% of high school students

APS's school staff includes:

- 126 principals, of which 54% identify themselves as Caucasian, 40% identify themselves as Hispanic, and 6% identify themselves as Native American, Asian, or Black
- 2,108 elementary school teachers, of which 63% identify as Caucasian, 35% identify as Hispanic, and 2% identify as Native American, Asian, or Black
- 1,687 secondary school teachers (middle and high school), of which 72% identify as Caucasian, 25% identify as Hispanic, and 3% identify as Native American, Asian, or Black
- 1,448 teachers' aides, of which 60% identify as Hispanic, 34% identify as Caucasian, and 6% identify as Native American, Asian, or Black.

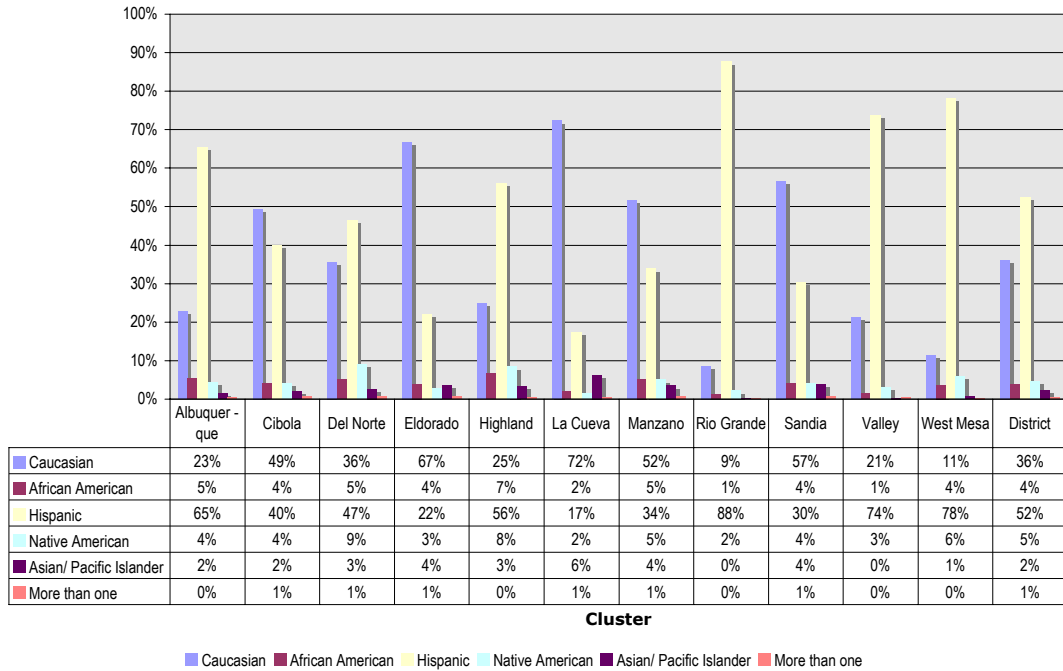
Please see Appendix A: Demographics for more information on Albuquerque demographics and a district profile.

Race and Socioeconomic Context

The data suggest that low-income families depend on public schools to educate their children. While only 10% of Albuquerque families are living below the poverty line, 57% percent of APS elementary schools receive free or reduced school lunch. While 50% of Albuquerque residents report their race/ethnicity as Caucasian, they comprise only 36% of public school students. Although Hispanics are 40% of Albuquerque city residents, they comprise 52% of public schools students.

The following table breaks APS student ethnicity demographics down by cluster. While Caucasians and Hispanics are the majority group within all clusters, it is worth noting that some clusters are predominately Hispanic, while others are predominately Caucasian.

APS Ethnicity By Cluster / District, 2004-05



What some people consider the historical problem of de facto segregation continues to be an issue at APS (Dominguez and Contreras, 2004; Contreras, 2004). Northeast Heights residents are predominantly Caucasian and middle to upper-middle class, while South Valley residents are predominantly Hispanic and lower-middle to working class. According to the state’s Equity Index for Gifted Programs, Caucasians and Asians are over-represented, and Hispanics, American Indians and Blacks are under-represented in the gifted programs in New Mexico schools.

APS History

APS came into existence in 1891. In 1914 the city's first high school was built. The enrollment of APS exploded between 1911 and 1956, from 42 to 1,420 students (Contreras, 2005). In 1948 the city and county schools consolidated.

The organization of the school board has undergone several changes (Rusk, 1993):

- From 1913-1962, elections were held every two years but a non-incumbent was rarely elected to the board. (If an incumbent board member decided not to stand for re-election, he or she would resign early. The board itself, including the departing member, would select the replacement, who would then run as an incumbent in the upcoming election.)
- In the late 60s and 70s, the board went through some transition and non-incumbents were elected.
- In 1983, by state statute, the Board of Education was transformed from a five-member body elected at-large to a seven-member body elected by district.

APS Structure

APS is governed by a seven-member elected Board of Education and a Superintendency Team.

Board of Education

The Board of Education is the policymaking arm of APS; it also hires the Superintendent. The Board of Education is comprised of seven members, each representing a geographic district that represents approximately 14,000 students. Board members are unpaid and serve four-year terms. As of August 2005, board leadership included the following people:

- Paula Maes, president
- Miguel Acosta, vice president
- Berna Facio, policy chair
- Leonardo J. Delayo, Jr., finance/audit chair
- Gordon Rowe, secretary
- Mary Lee Martin, district relations chair
- Robert Lucero, capital outlay chair

Superintendency Team

The enforcement of APS Board Policies, as well as state and federal mandates, is the responsibility of the APS Superintendent. Currently the APS administration is comprised of one Superintendent/Chief Executive Officer (Elizabeth Everitt), one Deputy of District Resources, and two Associate Superintendents.

The Associate Superintendent for Instruction is accountable for all educational support functions including:

- research development and accountability;
- teaching and learning systems;
- special education;
- health/mental health;
- language and cultural equity;
- technology;
- school-to-careers;
- equal opportunity services;
- Indian education;
- extended learning;
- community engagement;
- strategic planning; and
- other departments to be named later.

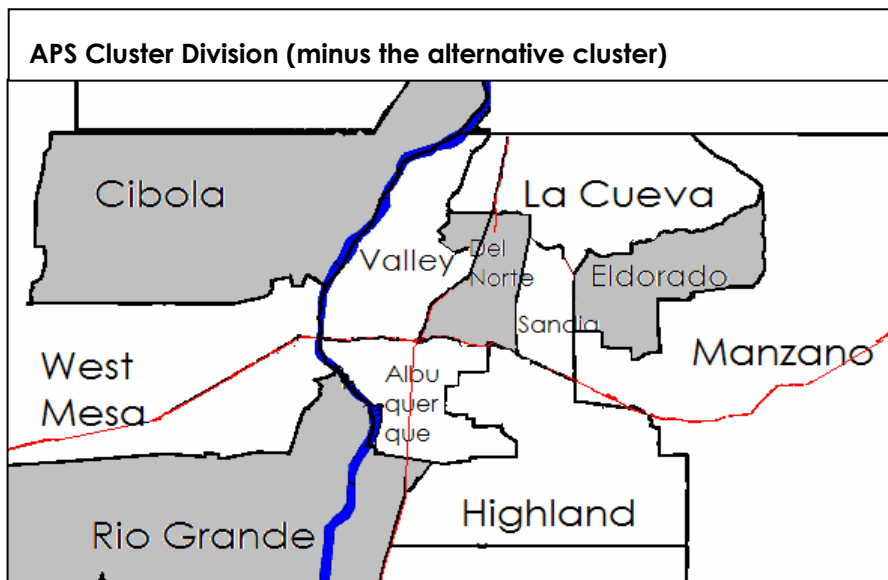
The Associate Superintendent for the Cluster System is accountable for all school and classroom activities including:

- the cluster system;
- superintendent schools (schools in need of improvement);
- high school redesign;
- middle school redesign;
- elementary school redesign; and
- other departments.

See Appendix B: APS Organizational Charts *for organizational chart.*

Cluster System

Although a school feeder system had been in place for decades, the current cluster system was officially created in 1999 in order to facilitate the development of small learning communities within APS. Clusters of schools are organized around a comprehensive high school and are comprised of the high school and its elementary and middle feeder schools. APS has 12 clusters, representing 11 high schools and their feeders, and one cluster representing all of the district’s alternative schools.



Clusters vary in size from six schools to 14 schools but are balanced in terms of student enrollment. According to APS, the cluster units allow the district to provide community access, continuity of focus within cluster schools, and a spirit of shared accountability within the whole school community.

District goal-setting and planning takes place at every level within the cluster system. Each school develops a plan, which is focused on school instructional priorities and aligned with cluster goals; this ensures that elementary and middle schools prepare their students properly for their cluster high school. Each cluster's plan encompasses schools' plans and is aligned with the district goals. Even non-student activities work with the cluster system; professional development resources are allocated directly to clusters based on the number of staff members within each cluster, so that these activities aid in the achievement of cluster goals.

Parental and Community Outreach

Parents are not a formal part of the cluster system, but many parent groups take part. Parents and community members are involved at the decision-making process at the school level through Instructional Councils (ICs) and parent groups. Parental groups have a section in every school newsletter. Parents are also involved with "Join-a-School" efforts, which include community businesses and organizations. Every principal is expected to have an open-door policy for parents, and the district provides a service center that parents can call to address questions or concerns.

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) executive boards may meet with cluster administration to help coordinate the work and be involved in cluster goal setting. The administration also facilitates cluster-wide Parent Professional Development Conferences and coordinates meetings of all the ICs from all the cluster's schools.

The larger community can also voice their concerns, suggestions, and input through Citizen Advisory Councils (CAC). The 12 clusters are represented by two CACs: Las Montanas CAC, which serves the El Dorado, Manzano, La Cueva, Del Norte and Highland clusters; and Del Rio CAC, which serves Cibola, West Mesa, Rio Grande, Albuquerque High, Valley and the alternative schools. The two CACs schedule meetings at different schools throughout the semester, providing forums for community members to voice their concerns and suggestions about their schools. Principals are part of CACs and attend their forums. The CACs provide feedback directly to the Board of Education.

APS Strategic Direction

In the early 2000s, APS developed a list of basic district goals. The following section summarizes those goals and presents success data reported by APS as of August 2005:

Excellence in Academic Achievement

1. **Goal:** 100% student proficiency required by No Child Left Behind.
- 1.1. **Progress toward goal:** Student achievement has been increasing or maintaining its level across the board. Currently, 81% of all kindergarten students are proficient in language arts and 84% are proficient in math, while 62% of 6th – 8th grade students are proficient or advanced in reading and 52% are proficient or advanced in math.

2. **Goal:** Increase student enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses by 5%.
- 2.1. *Progress toward goal:* AP enrollment increased by 25% for high school students.
3. **Goal:** Increase dual language/bilingual programs by 5%.
- 3.1. *Progress toward goal:* Goal achieved.
4. **Goal:** 90% of 9th graders graduate in 4 years.
- 4.1. *Progress toward goal:* 53% of entering 9th graders graduate four years later, the highest cohort graduation rate in the last decade.
5. **Goal:** Improve to below the 4.5% 2002-2003 drop-out rate.
- 5.1. *Progress toward goal:* Current drop-out rate is 3.7%.

Quality, Safe Learning Environments

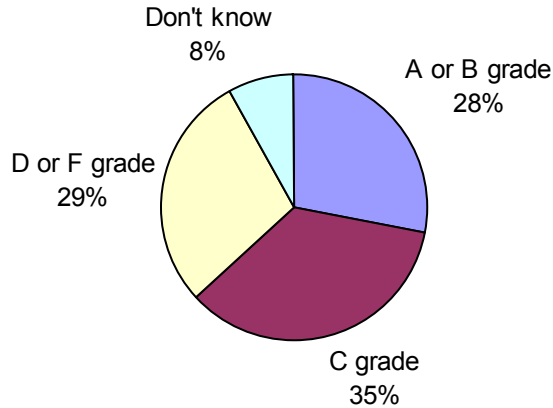
6. **Goal:** Annually increase the percentage of students, parents and staff reporting safe learning and working environments.
- 6.1. *Progress toward goal:* 85% of APS parents agree their child is safe at school, consistent with 2003 – 2004 rates.

Effective & Efficient Operations

7. **Goal:** All parts of APS will continually improve customer satisfaction.
8. **Goal:** All schools will be ready to open on time.
9. **Goal:** Increase the funds allocated to schools and clusters by 5%.
- 9.1. *Progress toward goal:* Schools and clusters received an 8% increase in funding.
10. **Goal:** Improve systems to support customer needs through the Capital Master Plan.
11. **Goal:** Improve facilities and operations systems to support customer needs.
- 11.1. *Progress toward goal:* APS Food Services received an “outstanding” audit from PED.
12. **Goal:** Provide high quality staff.
- 12.1. *Progress toward goal:* 79% of high school classes are taught by “highly qualified teachers,” with 69% at middle school level and 81% at the elementary level.

Section 3: Major Issues Facing APS

Like many school districts, APS faces its share of challenges. An August 2005 Albuquerque Journal poll asked voters to “grade” the job APS is doing educating children. As the results below show, public opinion on the subject varies greatly.



Based on 501 telephone interviews on Aug. 17-18 with likely voters in the municipal election. Margin of error: plus or minus 4.4 percentage points. SOURCE: Albuquerque Journal, 8/25/2005, page A1

The remainder of this section addresses three issues: achievement gaps in student success, equitable funding among district schools, and school overcrowding/utilization.

Achievement Gaps in Student Success

The New Mexico Public Education Department Student Assessment Bureau reported the 2004-2005 new standards-based assessment in reading (grades 3-9 and 11), mathematics (Grades 3-9 and 11), and science (Grades 3-9) on August 18, 2005. (Please see www.sde.state.nm.us/ for complete report.)

	Proficiency in reading		Proficiency in mathematics		Proficiency in science		Graduation rate
	3 rd grade	11 th grade	3 rd grade	11 th grade	3 rd grade	9 th grade	
Caucasian	73%	73%	58%	49%	90%	60%	65%
Asian	72%	69%	65%	58%	88%	59%	70%
Black	50%	51%	34%	18%	75%	29%	48%
Hispanics	49%	48%	38%	20%	70%	26%	45%
Native American	36%	43%	28%	15%	70%	19%	37%

These findings show that Caucasian and Asian students are more proficient in all subjects than their Black, Hispanic, and Native American classmates, and that this tendency only grows over time. Similar results occur when the same data is divided based on the student’s economic status, as in the table below.

	Proficiency in reading		Proficiency in mathematics	
	3 rd grade	11 th grade	3 rd grade	11 th grade
Non-economically disadvantaged	73%	67%	59%	36%
Economically disadvantaged	59%	36%	41%	17%

The gaps were also present among disabled and English Language Learners (ELL); however, the performance of recently exited ELL is identical to and in some cases higher than those who were never classified as ELL.

Ensuring Equity

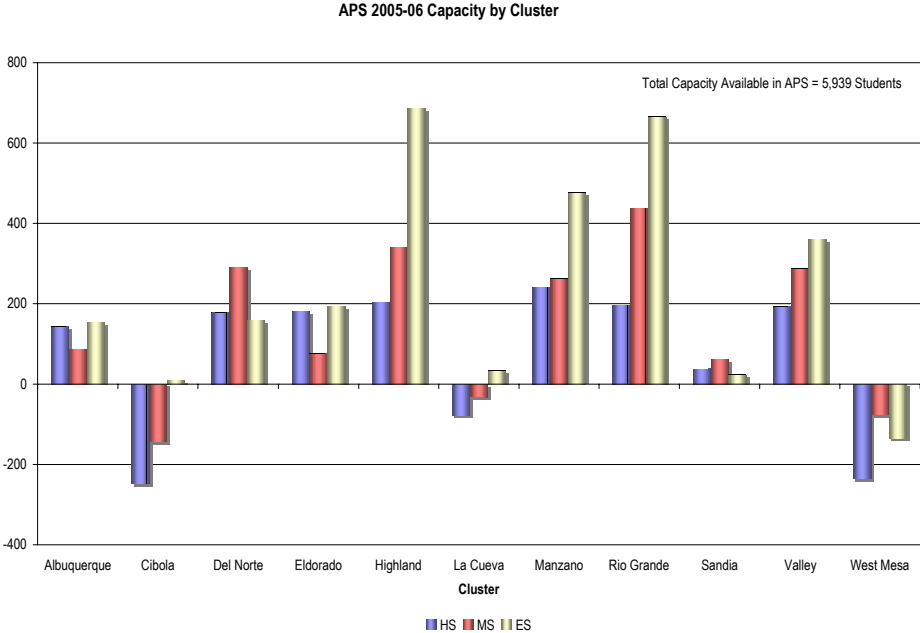
Since the state Public School Finance Act became law in 1974, New Mexico has been one of a handful of states that requires its districts to provide each school with an equitable distribution of operational funds (Mondragon and Stapleton, 2005:144). Funding for each school is determined by a formula that takes a basic cost-per-student and adds in funds for special needs above standard operations. These factors include special education, bi-lingual education, elementary fine arts, district size, the growth rate of the district, and “at-risk” factors. APS distributes an equal proportion of its operational state and federal funds to all schools.

There exists a history of discontent with the educational opportunities present in some sectors of the city, particularly those located in low-income areas. Since the 1980s, parents from the South Valley have advocated improvements in the physical conditions and educational opportunities that are offered to their children. In 1987, the U.S. Department of Justice mediated an agreement, known as the Sambrano Agreement, between community groups and the APS administration, addressing many issues including inequitable distribution of resources, library inadequacies, achievement scores, course selections, community involvement and the condition of the physical plant. A 1992 addendum required APS to build a new school for the Pajarito community to replace a dangerous facility. While this discussion continued through the 1980s and 1990s, the committee was dissolved in 2001 and no known structure exists for ensuring that the terms of the agreement are being met.

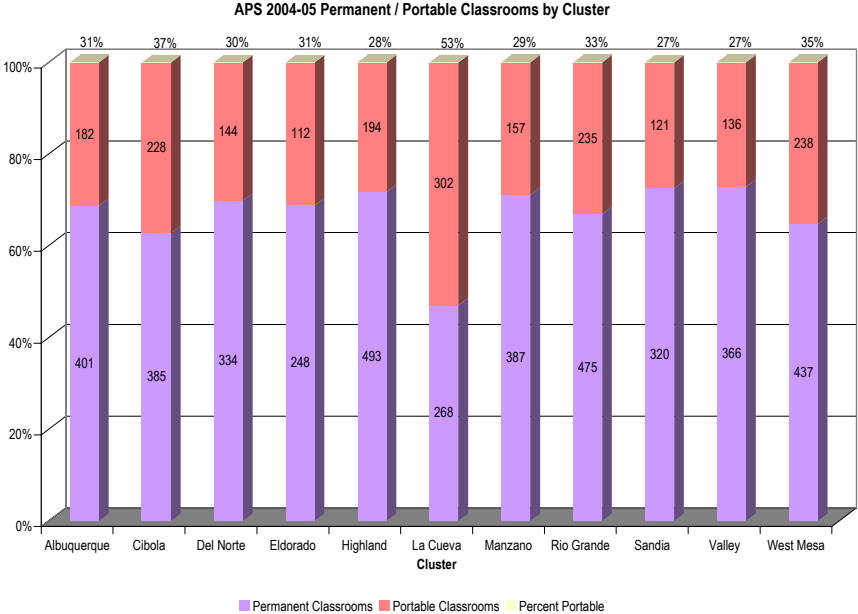
The issue of how equity is translated at the school level remains a contentious one. There appears to be a discrepancy between the notion of equity based on need and the actual distribution of operational funds. Each school’s “per student” costs is calculated based on a formula that takes into account special needs. Supporters of this funding formula claim that it directly addresses inequities common in public education by channeling funds to districts which need them most. Critics, on the other hand, say that what works in theory is inadequate to meet real student needs.

School Overcrowding and Underutilization

Data from APS show that three clusters (Cibola, La Cueva, and West Mesa) have enrollments that exceed their capacity. All other clusters have capacity in excess of enrollment. The most over-enrolled cluster is West Mesa with 444 students more than capacity for 2005-2006. The most under-enrolled cluster is Rio Grande, with 1,300 available places.



A second measure of school utilization is ratio between permanent and portable classrooms. Again, the clusters with the highest percentage of portables are La Cueva (53% portables); Cibola (37% portables); and West Mesa (35% portables). The clusters with smallest percentage of portable classrooms are Valley and Sandia (27% portables each).



Section 4: Should APS Be Divided?

While there are certainly many answers to the challenges presented in the previous section, one solution often raised is whether to divide up APS. The debate stems from dissatisfied parents who believe their children's schools are overcrowded and resource-deprived, as well as legislators who must respond to those parent concerns. The movement for secession from APS is also part of a larger movement considering a complete secession of the west side from the City of Albuquerque entirely (not just the school district) (Schoellkopf, 2005).

Albuquerque is not the only city addressing this question. Nationally, the trends in district size have gone from small to large and now small again. From 1940 to 1990, the number of school districts in the U.S. decreased significantly through consolidation. Beginning about 1990, however, the idea that smaller-is-better began to become an important part of discussions about school reform. For the most part, the focus has been on reducing class sizes and on creating smaller schools, but there has also been a small but growing interest in the relationship between educational quality and district size (Driscoll, et al, 2003; Bickel & Howley, 2000).

In general, those who favor large districts point to efficiencies of scale, the ability to offer a wide, diverse array of services, and the funding flexibility of a large tax base as advantages. Those who favor smaller districts argue that communication between various stakeholders (school board, administrators, teachers, parents, students) suffers when a district is too large and that educational and financial inequities between various parts of a large district can become frozen in place. The challenge facing policymakers is deciding which of these competing claims are true for this particular district and what the relationship is between these factors and student achievement.

In recent years, several large school districts have tried differing methods of deconsolidation.

- Chicago's school district was broken down into multiple local school councils in 1989, with more local control. However, due to low participation and increased politicization, the state legislature gave managing authority to the mayor, leaving the local councils in place but removing their financial authority.
- In New York City, the umbrella school district was broken down into 32 community school districts. Only 5% of voters took part in school board elections, and in 1996 legislation stripped these small districts of most of their power.
- Currently, the Charlotte/Mecklenburg school district in North Carolina is in the midst of a debate on whether to deconsolidate.

Context is crucial for unraveling the relationship between district size and student achievement. Although we can compare Albuquerque to other cities in New Mexico and across the nation, it is important to remember that Albuquerque represents a unique urban setting in a predominantly rural state. "Size relationships are generally more complex than is generally acknowledged by educators...small size does not seem to

facilitate the achievement of affluent students, and small size is by itself unlikely to eliminate or reverse the negative effects of poverty (Howley, 1996:31).” Other factors such as the race and socioeconomic diversity of a given districts leadership may shape the schooling outcomes of marginalized youth (Donato, 1999; Noguera, 2001).

Precedents for Secession

There are precedents in New Mexico that would establish the possibility that dissatisfied constituents could secede from APS. Rio Rancho Public Schools were once part of APS, but Rio Rancho created its own district in 1994. They report positive school outcomes among students, though it is difficult to know whether those outcomes can be attributed to secession. The Zuni school district also seceded from the larger Gallup-McKinley district in 1980, but there has been little impact on student achievement.

Current law allows for succession, but not deconsolidation. If APS were to deconsolidate into multiple districts, new legislation would be required.

Deconsolidation Options

A deconsolidation of APS could take different forms. Two of the more obvious options follow:

Option 1: The district could be divided into two or more districts along geographic boundaries. Existing charter schools could be grandfathered into to the newly formed districts. This solution presents several problems related to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), discussed on p. 29.

Option 2: The district could be divided into horizontal districts by grade level, creating an elementary school district, a middle school district and a high school district. This solution would not create a problem for NCLB and would concentrate expertise of administrators and teachers by grade levels.

Stakeholder Opinions

The following stakeholders – the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce and Albuquerque Teachers Federation – have historically taken positions *against* dividing APS. Arguments *for* deconsolidation can be found on pages 22-25.

Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce

The quality of public schools is important to Albuquerque’s business community – as it is in most cities – because: 1) high quality schools make people want to live and work in Albuquerque; and 2) future and existing employers want to know that the schools that are delivering a sound education to the children and teens who will grow up to become the next generation’s workforce.

For these reasons, the business community in Albuquerque, including the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, has been active in education reform for several years. According to its position statements, “The Chamber believes that educating every child is not only a moral imperative, but also the single most important economic development issue for the future of our community and state.” Historically, the chamber has advocated:

- Against deconsolidation of APS, instead recommending that Governor Richardson's education reform efforts be given time to implement;
- For greater accountability and higher educational standards, based on standards-based progress reports as opposed to traditional grading systems;
- For support of teachers, including tax credits teachers working in disadvantaged communities;
- Intensive literacy efforts in early grades;
- Strong math, science, and technology education in traditional and charter schools;
- Student support through community and business connections.

The Albuquerque Teachers Federation

The Albuquerque Teachers Federation (AFT) is active in policy matters affecting APS. It developed the following motion regarding deconsolidation of the district:

(Motion introduced by Rachel Krout, Whittier Elementary. Passed by Albuquerque Teachers Federation Representative Council on January 7, 2003)

Whereas, there is no evidence that smaller districts are more effective or more efficient than larger districts, and;

Whereas, breaking up APS into smaller districts would likely increase money going to maintain separate bureaucracies and thus, lessen funds available for the classroom, and;

Whereas, breaking up APS into smaller districts would hamper the financial benefits that economy of scale currently provides APS, and;

Whereas, dividing APS into smaller district would formalize and legitimize dividing the city along economic, ethnic and racial lines, and;

Whereas, breaking APS into smaller districts would also include the breakup of ATF thus affording each new district's board the choice of whether or not to collectively bargain with its employees.

Therefore, be it resolved, that ATF oppose the break-up of the Albuquerque Public Schools.

Section 5:

Past Research on APS Deconsolidation

As mentioned earlier in this report, the possible deconsolidation of APS has been discussed for years. Perhaps the most thorough consideration of this question to date occurred in the mid-nineties. In 1993, House Bill 577aa directed the New Mexico State Board of Education to “study the feasibility of dividing the Albuquerque Public School District (APS) into five or fewer separate school districts” (McOlash, 1996). In turn, the State Board commissioned a consulting firm, BDM Education Technologies, to conduct a study of the issue. Upon completion of the study, an ad hoc subcommittee of the State Board drew on it and other sources to make recommendations to the Board. Both the study and the ad hoc committee’s subsequent recommendations are summarized in the pages that follow.

BDM Education Technologies Study

Completed in 1995, the BDM study assessed arguments for and against deconsolidation. The study was based on a review of the research literature and on interviews and surveys of stakeholders. Because of its relevance to the present question, extensive extracts are provided below.

1995 BDM Study: Arguments in Favor of Deconsolidation

a.) Large school districts may be less able to allocate resources equitably.

“Large school districts must balance the needs of many communities in allocating resources. As a result some communities receive more resources and some less at any particular time. In situations where rapid growth is dramatically stressing a school system through overcrowding, it is difficult for large systems to rapidly respond to these stresses. . . . In the event one group is not satisfied— usually the groups stressed by rapid growth or overcrowding or facing the possibility of having their school closed -- they are likely to become proponents of deconsolidation” (1995 BDM Study, p. 3).

b.) Parents perceive less control and influence over education in larger school districts.

“Parents in large systems are regularly frustrated by their inability to gain the attention of the district’s leadership and exercise control over their schools. They believe their children’s unique requirements are lost in the need to have a unified strategy for the entire district. Large districts are often seen as sacrificing the good of the individual for the good of the whole to assure they cannot be accused of favoritism” (1995 BDM Study, p. 4).

c.) Smaller districts may be more effective in integrating with their communities than larger districts.

“The literature suggests that smaller scale is an important component of educational success. The achievement of advantages of small scale operates through small class size, good student affect, strong financial support relative to the community’s

socioeconomic status (SES), productive use of available financial resources relative to SES—particularly for the improvement of curriculum and instruction, and productive cooperation of students, staff and the community. In addition school boards in smaller districts tend to be better informed about the preferences and conditions of their schools and the organization of the central office is usually less complex, compartmentalized, and bureaucratic” (1995 BDM Study, p. 4).

d.) Smaller districts may be more able to hold school officials accountable, change policies as needed, and solicit community input.

According the BDM survey of school districts of comparable size to APS, “accountability, poor communication, central control and bureaucratization were identified as the major problems of large school systems.” Specific factors that reduce efficiency include “coordination costs” (costs required to sustain a complex bureaucracy), “service delivery” (the distance between where decisions are made and where services are delivered), “discouragement of innovation,” “‘capture’ by special interest groups,” “power seeking by bureaucrats,” and “limited consumer choice” (1995 BDM Study, p. 5).

e.) Student achievement may be higher in smaller school districts.

Studies reviewed in the BDM report “suggest that smaller districts do better than large districts in terms of students’ achievement” (1995 BDM Study, p. 6).

1995 BDM Study: Arguments Against Deconsolidation

a.) Larger districts have greater political influence than small ones due to their political clout at the state and federal level.

“The ability to influence political decision making at the state and federal level is greater in a larger district. All larger districts surveyed indicated they had greater influence in their state capitals than did the state’s smaller districts. They also believed they had more influence at the federal level” (1995 BDM Study, p. 7).

b.) Large districts can offer a broader curriculum.

“Large districts can provide students with access to a broader educational experience. This broader experience is possible because of the greater resources, both human and financial, at the district’s disposal. Large districts tend to have more ‘discretionary’ funds available as well as a larger pool of teacher with various ideas and experiences. Specialized programs such as language and advanced courses, creative curricular ideas, and special targeted programs can be more easily supported since there is a critical mass of both students and teachers available to utilize and support these programs” (1995 BDM Study, p. 7-8).

c.) Large districts attract a more varied and talented pool of teachers.

The BDM-surveyed districts “believed they could attract better teachers due to their size and ability to pay higher salaries. . . . Besides salary, larger districts tend to be attractive to teaching professionals for the following reasons: location in a desirable urban area, better training opportunities, more opportunities for advancement, higher quality and

more interesting colleagues, diverse programs in which to participate, and a more diverse student and parent community” (1995 BDM Study, p. 8).

d.) Smaller districts lack the ability to compensate for disparate socioeconomic conditions in a major metropolitan area.

Large districts frequently “engage in intra-district redistribution of resources. This strategy is designed to assure that all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, have access to the same level and quality of programs and services offered by the district” (1995 BDM Study, p. 8).

e.) Large districts are less expensive to administer than smaller districts thus freeing more funds for instruction.

“Both large districts themselves and education finance specialist claim that centralized delivery of education can achieve economies of scale. Costs are reduced as a result of a district’s ability to purchase large quantities and spread the fixed costs of district operations over a large number of schools. . . . Nationwide survey data suggests that school districts with 100,000 students have fewer administrators and supervisors per 1,000 students than do smaller districts” (1995 BDM Study, p. 8-9). (One study [Hirsch, 1980] argues that economies of scale similar to those achieved by large districts can be achieved by smaller districts working in cooperation with one another.)

f.) Large districts can offer a more diverse set of programs for special needs students.

“The requirements of educating special needs children presents a challenge to any school district. The cost of providing an education to these children exceeds the reimbursements provided by the state and federal government. Large school districts are better able to address these children’s needs because of their ability to absorb the extra cost of special needs children in the overall costs of the districts varied programs” (1995 BDM Study, p. 9).

Conclusions of BDM Study Regarding Benefits and Drawbacks of Deconsolidation

The BDM study concluded that large districts that deconsolidate into multiple smaller ones “achieve the objective of community support and control their proponents desire” (p. 12). However, they also concluded that “the data from New Mexico validate the argument against consolidation” because academic performance of APS is strong in comparison to other districts in the state and “all the benefits of a large system are apparent in the performance of APS” (p. 16).

Conclusions of BDM Study Regarding Legal Basis for Deconsolidation

The BDM study also explored how state law deals with consolidation and annexation of school districts. Deconsolidation of a school district would be viewed as a creation and thus governed by the same statutes. Since the time of that study, the powers held by the State Board of Education and the state superintendent has been transferred to the Secretary of Education. According to the 1995 BDM study:

“The State Board of Education (SBE) is empowered to create new school districts under three conditions: (1) passage of a resolution requesting the creation of a new district from the existing district; (2) receipt of a petition bearing signatures of 60% of the registered voters within the geographic area desiring creation of a new district; and (3) recommendation by the state superintendent and approval by the SBE that creation of a new district meets the standards of the law. In addition, an advisory referendum must be conducted in any district with more than 76,000 students. This provision, which only applies to APS, is designed to ensure that voters affected by the creation of the new district have an opportunity to express their opinion on the creation of a new district. This referendum is legally non-binding, but is designed to better determine the desirability and feasibility of creating a new district. A new district must have a minimum student population of 500, offer a high school program unless an exception is given, and be in the best interests of public education in the state. Creation of the district occurs through the issuance of an “Order of Creation” by the SBE. (p. 28).

Conclusions of the Ad Hoc Committee

The ad hoc committee appointed by the State Board of Education delivered its final report in May of 1995. Drawing on the BDM study, data from Research and Polling, Inc., and testimony from various individuals, the committee came to five main conclusions (McOlash, 1996):

1. It would be possible to divide APS, but doing so would involve significant complications including changes to state law.
2. A feeling of common purpose and community is required to create a successful district. This conclusion implies that any attempt at deconsolidation should occur at the community level and should not be mandated by an entity outside those communities.
3. If APS were to be divided, certain functions might best remain centralized.
4. If APS is not divided, efforts should be continued to decentralize functions and decisions that might better be done at cluster or school levels.
5. Unless a deconsolidation is well planned and carefully phased, it could be quite expensive to the districts involved and to the state.

Updating the Data to 2005

The general terms of the argument have not changed substantially between 1995 and 2005. The advantages of large districts continue to appear to be efficiency and the ability to offer comprehensive services. The advantages of smaller districts continue to appear to be community support and control. Table 1 provides a snapshot of how APS compares to the next five largest districts in New Mexico across dimensions of student demographics, spending per student, and spending percentages by category. Presumably, the deconsolidation of APS would result in districts similar in size to these five smaller districts. Few meaningful conclusions can be drawn from this data except that APS spends less on administration, lending support to the “efficiency” argument.

Table 1						
2002	APS	Farmington	Gallup	Las Cruces	Rio Rancho	Santa Fe
School Environment						
Students Per Teacher	14.9	14.8	15.3	13.3	17.2	14.5
Students Per Total Staff	7.7	7.3	6.0	6.8	9.6	6.9
Enrollment	87,201	10,215	13,840	22,414	10,566	13,482
Caucasian (%)	38.9	49.4	7.7	29.3	57.4	26.8
Black (%)	3.8	1.1	0.4	2.3	3.6	0.7
Hispanic (%)	50.6	20.8	11.7	66.5	33.3	68.5
Asian/Pacific Islander (%)	2.0	1.0	0.4	1.1	2.0	1.1
Am Indian/Alaska Native (%)	4.7	27.6	79.9	0.9	3.7	2.9
Econ. Disadvantaged (%)	42.3	42.9	74.3	56.2	25.7	47.0
English Language Learners (%)	17.7	22.0	36.3	12.2	6.4	27.3
Students with Disabilities (%)	19.9	15.6	16.4	25.3	17.0	18.1
Spending (\$ Per Student)						
Instruction	3,709	3,431	3,627	3,660	3,072	3,320
Instructional Staff Support	243	218	514	203	189	213
Pupil Support	622	472	691	680	514	515
General Administration	92	121	138	109	210	347
School Administration	412	321	431	496	288	353
Operations and Maintenance	626	570	796	535	475	551
Student Transportation	191	203	300	338	278	221
Food Services	249	213	313	269	229	228
Spending Distributions (%)						
Instruction	59.7	60.9	52.5	57.1	57.8	56.7
Instructional Staff Support	3.9	3.9	7.4	3.2	3.5	3.6
Pupil Support	10.0	8.4	10.0	10.6	9.7	8.8
General Administration	1.5	2.1	2.0	1.7	3.9	5.9
School Administration	6.6	5.7	6.2	7.7	5.4	6.0
Operations and Maintenance	10.1	10.1	11.5	8.3	8.9	9.4
Student Transportation	3.1	3.6	4.3	5.3	5.2	3.8
Food Services	4.0	3.8	4.5	4.2	4.3	3.9

Source: www.schoolmatters.org (National Education Data Partnership)

Regarding the relationship between district size and student achievement, some research since 1995 has continued to suggest that smaller districts produce higher levels of achievement. For example, a 2001 study of California schools (Driscoll, Halcoussis, & Svorny) concluded that “students attending schools in larger districts did not perform as well on standardized tests as those attending schools in smaller districts.” Similarly, Bickel and Howley (2000) argue (based on data from Georgia) that “Policymakers should start imagining ways to re-create districts that are everywhere sufficiently small to respond well to students, families, and (especially) communities” (p. 32). However, the relationship between size and student achievement cited in the research literature does not appear to hold true for APS as it relates to smaller districts in New Mexico. Table 2 compares the APS’s 2002-03 achievement data to that of the same five districts shown in Table 1.

Table 2: Comparison of Achievement Data: APS and Four Smaller Districts, 2002-03 Terra Nova and High School Competency Exam (District Averages)

	APS	Farmington	Gallup	Las Cruces	Rio Rancho	Santa Fe	State
Grade 4 Reading	57.2	52.3	43.9	59.9	64.4	53.6	54.9
Grade 4 Math	52.7	54.7	44.1	58.6	64.0	50.0	52.5
Grade 8 Reading	58.6	60.9	37.5	57.2	62.4	53.7	54.6
Grade 8 Math	54.6	56.9	35.9	52.7	66.4	49.3	50.7
HS Competency	209.25	208.85	190.94	209.15	214.53	198.40	204.24

APS finishes 2nd, 3rd, or 4th in the rankings for each test and exceeds the state average in every case. In other words, APS is doing about as well as other New Mexico school districts, so some advocates may argue there is not a strong case for dividing it up.

Section 6: Ramifications of Deconsolidation

Before considering whether to deconsolidate APS, parents and decision-makers must consider the long-term financial and academic impacts. Decision-makers must ensure that the idea is well supported by research and evidence and that it is worth the potential costs.

School Financing

If APS were deconsolidated, there would certainly be financial implications. Could a new district (or new districts) support themselves financially and build any needed new schools? What bond and mill levy debt exists that would impact property owners in the proposed new district(s)? What impact would break-away districts have on the financial stability of APS? This report cannot answer all these questions but presents data that informs such a discussion.

Key Definitions and Context

Capital budget: the portion of a school district's budget that funds construction, maintenance, furniture, and equipment. Any new school buildings would be funded from the capital budget.

- Money for the capital budget comes mostly from local property taxes; the average Albuquerque homeowner pays approximately \$395 a year for school construction and maintenance.
- The property tax rate is determined by bonds and mill levies that were approved by local voters.
- A school district's ability to raise money through bonds (and the cost of that money) is determined by its "bond rating," which is an indicator of the district's financial stability. APS has a very good bond rating: Aa2.
- In addition to property tax (bond and mill levy) funds, a small portion of APS' capital budget also comes from state grants.

Operating budget: the portion of a school district's budget that funds day-to-day operations including teacher salaries, administrative costs, text books, school supplies, and related expenses.

- Money for the operating budget comes from state taxes.
- Funds are allocated to districts based on a per-student funding formula.

Bonds: these long-term loans are often used by school districts or municipalities to complete a construction or maintenance project. Approved by voters, the bonds are gradually paid back, with interest, by taxpayers. The interest rate is determined by the borrower's bond rating.

Mill levy: the tax rate based on the value of the property.

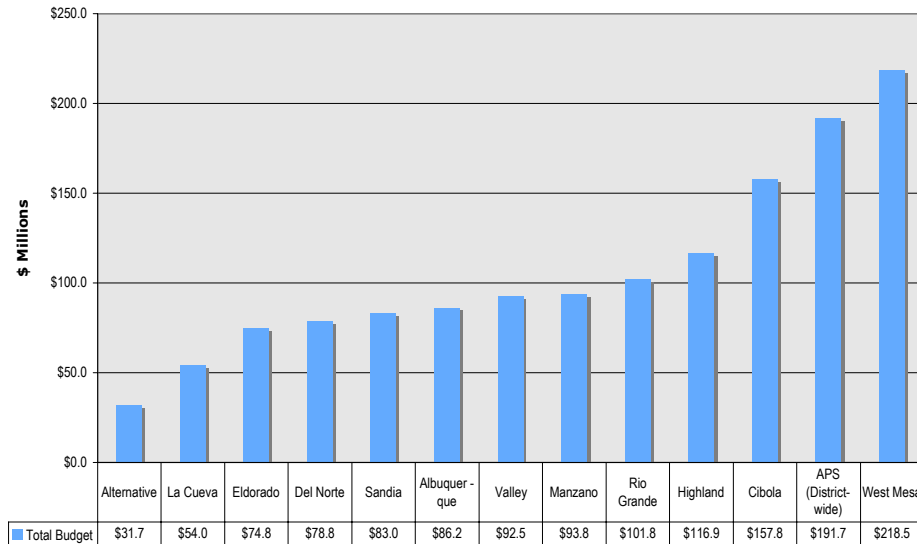
APS Capital Needs

APS has a five-year Capital Master Plan that allocates capital funds based on need, equity, and long-term goals. This plan was created by the Capital Master Plan Committee, composed of parents, teachers, principals, and administrators.

As mentioned previously, APS is divided into 12 clusters, each of which has projected construction needs (capital needs). The clusters with the greatest capital needs are on the west side of the city. According to APS, the student population on the west side of the city is projected to grow 7-10% a year for the next five years, while the student population in other areas of the city is projected to decline or remain flat. The following tables provide information on each cluster's projected need and projected tax revenue.

Cluster	Property Taxes	% District Enrollment	Future Needs (2005 -2010)
La Cueva	\$8.30M	8%	\$54.0M
Eldorado	\$6.98M	7%	\$74.8M
Del Norte	\$6.94M	7%	\$78.8M
Sandia	\$4.91M	6%	\$83.0M
Albuquerque	\$6.76M	7%	\$86.2M
Valley	\$6.60M	7%	\$92.5M
Manzano	\$6.12M	8%	\$93.8M
Rio Grande	\$3.37M	11%	\$101.8M
Highland	\$6.26M	10%	\$116.9M
Cibola	\$8.89M	14%	\$157.8M
West Mesa	\$6.19M	16%	\$218.5M

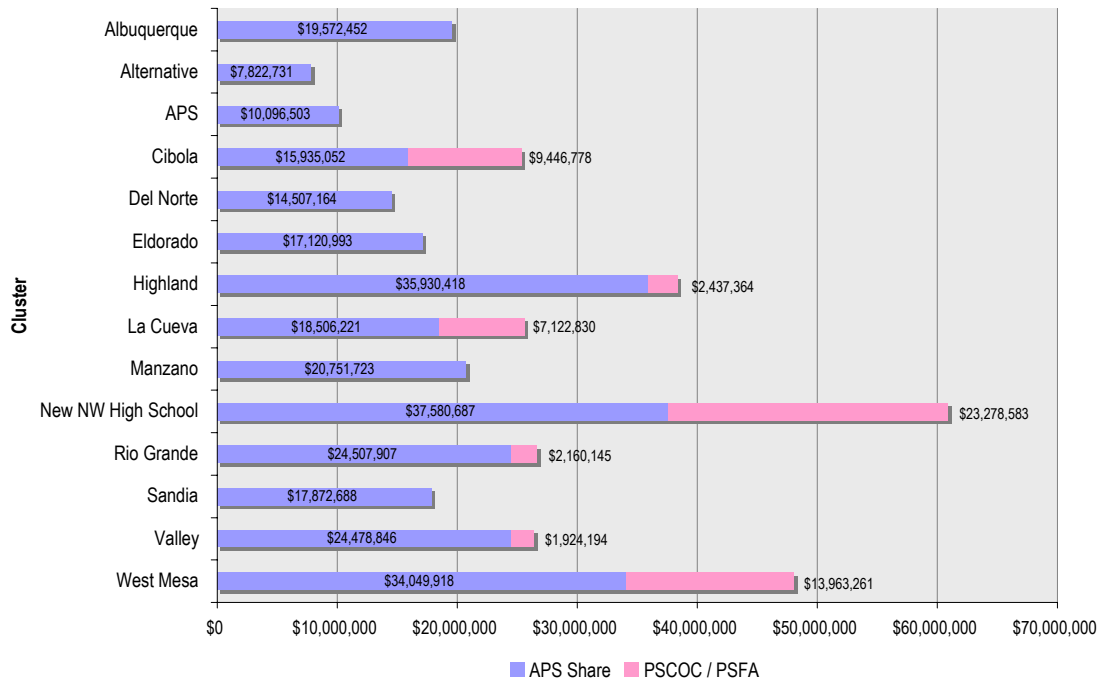
APS Total Capital Needs by High School Cluster, 2006-11 Strategy
(Millions of Dollars)



APS Construction

Using resources from bonds and mill levies, APS has built ten new schools in the past nine years (seven on the west side), has three new schools currently under construction, and plans to build a new high school on the west side. See p. 38 in the appendix for additional details.

APS 2006-11 Capital Strategy: Project-Based Construction by Cluster



No Child Left Behind

In addition to the financial impacts of dividing APS, decision-makers also must consider the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. The law includes a range of provisions that impact all public schools. Two aspects of NCLB that should be considered in the discussion about deconsolidation are the distribution of schools failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and the choice/transfer provisions of the law.

Distribution of Schools Failing to Make AYP

AYP is a state's measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards. The accountability provisions of NCLB stipulate that schools failing to make AYP for two consecutive years be identified as in need of improvement. Parents must be immediately notified of that fact and, if the school is Title I (officially serving disadvantaged students), the parents must receive the option of transferring their child to another school not in need of improvement. The district must provide transportation. The failing school also must develop an improvement plan. If the school fails to make AYP for a third year, the transfer option remains, plus parents may now request "supplemental services" (typically tutoring) for their children. The school district is required to develop a list of approved providers from which parents can choose. If a school fails to make AYP for more than three years, sanctions such as replacing staff

members, adopting an entirely new curriculum, and structural reorganization are required (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Any discussion about APS deconsolidation should take into account the distribution of schools in need of improvement across the new district and the ability of the district to support such schools. For example, if APS were divided into multiple districts, would one of the new smaller districts end up supporting a greater proportion of failing schools? Could that new, smaller district, afford the transportation and tutoring expenses required for failing schools?

Choice/Transfer Provisions

According to the U.S. Department of Education website,

“Children are eligible for school choice when the Title I school they attend has not made adequate yearly progress in improving student achievement – as defined by the state – for two consecutive years or longer and is therefore identified as needing improvement, corrective action or restructuring. Any child attending such a school must be offered the option of transferring to a public school in the district – including a public charter school – not identified for school improvement, unless state law prohibits such an option. No Child Left Behind requires that priority in providing school choice be given to the lowest achieving children from low-income families. As of the 2002/2003 school year, school choice is available to students enrolled in schools that have been identified as needing improvement under the Elementary and Secondary School Act as the statute existed prior to the enactment of No Child Left Behind. In addition, children are eligible for school choice when they attend any ‘persistently dangerous school,’ as defined by the individual state. Any child who has been the victim of a violent crime on the grounds of his or her school is also eligible for school choice” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

This excerpt of the NCLB law influences the debate about dividing up APS because large districts obviously can provide a wider range of schools to choose from than smaller districts. Districts “may choose to enter into a cooperative agreement with another district that would allow their students to transfer into the other district’s school,” however, there is no requirement that they do so (unless a district is so small it has only one school on a particular level and provides no choice at all).

Thus, if a newly formed district has an overrepresentation of failing schools, it’s children will not be able to transfer to the wealthier and better performing school districts. This quandary could be addressed if APS were deconsolidated along grade levels because children in a given grade level would all technically be in the same district and would be able to apply for horizontal transfers across the city.

In sum, if APS divided, parents of students in failing schools would likely have fewer choices of where to send their children, since the new smaller districts would be comprised of fewer schools. Of all the provisions in NCLB, this one seems most likely to come into play in discussions about deconsolidation.

Charter Schools

It is unclear what impact deconsolidation would have on charter schools within APS. In New Mexico, charter schools “are not considered their own district, but are part of the school district in which they open” (New Mexico PED, Charter Schools FAQs) (<http://nmcharterschools.org/faqs/index.html> - g9). Presumably, they would become part of the district in which they reside, but there are potential complications, such as charter schools with multiple campuses.

About 6,000 students are currently enrolled in the 34 APS charter schools with pending applications for six more charter schools. APS provides just a few services to charter schools, including a 2% surcharge on revenue pass-through, fiscal services for one school, and general capital master planning.

Conclusions

This report has called on readers to reflect on the strengths and weakness of APS, and to think about whether the district should be deconsolidated in some way. Key issues to consider:

- Discussions about dividing APS into multiple districts must take into account questions about the equitable allocation of funds and whether any new districts could support themselves financially.
- Race and class demographics must be taken into consideration before implementing any district reorganization.
- Communities may wish to consider ways to hold schools and APS accountable for student achievement and equitable distribution of resources.
- Any plan to break up APS must include a plan for dealing with NCLB requirements, including transfers, special services such as special education, dual immersion, bilingual, disability services, performance-based budgeting, and curriculum offerings.

Decision-makers considering APS restructuring options also might consider additional research, including:

- Before and after comparisons of other large school districts that have deconsolidated, looking specifically at whether deconsolidation resulted in increased student achievement;
- Financial assessments of an APS break-up on NCLB requirements;
- Research on racial, ethnic, class, gender, and economic issues, including their impact on student achievement.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Demographics

New Mexico Demographics

Key facts about New Mexico follow:

- NM is a majority minority state where 43% of the 1.9 million residents identify as Latino, 10% American Indian, 2% Black, and 1% Asian.
- Although New Mexico's foreign-born population is less than the national average (8% versus 11%), 37% of residents speak a language other than English at home, compared to 18% in the rest of the nation.
- Compared to 12% nationally, 18% of New Mexico residents live below the poverty line.
- New Mexico has a higher percentage of Title I eligible students than the national average (56% vs. 47.1%)
- The mean student-teacher ratios are below the national average across all grade levels, including primary school (14.6 vs. 16), middle school (14.5 vs. 15.7), and high school (14.5 vs. 15.1) (NCES, 2003a,c).

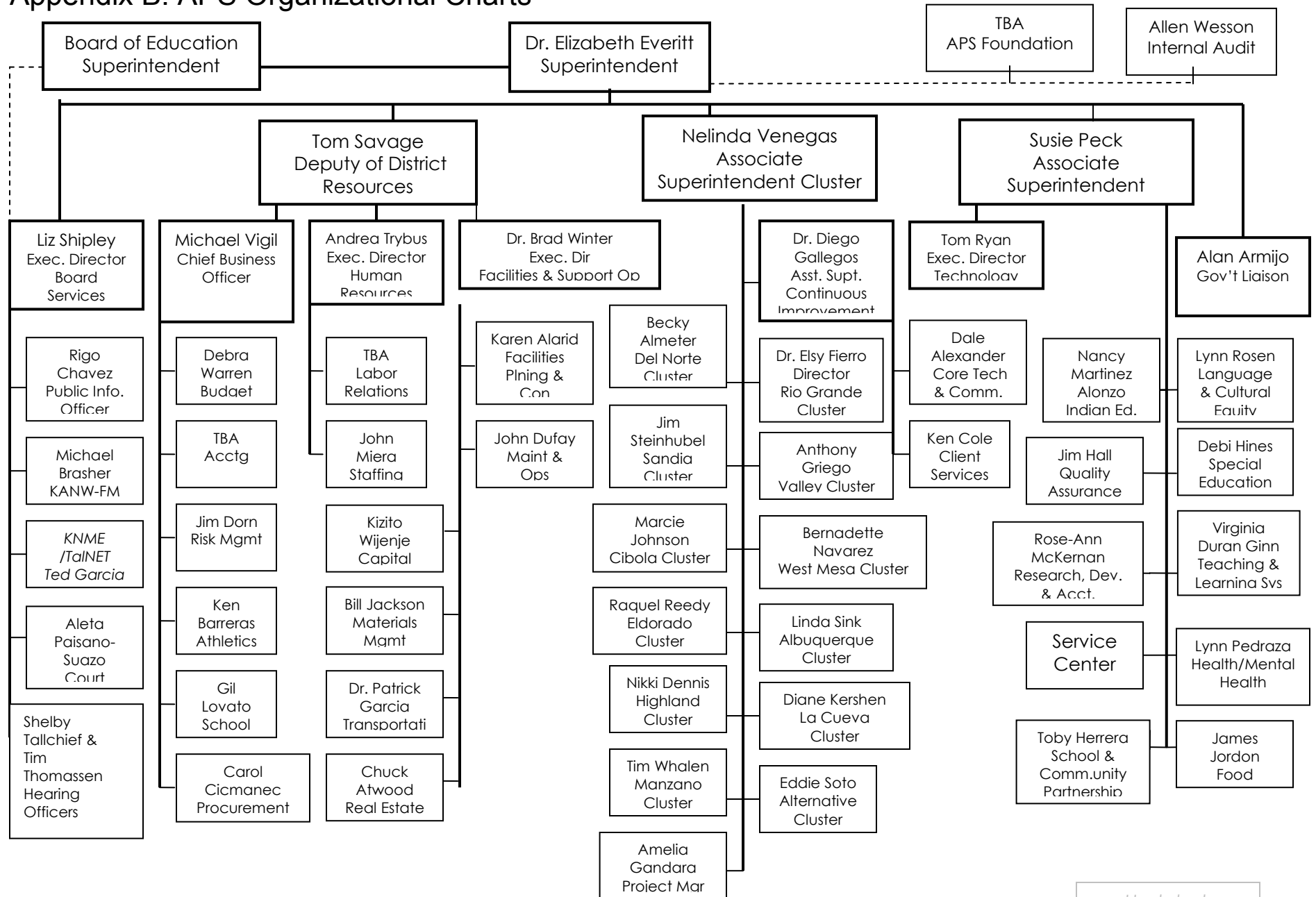
Albuquerque Demographics

As the 35th largest city in the nation and New Mexico's largest city, the population of Albuquerque has doubled over the last several decades, from 201,189 in 1960 to 448,607 in 2000. The unprecedented expansion of the city over the last few decades has contributed to Albuquerque being ranked second for urban sprawl in the Rockies (Ludwick, 2005). The geographic boundaries of Albuquerque have more than tripled in the last 45 years, to today's 187 square miles (Zoretich, 2004). It is important to remember that Albuquerque represents a unique urban setting in a predominantly rural state.

Key demographics for Albuquerque follow:

- 8% of Albuquerque's population is foreign born and the majority is from Latin America (64%) followed by Asia (18%).
- Although the citywide poverty rate is only 10%, 20% of families with related children under age five are living in poverty.
- 46% of mother-headed households with children under five are living in poverty.
- 28% of Albuquerque residents are under the age of 19.
- One third of Albuquerque households have individuals under the age of 18.

Appendix B: APS Organizational Charts



Updated:

Appendix C: APS Enrollment Trends

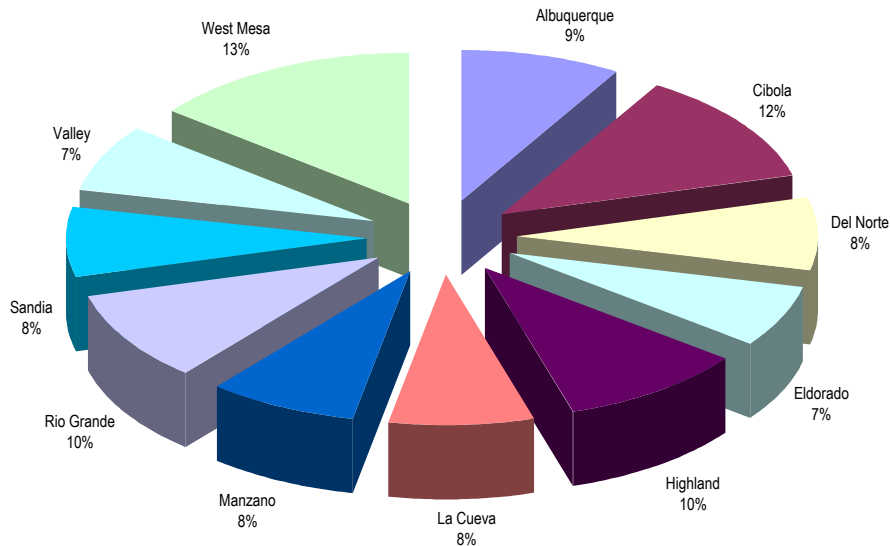
In the early 1990s, APS enrollment was steadily and rapidly increasing. That trend stopped in 1994 – 1995, when Rio Rancho formed its own school district. Since that time, APS enrollment has overall declined, though enrollment numbers are trending back upward from 2002 – 2005.

APS School Enrollment, 1990-2005



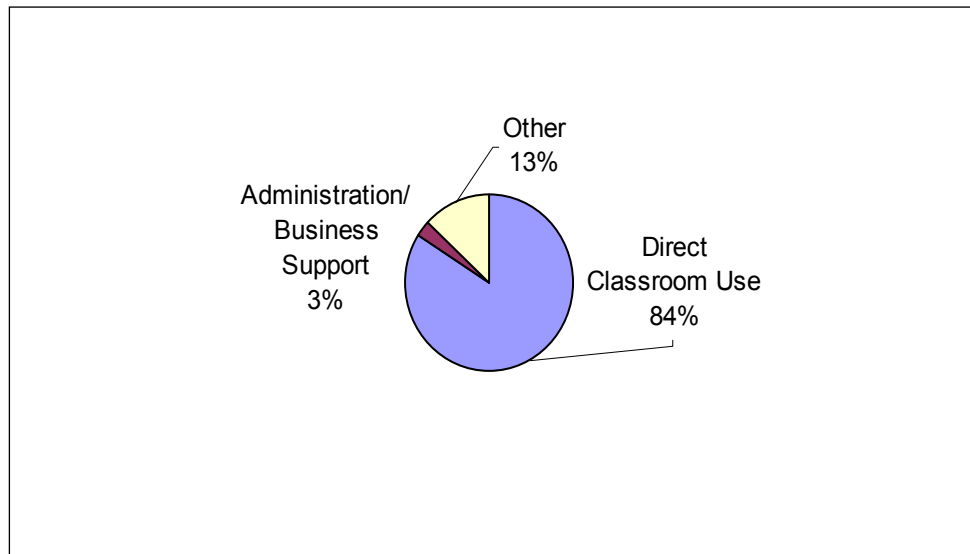
This enrollment is divided up into clusters, which generally reflect 7 – 10% of the student population per cluster. Two of these clusters, West Mesa and Cibola, are the main growth areas of the district. In order to prepare for this growth, one west side high school is already under design, while another is planned in the APS 2006 – 2011 capital strategy.

APS 2005-06 Percent Total Enrollment by Cluster



Appendix D: APS Budget Information

- \$500,403,284 in projected General Fund Expenditures (disbursed by the State Legislature), a 4% increase from 2003 – 2004.
- \$227,824,963 in projected 2004 – 2005 Capital Fund Expenditures (accrued from local property taxes) a 44% increase from 2003 – 2004. (This is resumption of capital funding after a local bond/mill levy election failure.)
- APS's **operational budget** = #students enrolled x a per student allocation formula mandated by the State Department of Education.
 - pays for day-to-day operation of the district, including all teacher salaries
 - derived from the State General fund (total state revenue per year)
 - 84.3% is for direct classroom use
 - 2.6% is for Administration and Business Support
 - 13.1% pays for maintenance, athletics, community services, and transportation

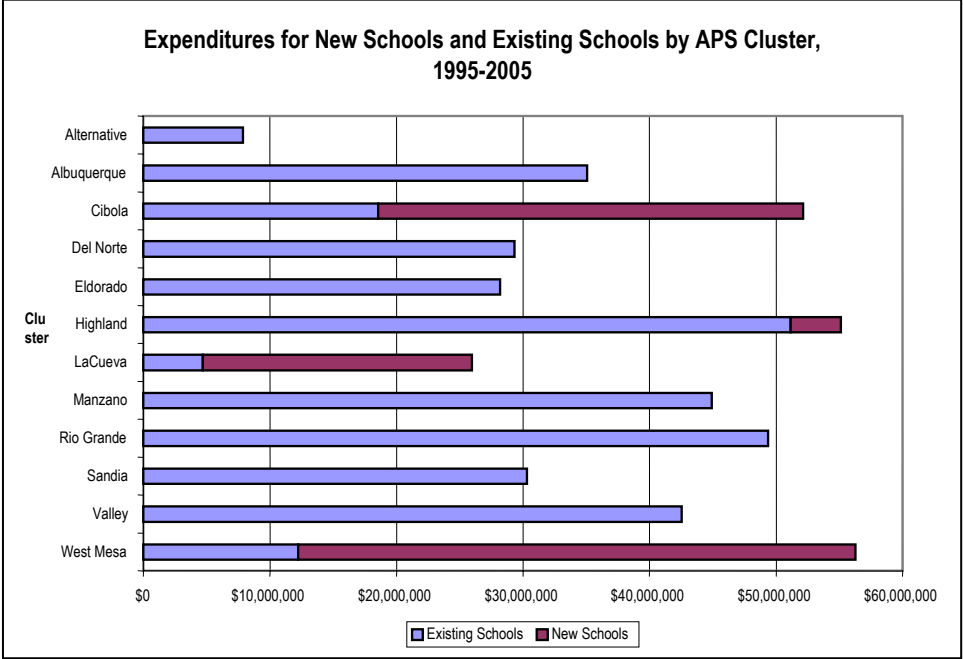


Appendix E: APS Capital Budget Information

APS Capital Budget Background: Sources of School Capital Funding in NM

- 88% of APS' capital budget is from local sources (GO Bonds, HB33 and SB9)
- Since 1990, APS district voters have approved about \$1.1 billion in capital expenditures in general obligation bonds (GO) and mill levies (HB33 and SB 9)
- The remaining capital budget (12%) is Special Legislative Grants
- APS now qualifies for state capital outlay assistance (state 47% matching on qualified projects) – \$52.8 million was awarded to

Source: RBC Dain Rauscher, Inc.



APS Capital Budget Background

APS Capital Expenditure and Student Enrollment by Cluster

APS New Schools Vs Refurbishment Capital Expenditure 1995-05 (SB9/HB33/GO Bonds)

Cluster	Existing Schools	New Schools	Total	% of \$ for New Schools
West Mesa	\$12,230,499	\$44,038,000	\$56,268,499	78%
Valley	\$42,558,200	\$0	\$42,558,200	0%
Sandia	\$30,308,067	\$0	\$30,308,067	0%
Rio Grande	\$49,362,900	\$0	\$49,362,900	0%
Manzano	\$44,919,050	\$0	\$44,919,050	0%
LaCueva	\$4,697,833	\$21,278,800	\$25,976,633	82%
Highland	\$51,166,533	\$3,968,000	\$55,134,533	7%
Eldorado	\$28,175,467	\$0	\$28,175,467	0%
Del Norte	\$29,326,950	\$0	\$29,326,950	0%
Cibola	\$18,555,366	\$33,575,100	\$52,130,466	64%
Albuquerque	\$35,072,450	\$0	\$35,072,450	0%
Alternative	\$7,863,500	\$0	\$7,863,500	0%
Total	\$354,236,815	\$102,859,900	\$457,096,715	23%

Source: APS Capital Master Plan

APS Capital Budget Background

APS Capital Expenditure and Student Enrollment by Cluster

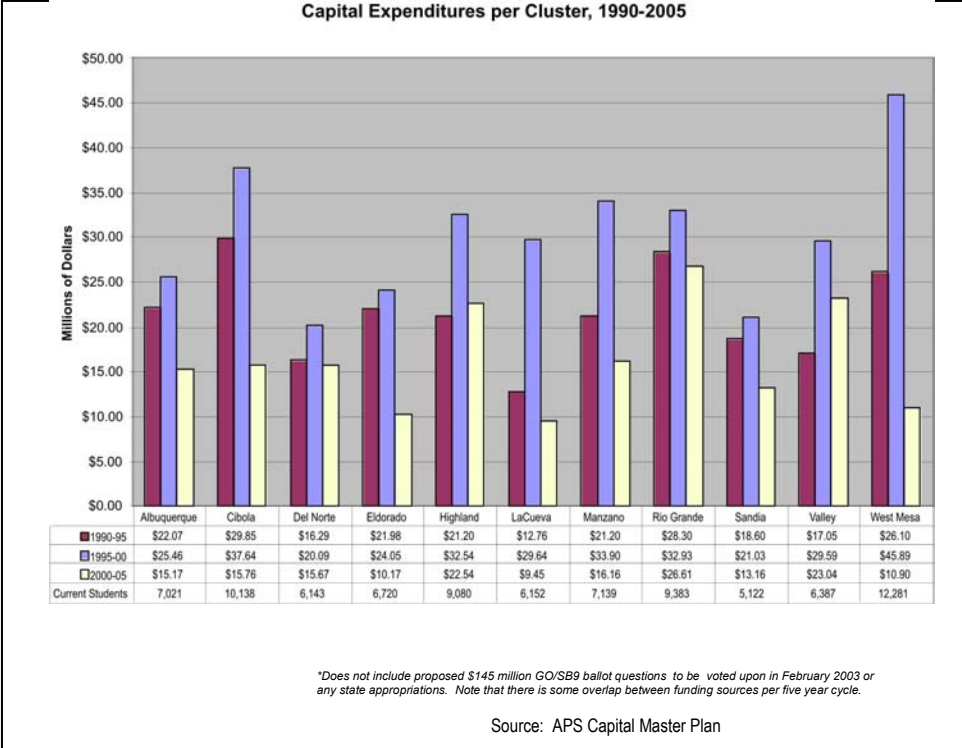
APS Capital Expenditure 1995-05 (SB9/HB33/GO Bonds)

Cluster	95-05 Capital Expenditure	%
Alternative	\$7,863,500	2%
LaCueva	\$25,976,633	6%
Eldorado	\$28,175,467	6%
Del Norte	\$29,326,950	6%
Sandia	\$30,308,067	7%
Albuquerque	\$35,072,450	8%
Valley	\$42,558,200	9%
Manzano	\$44,919,050	10%
Rio Grande	\$49,362,900	11%
Cibola	\$52,130,466	11%
Highland	\$55,134,533	12%
West Mesa	\$56,268,499	12%
Total	\$457,096,715	100%

APS Enrollment by Cluster 2003-04

Cluster	03-04 Enrollment	%
Alternative	2039	2%
Eldorado	5826	7%
LaCueva	6379	7%
Del Norte	6381	7%
Sandia	6418	7%
Valley	6436	7%
Manzano	6967	8%
Albuquerque	7353	8%
Highland	8527	10%
Rio Grande	8559	10%
Cibola	10419	12%
West Mesa	11253	13%
Total	86557	100%

Source: APS Capital Master Plan



APS 2006-11 Capital Strategy

The recommended strategy will provide \$454.25 million in voter approved revenue to meet district needs from 2006 to 2011 maintaining current tax rates.

Expected Revenue Capital Strategy 2006-11*		Election Date
HB 33 06-10	\$218,615,400	Feb-05
GO 06	\$75,000,000	Feb-06
SB 9 08-11	\$90,632,600	Feb-07
GO 09	\$70,000,000	Feb-09
Total	\$454,248,000	

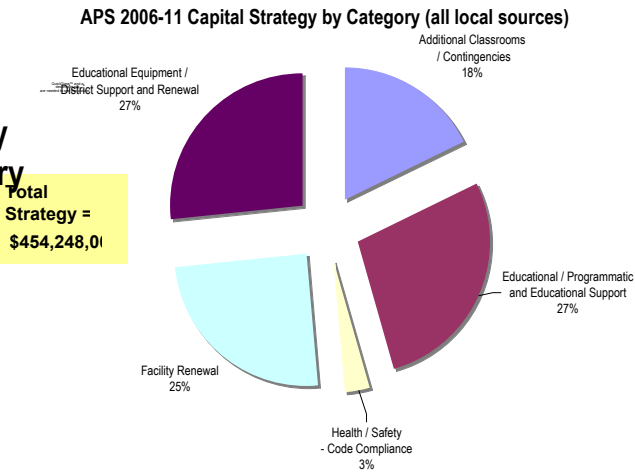
Expected Revenue: APS 2006-11 Capital Strategy

*Does not include state legislative grants or PSCOC matches

Source: APS Capital Master Plan 2006-11

APS 2006-11 Capital Strategy

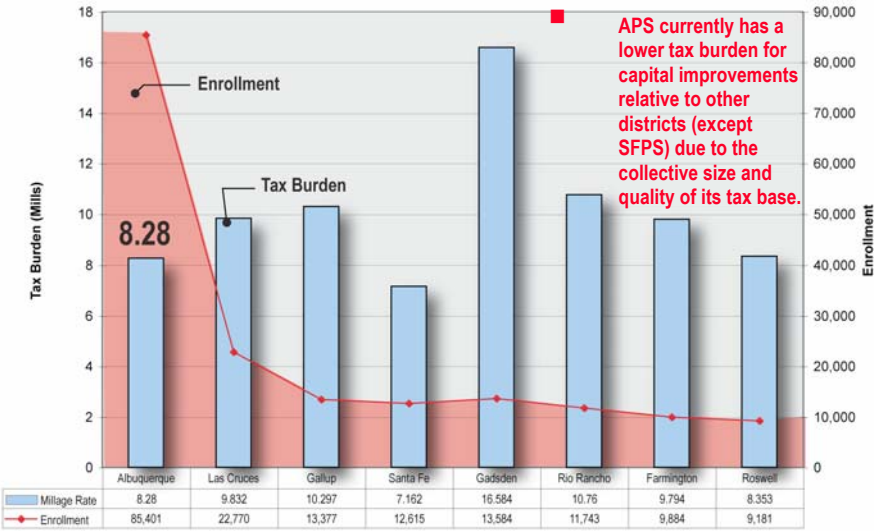
2006-11 Capital Strategy Summary



Source: APS Capital Master Plan 2006-11

APS Capital Budget Background Comparison with Other Districts

Tax Burden of the Eight Largest School Districts in New Mexico, 2004-05



*Tax Burden = Residential tax levy (rate) for capital improvement purposes per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.
 Source: New Mexico Department of Education
 Note: APS enrollment does not include charter schools

APS has expended significant resources to address growing and shifting enrollment pressure on the west side.

New APS Schools: 1995 - 2004

- Chamiza Elementary School (North west Albuquerque) - 1995
- Double Eagle Elementary School (North East Albuquerque) - 1996
- Desert Ridge Middle School (North East Albuquerque) - 1997
- Painted Sky Elementary School (South West Albuquerque) - 1998
- Jimmy Carter Middle School (South West Albuquerque) - 2000
- James Monroe Middle School (North West Albuquerque) -2001
- Seven Bar Elementary School (North West Albuquerque) – 2001
- Manzano Mesa Elementary School (South East Albuquerque) - 2004
- Edward Gonzales Elementary School (South West Albuquerque) - 2004
- Ventana Ranch Elementary School (South West Albuquerque) - 2004

APS Schools Currently Under Construction

- Far North East Heights Elementary School - Planned opening 2006
- Far South West Elementary School - Planned opening 2006
- New North West High School - Planned opening 2007/08

Planned APS Schools

- New South West High School – Design Funded GO 06 (other funding under consideration)
- New Middle School Alternative

Appendix F: Financial Analysis of West Side Secession

The financial securities firm RBC Dain Rauscher compiled an analysis for APS on potential financial impacts of the west side seceding and establishing its own school district. RBC Dain Rauscher has served as APS's Financial Advisor since 1994 in connection with tax and bond measures. Current RBC staff assisted APS in separation of Rio Rancho schools in 1993 as well. The firm also serves as financial advisor to NM school districts representing over 73% of all NM students.

For the purpose of the analysis, a hypothetical new west side public school district (WSPS) was described as being composed of the geographic area formed from I-40 on the south, Rio Grande river on the east and Bernalillo County lines on the north and west.

The analysis assessed APS's bonding capacity, two-mill levy, House Bill 33 levy revenue, and bond rating impact. In summary, it determined that APS generates \$81 million per year on average from bond and mill levy sources with its current \$8.03 combined capital improvements property tax rate. Upon separation APS would generate an estimated \$67 million. If a newly created WSPS with \$1.566 billion of Assessed Valuation maintained the same tax rate as APS, Dain Rauscher estimates WSPS could generate approximately \$15-16 million per year of bond and mill levy funds for capital.

The remainder of this section directly quotes the Dain Rauscher report.

Bond Capacity

APS has \$120,520,000 of general obligation bonds outstanding. Such bonds mature August 1, 2004 to August 1, 2018. The district also has \$40,010,000 of authorized but unissued bonds, which it plans to sell in 2004 and 2005. Final maturity of those bonds will be 2020. The next general obligation bond election is scheduled for February 2006.

The district's bonding capacity is limited to 6% of assessed valuation. The bonding capacity of APS would drop from \$586.4 million to \$492.5 million and bond funds available without increasing the tax rate would decrease by approximately 19%. The loss of the tax base growth associated with WSPS would reduce APS's future available bonding capacity, however capital required for growth needs would also likely be correspondingly reduced. It should be noted that APS currently has \$465.934 million of unused bonding authority.

The bonding capacity of WSPS would be limited in several respects. The WSPS district's bonded-to-capacity percentage would start at approximately 20% due to allocation of approximately \$20 million of outstanding bonds carried over from APS and should decrease overtime as old APS debt is repaid. The gross capacity (\$93 million) net of APS overlapping bonds would be approximately \$74 million. If the state were to pay off bonds like it had for Jemez Springs Schools during the creation of Rio Rancho Schools, and fund a defeasance escrow of APS bonds related to WSPS, it may be possible to have no bonding capacity drag. Credit issues with outstanding APS bondholders will, however, need to be addressed.

Bond Tax Rate Impact

APS taxpayers have approved bonds resulting in a \$2.162 tax rate (per \$1,000 of Assessed Valuation). In addition, voters have approved a Two Mill and House Bill 33 mill levy for capital improvements. The total tax rate for bonds and capital levies is \$8.03. Because voters of APS voted on approval of all bonds prior to creation of WSPS, the debt service tax rate would continue for both APS and WSPS property owners until such bonds are paid. Future APS and WSPS bonds authorized after separation would have a separately computed tax rate in addition to the above levy.

The debt service tax rate (expressed in \$ per \$1,000 of assessed valuation) is expected to be as follows assuming issuance of the authorized but unissued bonds and no future elections. It should be noted that if the state were to allocate funds to retire bonds of WSPS, no tax rate would be necessary in WSPS.

Debt service tax rate (expressed as each amount below per \$1,000 of assessed valuation)					
2004	\$2.16	2010	\$1.11	2016	\$0.95
2005	2.16	2011	1.07	2017	0.71
2006	2.16	2012	1.04	2018	0.67
2007	1.54	2013	1.02	2019	0.61
2008	1.34	2014	1.06	2020	0.32
2009	1.20	2015	0.98		

Two Mill Levy and House Bill 33 Rate Impact

Upon separation from APS the WSPS taxpayers would no longer pay the Two Mill and HB 33 mill levy. APS receives approximately \$19.352 million and \$38.794 million from the SB 9 and HB 33 tax levies respectively. If WSPS separates, SB 9 and HB 33 tax revenue will be reduced approximately \$3.100 million and \$6.522 million respectively. The combined decrease from both tax levies is approximately \$9.622 million. However, like the impact that the separation would have on capital improvement needs would be reduced as well.

Bond Rating Impact

We do not expect APS's "Aa" category rating to be adversely impacted unless operational funding is reduced to levels where educational programs cannot be continued. If capital growth needs are reduced and required bond issues likewise are reduced the rating impact could be positive. The WSPS rating would most likely be a partial category below APS for the opposite reasons mentioned above.

Appendix G: Albuquerque Journal Article “She Made La Mesa a Magnet School for Families”

BYLINE: Kate Nelson Commentary, Albuquerque Journal, July 5, 2005

When she first walked into La Mesa Elementary School, Barbara Trujillo already knew a lot about poverty, culture clashes and tough neighborhoods.

She also knew a lot about teaching, leadership and bureaucracies.

She knew little about what the next seven years would teach her.

"It was a mess," she says of the school she took over as principal in 1998. "They'd had a high turnover in leadership, and it's a very challenging place to work. It pulls on your heartstrings.

"It was easy for teachers to feel sorry and, so, become a comfortable and fun place for kids 'Their lives are hard, so we won't put more pressure on them.' "

The thing was, Trujillo knew, pressure was what they needed. The students and their families.

The chronically crowded school surrounded by mostly low-income housing occupied largely by immigrant families needed to become a force in their lives, a place where needs would be met and lives would be changed.

It started with a full-day bilingual kindergarten program that put responsibility on parents.

"We said, 'You will come to a monthly meeting. You will be in the classroom four times a year,' " Trujillo said. "It was a privilege, not a right, and because of that, everyone was fighting for it."

One success down, Trujillo asked the parents what they wanted. Help with parenting skills, they said. She brought in guest speakers. She created a computer class, monthly meetings for dads and a book club for moms.

The first book was simple; something they could read with their children. By year's end, the moms were reading Carlos Fuentes and writing essays about him.

"There was no grand design," said Mick McMahan, a La Mesa neighborhood activist. "It just sort of happened.

"Barbara made the school a place where the parents really wanted to come. All of a sudden, they saw it was good for kids and good for them. Here's a place where we can help an individual with a lot of problems health care, getting along with neighbors, teaching leadership skills."

La Mesa consistently charts one of the highest rates of students who walk to school often walking with their parents. And often, Trujillo says, those parents are waiting at the door when school lets out.

"A lot of parents think they don't have the ability to support their kid in the system," she said. "But the No. 1 way to support your child is to send your kid to school every day. And stand by the door at the end of the day."

When school starts in August, Trujillo won't see those parents at the door. She won't see the teachers adding backbone to their lesson plans. She won't see the children blossom.

After seven years, she figured it was time to either bow out or burn out. The administrative duties were onerous. The No Child Left Behind mandates were incessant. The hours were brutal.

"From 7 in the morning until 7 at night, you'd see her car in the lot," McMahan said. "And sometimes there were meetings after that."

Beyond a kayaking trip in the San Juan Islands of Washington state, Trujillo, 54, isn't certain what she'll do next although she'd like to figure out a way to buff up the image of the second-most-important group of people in a child's life.

"We're in a place where educators feel very beat up and also adversarial," she said. "Teaching really is rocket science. I want to bring teachers gently back into our minds as interesting people."

But that's the future. This is now. Trujillo intends to keep working without pay through July to leave her school in the best shape possible for the leaders to come.

"Somebody else needs to take it from here," she said. "I need a recharge. And I already feel myself separating from the children, just wrenching away."

For Trujillo, that's the sad fact of her last act for La Mesa. For the rest of us, it's the dimming of one more light in the gathering dark of American education.