

SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION IN FRESNO COUNTY

Volume I

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PART I

INTRODUCTION TO SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

School district organization is important because it directly affects the lives of children and families, school employees, and residents of the community and region at large.

In California, school district organization is coordinated at the county level. State law gives major responsibility to the County Committee on School District Organization, which is either appointed by the County Board of Education, or selected in a manner approved by the Board.¹ County Committees are directed by statute to study the organization of school districts under their jurisdiction and to make recommendations when necessary. The Committee has the authority to analyze, coordinate, facilitate, and make recommendations that affect the number, size, type and shape of public education institutions.

Sound practice requires that each County Committee periodically review school district organization within its jurisdiction. This periodic review is important because the world of schooling is dynamic. Over time, changes occur in schools, districts, the state, and the county along numerous dimensions, each impacting the manner in which education is delivered to the pupils throughout the jurisdiction of the Committee. Consideration must be given to such dimensions as:

- Population changes and density of population, particularly the size of the school-age cohort in various communities
- Demographic changes within existing school districts
 - Racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic makeup of the student body
 - Primary language of pupils
- Political, geographic, and economic changes
 - Creation of new towns and cities
 - Addition of new roads and highways
 - Addition of new residential developments
 - Changes in assessed value of property in school districts
- Educational changes
 - New state mandates

¹ In some counties, the functions of the County Committee on School District Organization are carried out by the County Board of Education.

- Changes in community preferences
- Evolution of preferred educational methods, such as changes in preferred class size and favored educational technology
- Adequacy of school facilities
- Equity and adequacy of school funding
- Educational attainment of the students

In sum, the ever-changing environment of public education makes it imperative that there be periodic review of school district organization in all counties, and particularly in counties as large as Fresno. In the following section the subject of school district organization is placed in historical context.

History of School District Organization Efforts

School districts began to form in California in the mid-1800's. In the largely rural, agrarian state many small, often one-school, elementary districts were formed. Later, as high schools were established, separate high school districts were created encompassing more than one of the elementary districts in the area. By the mid-1930's, California had over 3,500 school districts. Two processes were in play to increase district size, reduce the number of districts, and accommodate California's move to a more urban population. First, annexation allowed two or more districts of the same type (i.e., elementary and high school) to consolidate. These districts were known as "union" school districts. Second, unification was introduced as an option in the 1930's, which permitted elementary and high school districts to combine, or "unify" under a single governing board. The 1940's and 50's witnessed an effort to pare down the number of districts by encouraging unionization and unification. By the late 1950's the number of school districts had declined to about 2,100. The legislature adopted measures to further encourage unification by: (1) Modestly increasing the transportation allowance for unified districts, recognizing the increased costs associated with bussing over larger distances; (2) by increasing, again modestly, the amount of State aid per pupil for students in unified districts; and (3) by requiring that each county in the state develop a master plan for school district organization and requiring voters to decide whether they wanted to reorganize their districts. These actions by the state further decreased the number of districts to about 1,500. By 1964, the total included 164 unified districts, up from none in 1935.

In 1964, Jesse Unruh, the Speaker of the Assembly, sponsored successful legislation that upped the stakes for unification. The measure declared that it was the policy of the state that unification was to be the "ultimate" form of school district organization in California and that by a specific date, every non-unified district was required to hold a unification election. A "unification bonus" was enacted to encourage unification and elementary districts that voted "yes" in the election would be eligible for the a bonus even if the proposition to unify ultimately failed. A provision of the bill required that in order to be successful, the election had to be successful in each of the

component elementary districts. By 1972, the total number of districts had decreased to 1,067 while the number of unified school districts had increased to 242.

From the mid-1970's to the mid-1990's, unification efforts slowed. Unification elections were no longer mandated and the unification bonus was eliminated. Furthermore, the requirement that unification had to have the approval of all the elementary districts in the high school district proved to be a significant barrier to further unification efforts.

In 1994, the legislature passed legislation that made it easier to form unified districts by permitting high school districts to unify without requiring that all elementary districts within the high school district boundary participate. In other words, component elementary districts may opt out of the unification election and remain independent elementary districts feeding into the unified district. Riverdale is an example of a district that benefited by such a provision; the high school district and elementary district located in Riverdale could unify and Burrel and Westside could choose to retain their independent elementary school status.

In sum, over the years, California has seen its total number of districts drop from over 3,500 to less than 1,000. Meanwhile, unified districts have grown from 0 to 327. Elementary districts have declined by about 80% to about 560 today and high school districts have declined by 2/3 to only about 90 today. The rate of growth in unification has been fairly slow since the early 1970's when the unification bonus and mandatory election were eliminated.

Criteria For Evaluation of District Organization

How, and by what standards should deliberative bodies and the general public judge whether or not to alter a school district boundary? This is not a simple question and there is no standard answer. Reasonable people can and do differ and often give different values to different standards by which to measure the appropriateness of any one organizational option over another. For the purposes of this study, we focused on six general criteria that the Committee on School District Organization ought to consider when assessing the appropriate organization of Fresno County schools.

Educational Effectiveness. The primary consideration in assessing school district boundaries is, of course, the quality of the educational program and student performance. Redrawing district boundaries, either to render districts larger or smaller is, in itself, unlikely to completely solve complex educational problems. However, in examining alternative organizational arrangements, one must be careful to ensure that proposed alternatives, at a minimum, do not damage and, more positively, actually offer an opportunity to improve education for all students.

The study will address the question: "What organizational and governance arrangements will most likely provide the curriculum coverage, instructional competence,

learning incentives, fiscal resources, professional expertise, and operational flexibility to enable Fresno County’s educators and citizens to best address varying circumstances in terms of population density, socioeconomic levels, English language facility, and other characteristics?”

District organization and boundaries affect such important educational program features as the amount of time students must spend on school buses, the articulation of the curriculum between elementary and secondary levels, the breadth of the curriculum that is available to students, the ability to recruit and retain excellent teachers, the provision of specialized services, the availability of advanced learning programs, and teacher and principal morale and initiative. These, in turn, directly impact the scope and depth of student achievement. Clearly, if a district has failed to adequately educate its students over a significant period of time, it would be questionable to give that district responsibility for educating more students. However, if reorganization provides for a stronger curriculum, more course offerings, and greater resources, the likelihood that educational performance will improve is enhanced.

The recent state and national focus on accountability, that is, holding schools and districts accountable for student outcomes, has heightened the importance of this factor.

Organizational Scale. School and district size are perhaps the most important boundary-related consequences because they affect the quality of the academic program, the opportunities for parents and community to participate in the governance and activities of the district and, sometimes, the financial resources of the district.

The “best” size for schools and school districts is arguable and depends, in large part, on the priorities of the parents and community. “Large” and “small” both have advantages and disadvantages. For example, extensive offerings of highly specialized services, such as advanced science, mathematics, and foreign languages, are more easily organized and paid for where there are large numbers of students desirous of such services. In contrast, in a small school district such rich program offerings are a challenge both organizationally and financially. On the other hand, relatively small neighborhood schools and smaller, more local school districts may assist access to decision-making, personal knowledge of decision-makers, and parent participation. Also, it is widely believed that relatively small schools are educationally more effective than large schools.

Extremely small and large schools usually have distinctive problems. In the former case, overhead costs per pupil are typically high; while in the latter instance, student/staff relationships are often not close, and we find higher levels of student violence and other anti-social behavior in very large schools.

Similarly, extremely small and large districts have advantages and disadvantages. For example, a very large district can purchase paper by the truckload, resulting in a lower cost per pupil compared to small districts for this basic educational ingredient. However, large districts can become bureaucratic quagmires (compared to nimble small

districts), stifling innovation, creativity, responsiveness to the community, and, ultimately, program improvement.

A second part of the “size” question is related to the purposes for which the question of size is raised. As an example, what may be an optimal size for the delivery of educational services and citizen participation in school governance, may be quite a bit smaller than the optimal size for the delivery of certain non-educational services. As part of its study, MAP will examine organizational alternatives that will permit some services to be provided on a larger scale — thus taking advantage of the economies of scale that would result from a larger area of service.

Racial, Ethnic, Socio-economic, and Language-Proficiency Composition. A proposed change in school district organization must give consideration to the risk of exacerbating any existing racial, ethnic, socio-economic, or primary-language imbalances. While no one can say with certainty what the legal ramifications of a boundary change might be, there is sufficient precedent to assert with reasonable confidence that any redistricting that increases racial or ethnic imbalances is likely to be subject to legal challenge.

Responsive Governance and Community Cohesion. The placement of jurisdictional boundaries can influence the extent to which citizens identify with, feel committed to, and participate in school and district affairs. It also can influence the degree of citizen oversight and the extent of school and district accountability. Boundaries can enhance and reinforce community cohesion or, if drawn or redrawn in an ill-considered manner, can damage a sense of community.

Redrawing jurisdiction boundaries to enlarge a school district to make it more inclusive or more efficient does not guarantee that all residents included within the new borders will automatically form a cohesive community. Matters of self-identification and group perception are far too complicated to hinge on government boundaries alone. Conversely, if a community of interest already exists, downsizing a large district, that is, redrawing boundaries to create two or more units where there was once one, can be damaging. Those activities in which residents were once jointly engaged are now conducted separately under the new arrangements, and are no longer activities that reinforce established community identity.

Fiscal Resources. In evaluating school district reorganization proposals, one must be mindful of the fiscal consequences—in terms of both the operational expenses of instruction and support, and the capital costs of buildings and other facilities. In addition, both the immediate fiscal impact and the future financial status of the district must be evaluated.

While State law works to ensure a minimum level of financial support for educational programs, the impact of reorganization proposals on community redevelopment agency or other pass-through agreements, parcel taxes, loss of incremental

taxes, basic aid, tax overrides, federal and State categorical funds, and other revenues must be addressed.

Provision of adequate school facilities is a key concern in any reorganization proposal. Careful analysis must be done to ensure that the assessed value, mitigation agreements with developers, Mello-Roos Community Facility District funds, certificates of participation, and State aid will be sufficient to provide educationally sound physical plants in each school district.

Also an analysis of capital requirements must address enrollment projections, the current and future location of the population, and the utilization, capacity, and condition of existing facilities.

Financial Impact on the State. California law requires that school district reorganization not result in a substantial increase in costs to the State. Thus, a review of a reorganization proposal must consider whether it will change a district's basic aid status, result in increased State costs for school facilities, increase entitlements for special and categorical aid, increase transportation reimbursements, or increase State costs resulting from additional schools being classified as "necessary small schools."

Committee-Adopted Conditions

In addition to these six basic criteria, the County Committee on School District Organization approved a set of conditions for particular focus in Fresno County that could be used to trigger further review of the appropriateness of a district's current organizational structure. These conditions are:

Very Small District Enrollment. There is no magic number that is optimal for district size. The research on district size is less sophisticated than that for school size, and it is fair to say that the appropriateness of a district's size is situational. It is not just a matter of size that determines whether a district may be too small to be effective. It is rather a combination of factors. A district may be small because it is sparsely populated and students would have to be bussed over inordinately long distances to other districts to attend school in a larger school or district with a more fulsome set of educational offerings. The two most important advantages of being larger are economies of scale (for example, larger size usually converts to a smaller portion of the budget being spent on fixed costs, since the costs are spread over a larger number of students), and breadth of services (for example, a larger district may be able to hire more specialized personnel to offer a wider array of services than their smaller counterparts). Most importantly, a district should be of sufficient size that its offerings permit students to attend high schools with sufficient offerings to fully prepare students for college attendance or entry into the workforce. Size matters more as students progress through school. Small school and district sizes may be sufficient for elementary self-contained classrooms. It becomes more difficult in a middle school where specialized instruction, particularly science and mathematics, is likely to occur and even more critical in high schools where

specialization is the order of the day across the curriculum. The state of California has a minimum size requirement (1,500) for any new unified district, but does not restrict district sizes in already existing districts, whether unified or not. Fresno County has a large number of districts, mostly elementary, that would be considered small.

Very Large District Enrollment. Just as there is no clear, absolute standard for small size, there is no magic number for large size districts. Just as there are economies of scale that kick in as small districts grow larger, there are diseconomies of scale that occur when large districts get even larger. The literature is replete with examples in business and education that at some point in the development of most enterprises, the sheer size of the organization makes it difficult if not impossible to operate efficiently.

Persistent Enrollment Decline. Ongoing enrollment decline has a pernicious impact on school districts. Marginal costs simply do not decline as rapidly as the loss of revenue in a district undergoing enrollment decline. To take a simplified example, if you have a class of 30 students and 1 student leaves, the revenue declines by 1/30 but the costs remain virtually the same. Teacher salaries, utilities, and administrative expenses are constant; about the only thing that changes is the revenue. A consistent pattern of declining enrollment results in a downward spiral that is difficult to overcome.

Persistent Patterns of Very Low Student Performance. If a school or school district has a steady pattern of low student performance, with little or only sporadic periods of improvement, it signals that alternative means of operation should be considered. That is not to say that reorganization is the only option but sustained poor performance needs to be responded to by some means to break the cycle of poor performance. The state and federal government have both adopted accountability measures to ensure that students in these schools are afforded a quality education. The state's accountability system compares school performance both absolutely, that is, compared to a set standard (a score of 800 on the API); and relatively, compared to all schools of the same type (elementary, middle and high), and within the same type of school, with schools that have similar school populations. This latter measure is intended to draw comparisons with schools that have similar student characteristics, such as percentage of English learners, percentage receiving free and reduced-price meals (a proxy for low income), and level of parental education.

Lack of Curriculum Articulation between Elementary, Middle and High Schools. Articulation is the manner and degree to which the educational program at one level is connected to the program at the next higher level. For example, we must ask, "how well does the elementary English Language Arts program at the elementary school prepare students for what they will be expected to know and be able to do in the middle school?" Similarly, the middle school curriculum should be well articulated with the program at the high school level. The presumption is that articulation is easier in a unified school district since you have a single school board setting policy and one central administration, not several, making certain the policy is implemented. Unfortunately, having a unified district is no guarantee that high-quality articulation takes place. In fact,

it is fair to say that every district, unified or not, could do a better job of ensuring that the connections between levels are coordinated.

Financial Incentives To Reorganize. Although the state has abandoned the “unification bonus,” a careful analysis of the financial implications of reorganization may reveal revenue gains resulting from the way California’s school finance system operates. At the very least, economies of scale achieved through unification will generate additional discretionary funds. Additional state funds may be generated by formulas allowing equalization of salaries when districts unify, and certain patterns of enrollment change (such as growth at the elementary level and a simultaneous decline at the secondary level) may result in financial gains for districts that unify.

Before turning to specific findings and recommendations, it will be helpful to gain an overview of education in Fresno County in the statewide context as presented in Part II. Following that, in Part III, study procedures and findings are outlined. And finally, in Part IV, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

PART II

STATE AND COUNTYWIDE DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN FRESNO COUNTY

This Part presents an overview of the public education system in Fresno County including countywide totals, characteristics of all thirty-four districts, and comparisons to statewide averages.

Countywide Enrollment

Since the financial status of public education in Fresno County is closely linked to the growth or decline of enrollment, this Part begins with an overview of countywide enrollment.

Exhibit II-1 shows countywide public school enrollment from 1993-94 through 2004-05. During this period, year-to-year growth has been continuous. However, as shown in Exhibit II-2, the annual percentage growth during the last decade has fluctuated considerably and may be in a downward trend. It can also be seen in Exhibit II-2 that statewide the rate of growth of the student population has declined steadily since 1996-97.

Exhibit II-3 displays the Fresno County public school K-12 enrollment projection prepared by the California State Department of Finance in December, 2005. Between 2004 and 2013, countywide enrollment is projected to grow by 6.5%, which equates to about 0.55% per year on average.

Even though countywide growth is projected to continue at a slow pace—generating some increased revenues from the state of California--individual districts in the county may experience enrollment declines that could result in financial problems, potentially leading to the need to seriously consider district reorganization. In the District Profiles presented in Part III, enrollment trends in each district are discussed. The Appendix contains detailed historical enrollment data for each district.

District Size

School district size is a key consideration in the organization of public education in California. Extremely small districts have diseconomies of scale and may not be able to offer students adequate breadth of educational opportunities. On the other hand, very large districts can become administratively top-heavy, unresponsive to neighborhood and community concerns, and unable to change to improve educational results.

California State law sets minimum sizes for reorganized districts (901 students in elementary districts, 301 in high school districts, and 1,501 in unified districts). There are no limitations in law governing maximum sizes.

Fresno County contains 34 school districts: 15 elementary districts, 2 high school districts, and 17 unified districts.

- Exhibit II-4 displays the October, 2004, enrollment of each district, grouped by district type (elementary, high, and unified).
- Exhibit II-5 compares the size of Fresno County districts with statewide averages.

Overall, school districts in Fresno County are small compared to statewide averages. Only Fresno, Clovis, and Central are larger than the statewide average for their type.

Of the fifteen elementary districts, thirteen could not be established today under State-law size minimums. However, only two of the seventeen unified districts and none of the high school districts are below the legal criteria for reorganization. Despite the small size of nearly all the elementary districts, considerations of community identity, transportation distances, and academic achievement will frequently outweigh the advantages of larger size in considering the potential for reorganization.

Countywide Socio-economic Characteristics.

There is a high correlation in California between schoolwide student achievement and the income level of the students' families. Income level influences the home resources available to support the students, and it often reflects parent educational attainment and fluency in English.

School district reorganization proposals that would segregate students along socio-economic lines are not permitted in California. Conversely, proposals that would integrate socio-economic levels are seen as having potential to improve the academic achievement of lower-income students and are viewed favorably.

The available indicators of socio-economic status at the county level are enrollment in the "Free and Reduced-price Lunch" program and student English language proficiency. (The number of students classified as "socio-economically disadvantaged" is available at the school and district levels. This information is presented for individual districts in the Part III Profiles. Additional detail for selected individual schools is contained in the Appendix.)

The "Free or Reduced-Price Meals" program is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Participation is by application and is based on the income of the child's parent or guardian. The data presented here are for "enrolled"

students—the family has met eligibility criteria and the student is “signed up” to participate.

As shown in Exhibit II-6, nearly two-thirds of Fresno County children were enrolled in the Meals program in 2004-05, a substantially higher percentage than the statewide total in that year (which was 49.7%). The Fresno percentage has grown steadily since 1999-2000 when it was at 55.4%.

There is great variation among the districts in Fresno County in the percentage of students enrolled in the Meals program, ranging from about 20% to 100% (see District Profiles in Part III for more detail).

English Language Learners (ELL) in Fresno County have been 25% to 29% of the student population for the last ten years, as displayed in Exhibit II-7. The 2004-05 level of 28.7% is only slightly higher than the statewide total of 25.2%. Forty-seven different native languages are represented in Fresno County schools, with the leading ones being Spanish (75.4% of ELL), Hmong (16.1%), Cambodian (2.0%) Punjabi (1.9%), and Lao (1.6%).

Countywide Ethnicity

The impact of school district reorganization on the racial/ethnic composition of the resulting districts and schools is an important concern in the evaluation of a reorganization proposal. State law prohibits any district reorganization that promotes racial or ethnic discrimination or segregation.

Exhibit II-8 displays the percentage of enrollment in the eight ethnic categories for which the California Department of Education collects data. As can be seen, more than half the students in the county are Hispanic/Latino, a quarter are White (not Hispanic), about 11% are Asian, and about 7% are African American. The distribution for Fresno County is roughly the same as that for the State as whole. (Racial/ethnic data for individual districts is shown in the Appendix.)

Countywide Academic Performance

The Academic Performance Index (API) is a summary measure of the academic achievement of districts, schools, and eight subgroups within schools (subgroups are the ethnic groups and students classified as “socio-economically disadvantaged”). (Detailed performance data for individual districts and schools is given in Part III and the Appendix.) The API is a composite score of results on exams in mathematics, physical science, social science, and English language arts.

The latest available data for Fresno County school districts are the Spring 2005 API Growth scores. Exhibit II-9 shows the results for all thirty-four school districts in

the county and the statewide average. Ten districts (Riverdale, Kingsburg HSD and ESD, American, Alvina, Sierra, Big Creek, Clovis, Pine Ridge, and Clay) are above the statewide weighted average; the other twenty-four are below the average. Five of the above-average districts are very small elementary school districts.

These 2005 scores can be compared with the Spring 2004 API Base scores to determine whether student performance on the exams has improved (see Exhibit II-10). Although 70% of the districts scored below the statewide average in 2005, twenty-eight out of thirty-four improved their scores compared to 2004; and twenty-one districts had growth equal to, or greater than, the statewide weighted-average growth.

Another way to look at student achievement throughout Fresno County is to compare individual school performance with all schools in the state and with a set of similar schools from across the state. Exhibit II-11 displays the number and percentage of schools in Fresno County in each of ten deciles for all schools and similar schools. (In the comparison to all schools in the state, elementary, middle, and high schools are separate groups. Similar schools are schools that have about the same socio-economic characteristics and are similar in other features such as year-round-school status. Schools with a decile rank of “1” are in the bottom 10% of schools in terms of performance; and schools with a decile rank of “10” are in the top 10%.)

For both comparisons (statewide and similar school), if the distribution in Fresno County were the same as the distribution in the state or in the group of similar schools, 10% of Fresno schools would be in each decile rank. As can be seen, Fresno County schools are disproportionately over-represented in the lower decile ranks in both the statewide and similar schools comparisons. Accordingly, they are disproportionately under-represented in the higher and highest decile ranks. Many of the low-performing schools are in the Fresno Unified School District.

A third indicator of student achievement is success or failure in meeting Federal Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goals. The No Child Left Behind program sets four academic goals—English language arts proficiency, mathematics proficiency, Academic Performance Index improvement, and an expected graduate rate. If a school fails to meet any one of these goals in two successive years, it becomes a “Program Improvement School” which must take mandated actions to improve achievement.

Exhibit II-12 shows the number of schools in Fresno County that met all four goals (or three in the case of schools that do not produce high school graduates) in 2004-05. About half the schools in the county met the goals and half did not. A higher percentage of schools in Fresno USD failed to meet the goals (69%) than in the rest of the county (39% failing to meet all the required goals).

The next Exhibit (II-13) shows the number of schools that failed to meet individual goals or combinations of goals. Most frequently, schools missed only the English language arts goal (65 schools did not meet this goal but achieved all others). Forty-eight schools failed to meet both English language arts and math goals.

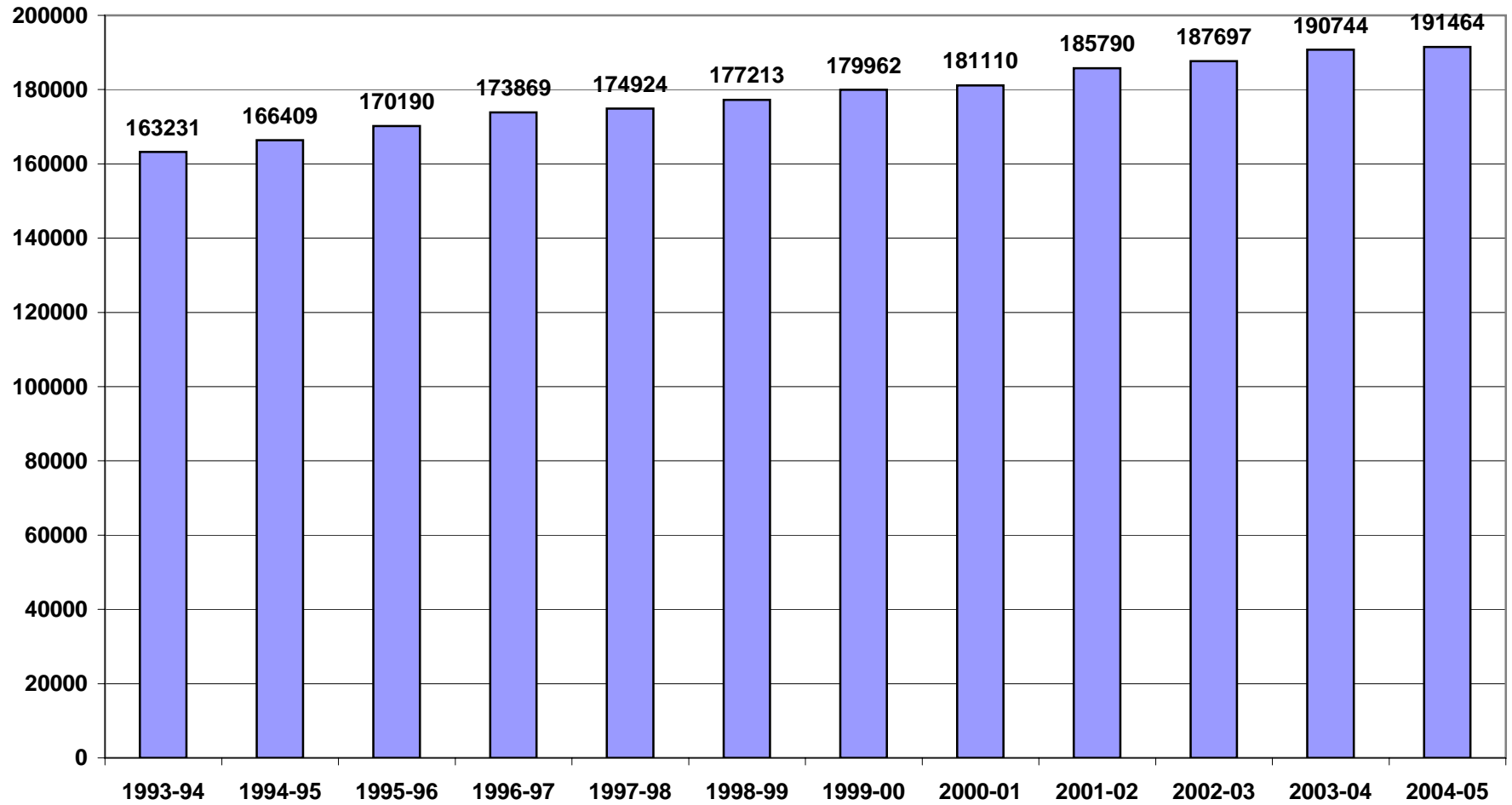
Finally, Exhibit II-14 displays the number of Program Improvement Schools in Fresno County—separating those in Fresno USD from those in all other districts. The “Year” designation indicates how many years the schools have been in “Program Improvement Status” in 2005-06. As can be seen, more schools in Fresno USD are in their fifth year in Program Improvement in 2005-06 than in all other districts throughout the county combined.

In sum, Fresno County schools and districts:

- Can expect slight enrollment growth overall in the coming decade.
- Have a higher than average number of small elementary districts.
- Have a much higher than average poverty rate.
- Have a slightly higher than average number of English learners.
- Are below the state average student achievement.
- A majority of districts is above the state average in recent improvements in academic achievement.
- Parallel closely the state’s ethnically mixed student bodies.

Exhibit II-1

Total Enrollment in Fresno County Public Schools 1993-94 to 2004-05



Fresno Countywide characteristics time series chart 1

Exhibit II-2
Enrollment Growth Rates in Fresno County and Statewide
1993-94/1994-95 To 2003-04/2004-05

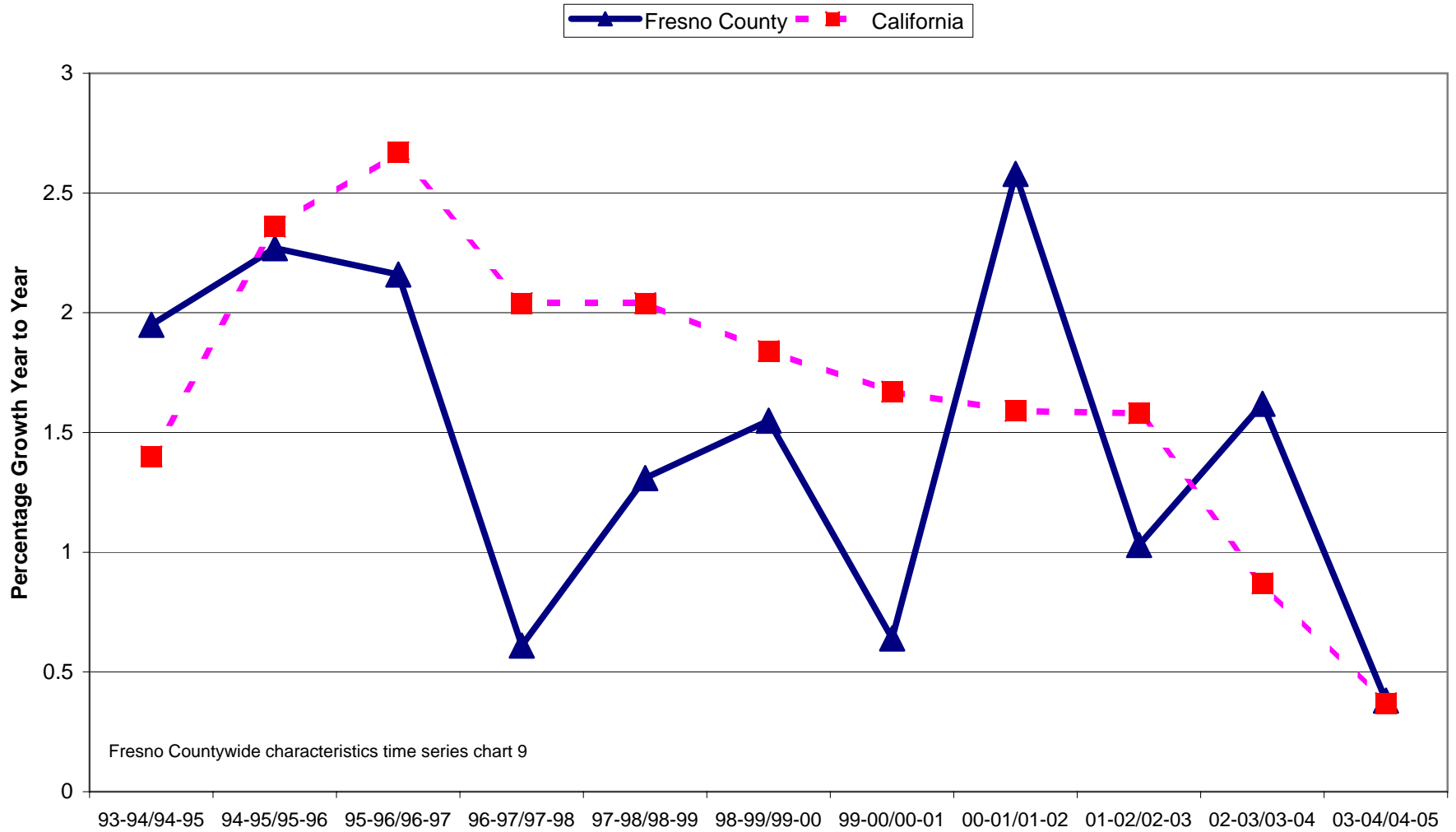


Exhibit II-3
Historical and Projected K-12 Public School Enrollment in Fresno County
1974 to 2014-15
Source: California State Department of Finance
December, 2005

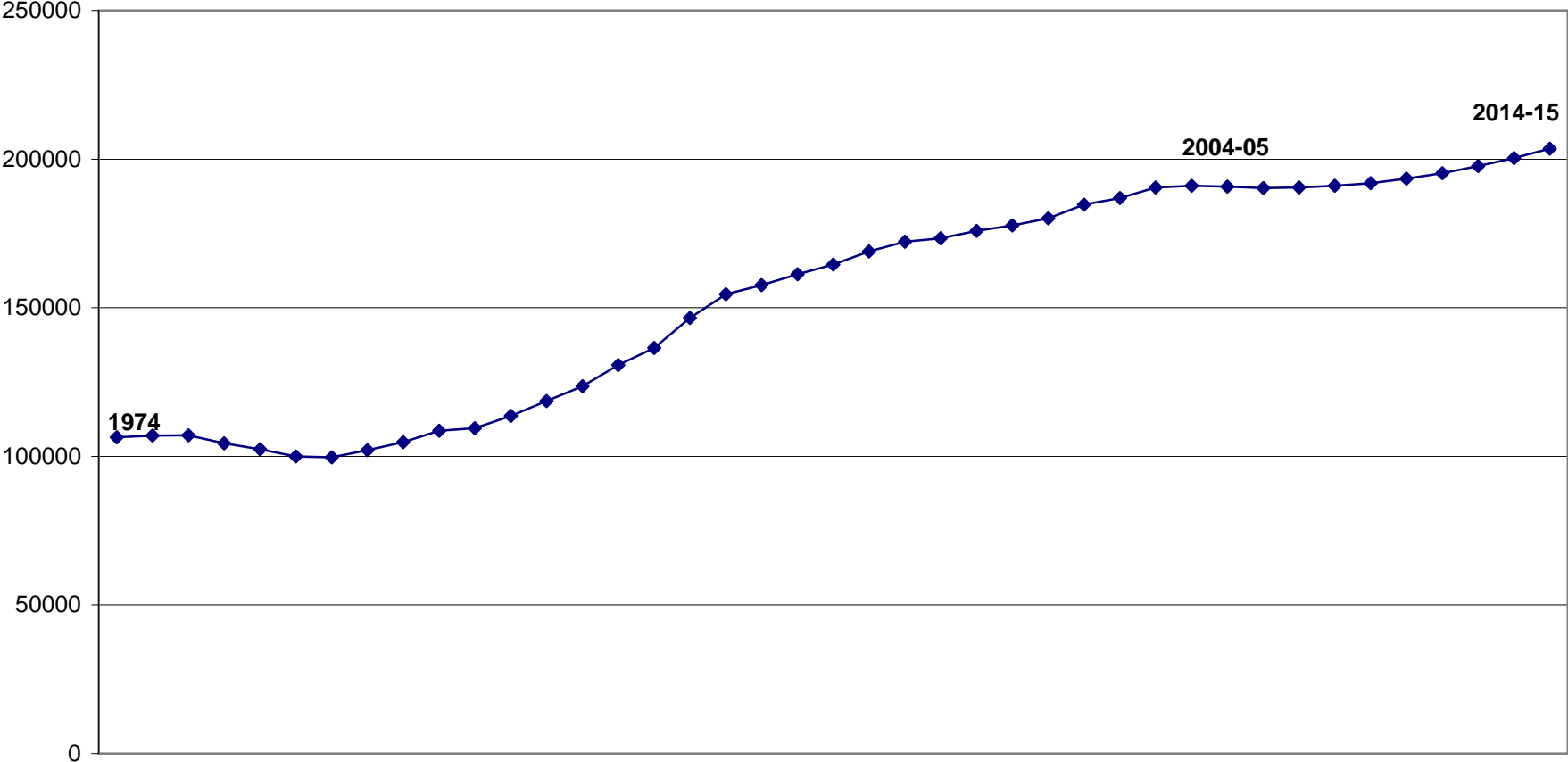
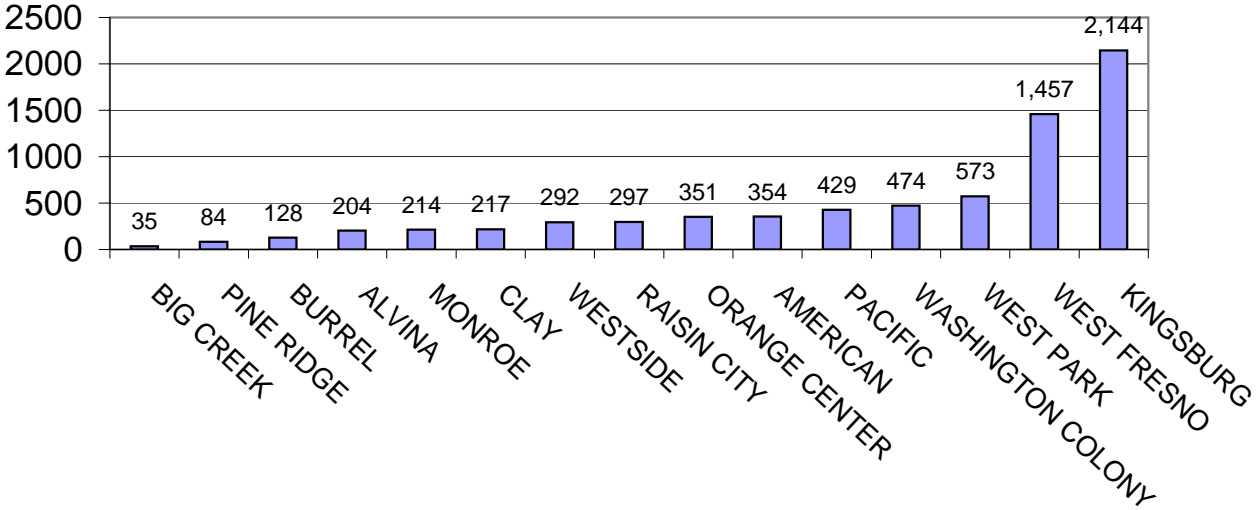


Exhibit II-4

**Elementary School Districts in Fresno County
Enrollment October, 2004**



**High School Districts in Fresno County
Enrollment October, 2004**

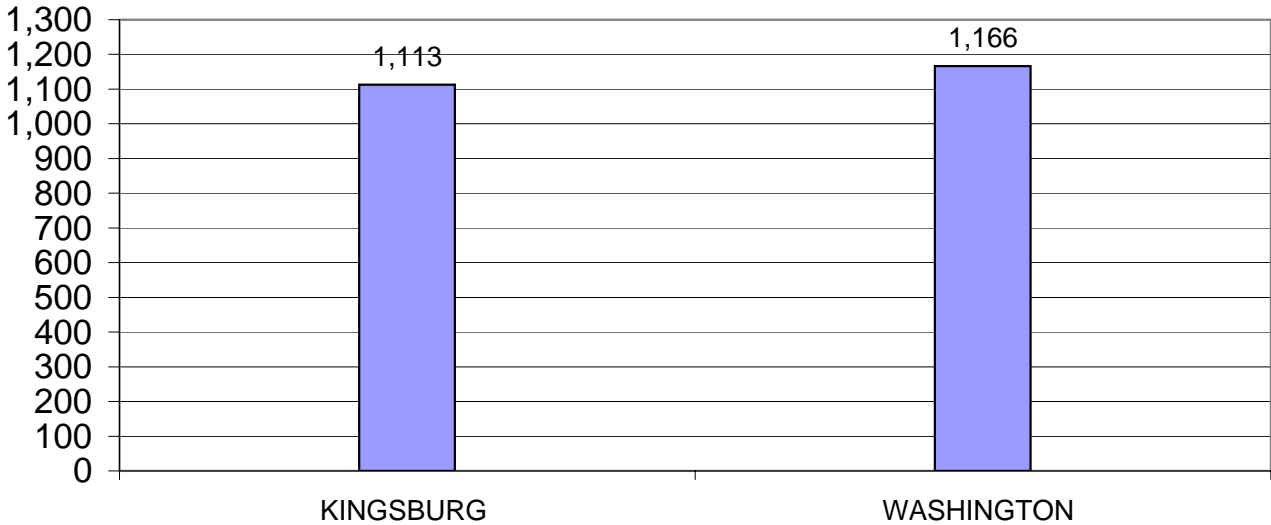


Exhibit II-4 (continued)

Unified School Districts in Fresno County Enrollment October, 2004

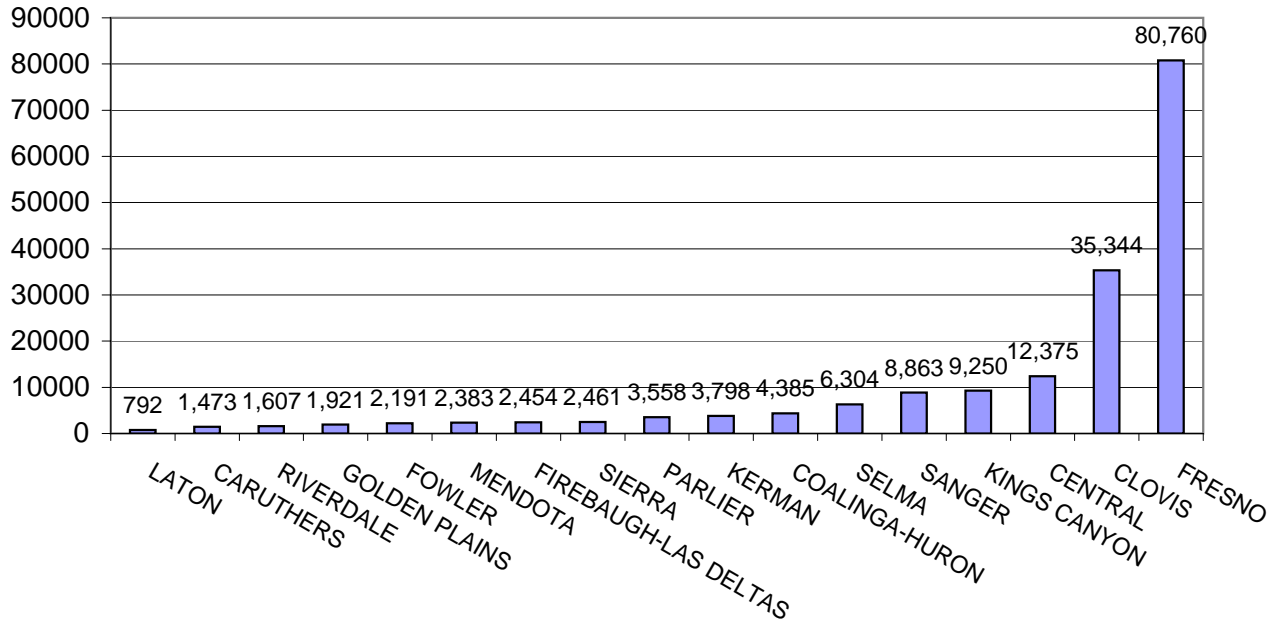
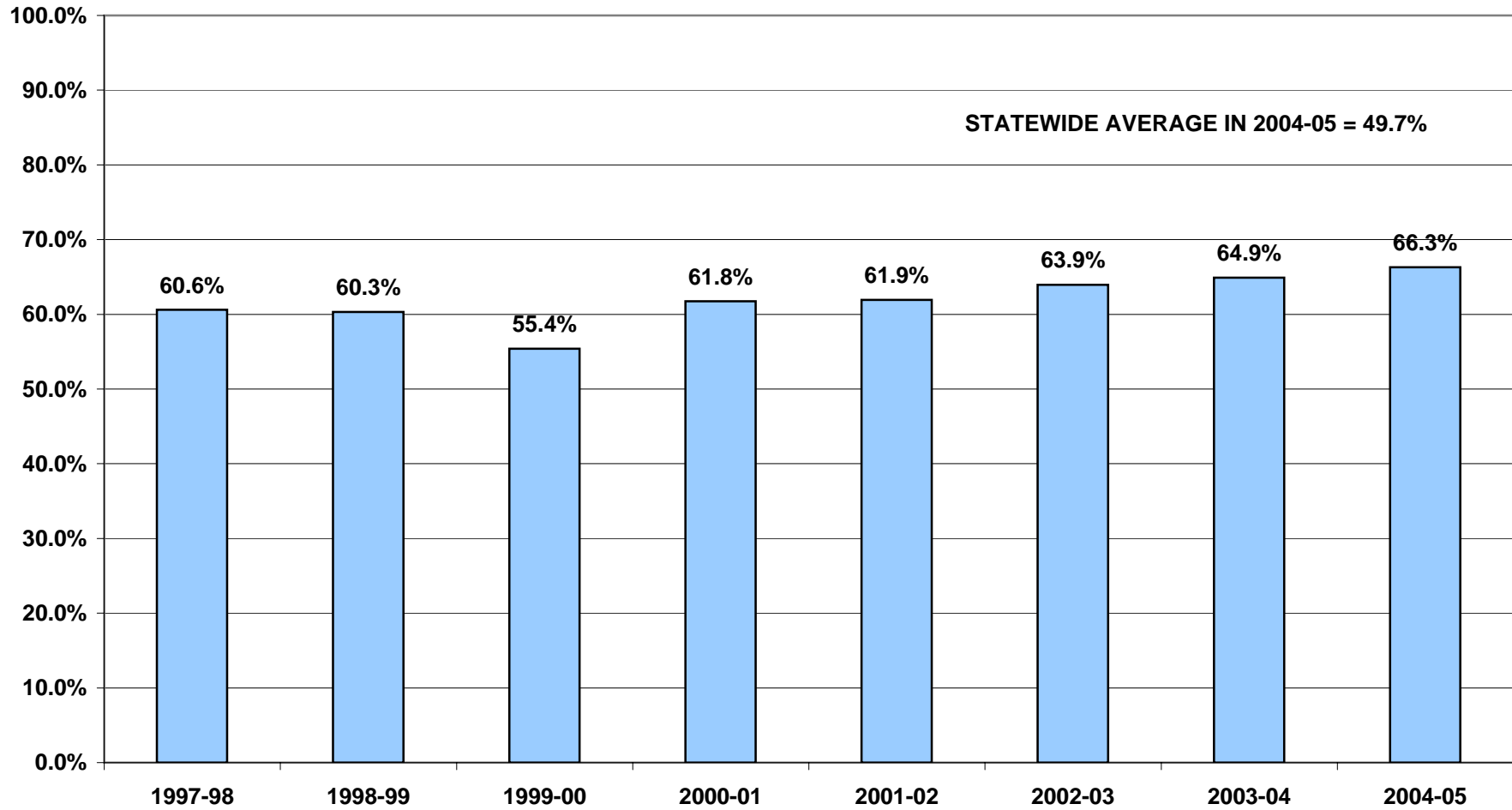


Exhibit II-5

School District Size

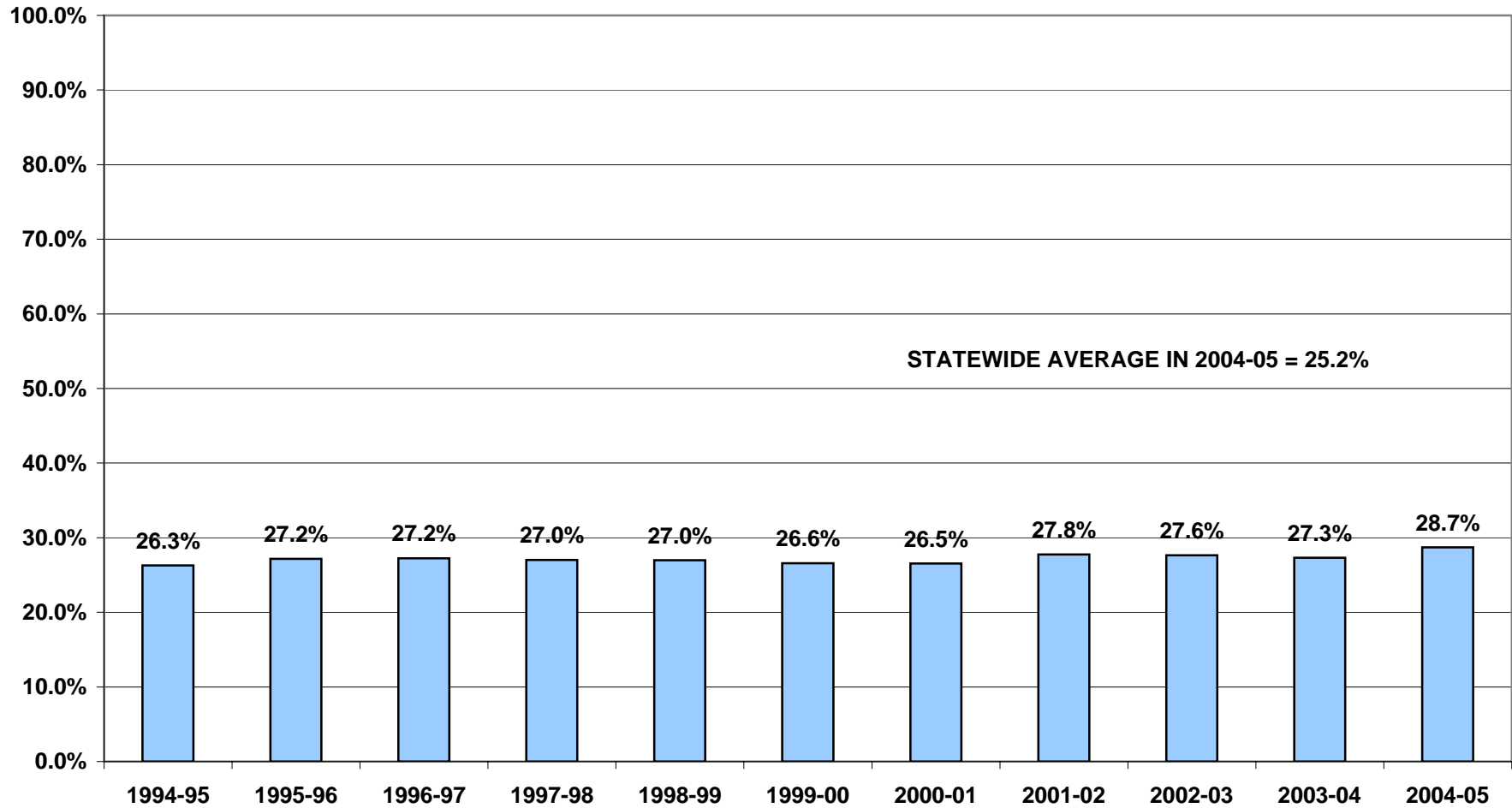
	<u>State of California 2003-04</u>			<u>Fresno County 2004-05</u>		
	<u>Number of Districts</u>	<u>Average District Size</u>	<u>Average District Size Ex. LAUSD</u>	<u>Number of Districts</u>	<u>Average District Size</u>	<u>Average District Size Ex. FUSD</u>
Elementary Districts	567	2226		15	484	
High School Districts	94	6428		2	1140	
Unified Districts	328	13263	11049	17	10583	6197

Exhibit II-6
Percentage of Students in Fresno County Public Schools
Who Are Enrolled for Free or Reduced-Price Meals
1997-98 to 2004-05



Fresno Countywide characteristics time series chart 5

Exhibit II-7
Percentage of Students in Fresno County Public Schools
Who Are English Language Learners
1994-95 to 2004-05



Fresno Countywide characteristics time series chart 3

Exhibit II-8
Percentage of Enrollment in Fresno County Schools and Statewide By Ethnicity
2004-05

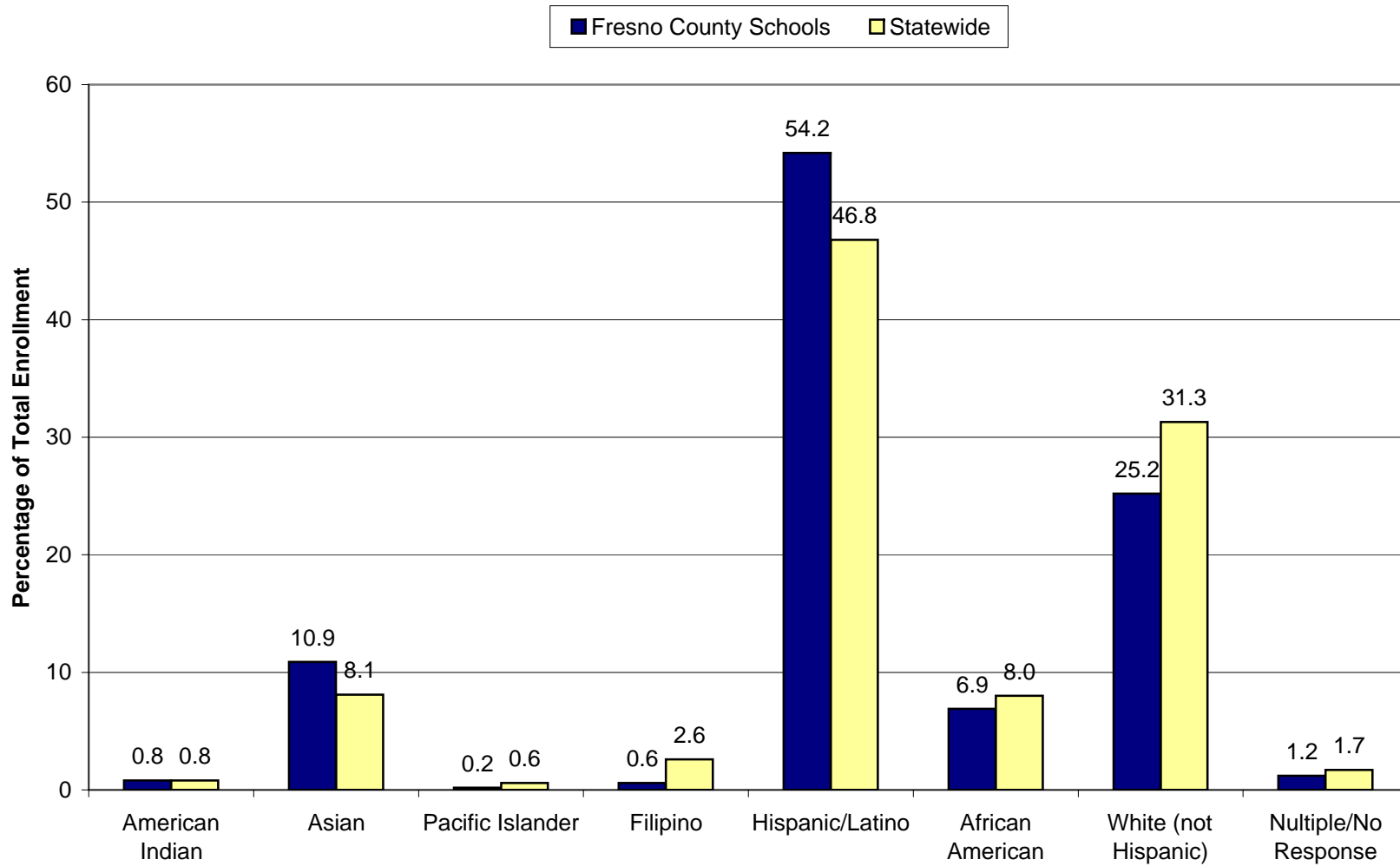


Exhibit II-9
2005 Academic Performance Index (API Growth) of School Districts in Fresno County
Compared to Statewide Average

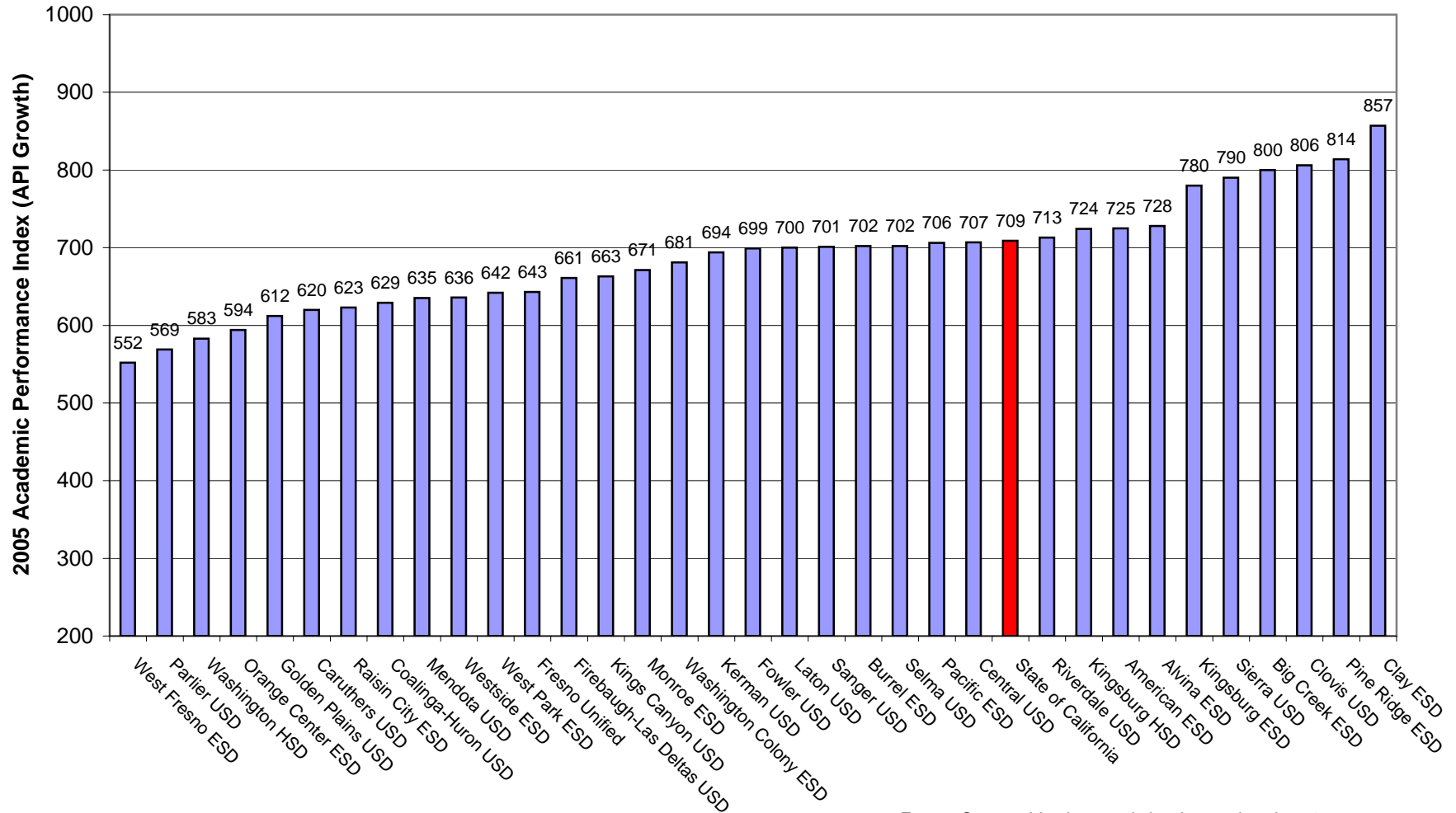


Exhibit II - 10
Growth in the Academic Performance Index (API) of School Districts in Fresno County
2004-2005

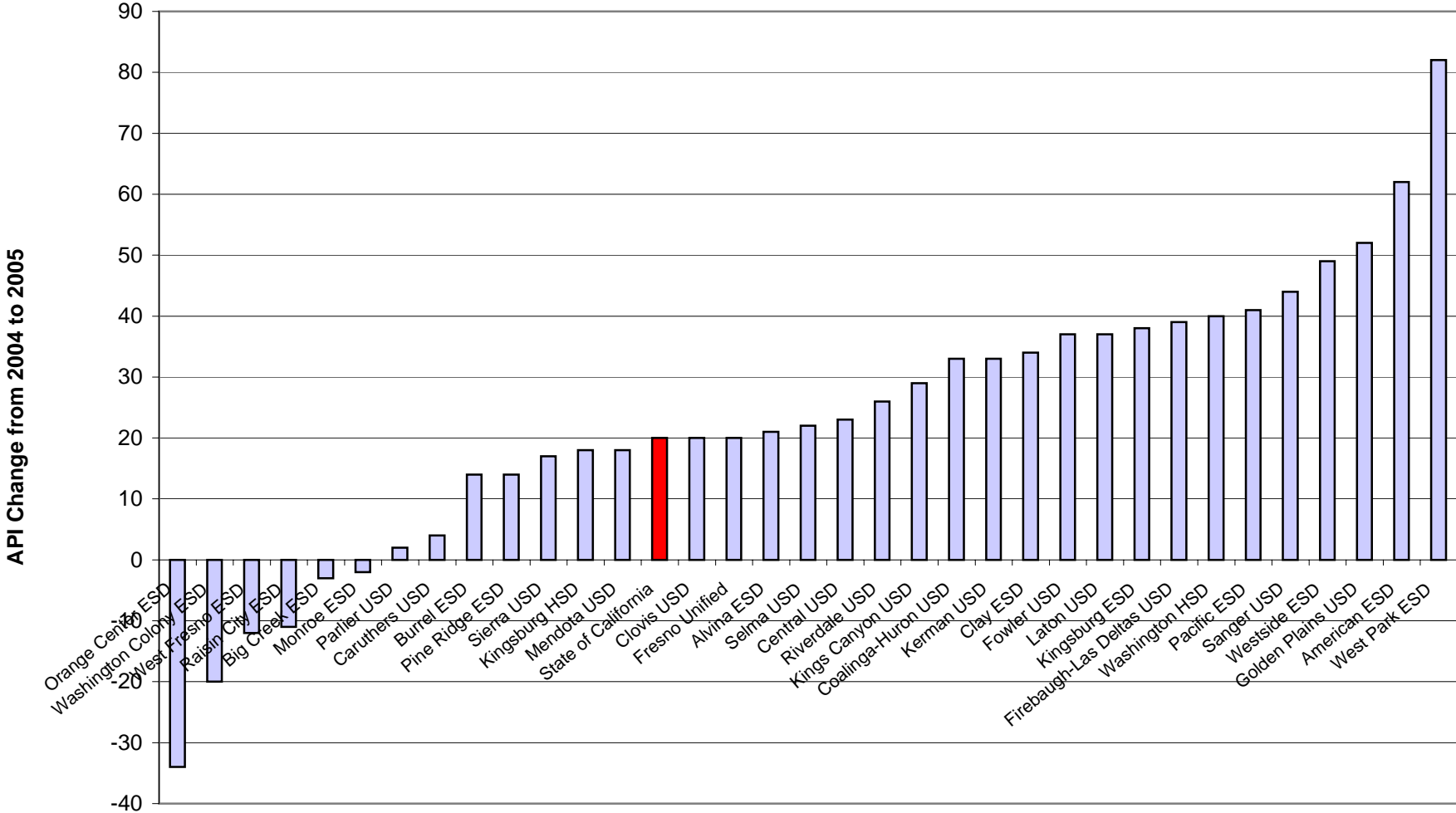


Exhibit II-11

**Number and Percentage of Fresno County Schools
in Each Statewide and Similar School Decile Rank**

2004 Base Academic Performance Index

(1 = lowest rank; 10 = highest rank)

Statewide Decile Rank	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools	Similar School Decile Rank	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools
1	68	27.8%	1	59	25.3%
2	35	14.3%	2	29	12.4%
3	29	11.8%	3	25	10.7%
4	22	9.0%	4	18	7.7%
5	16	6.5%	5	15	6.4%
6	16	6.5%	6	15	6.4%
7	11	4.5%	7	18	7.7%
8	21	8.6%	8	18	7.7%
9	17	6.9%	9	20	8.6%
10	11	4.5%	10	16	6.9%

Notes: The number of schools given similar school decile ranks is less than the number given a statewide decile rank because small schools and alternative schools are not ranked against similar schools
Fresno Countywide characteristics time series sheet 2 page 2

Exhibit II - 12
Schools in Fresno County that Met or Failed to Meet All Four Academic Components
of the AYP Criteria in Spring 2005

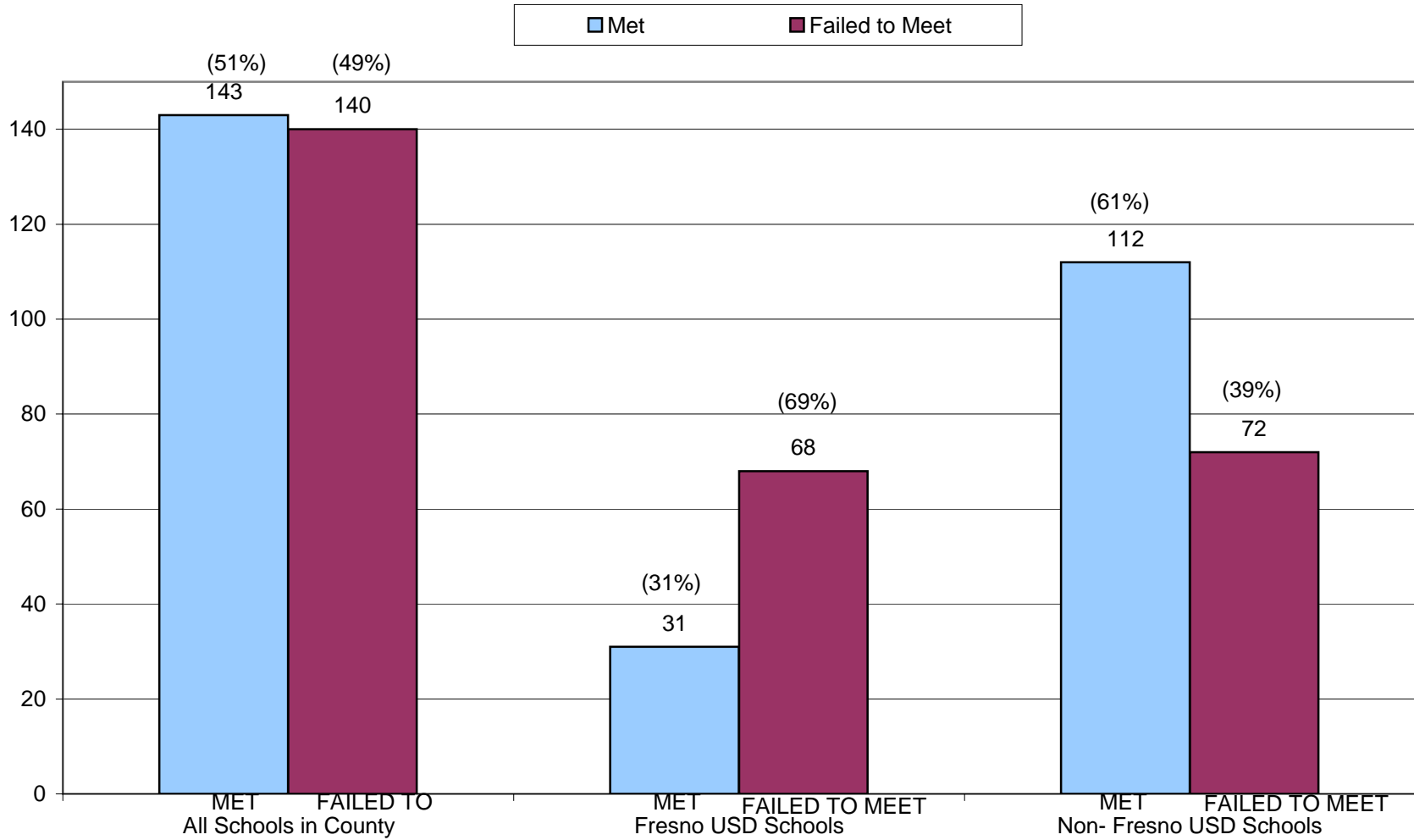


Exhibit II - 13
Number of Schools Not Meeting Specific Academic Components
of the Spring 2005 AYP Criteria

All Schools in Fresno County

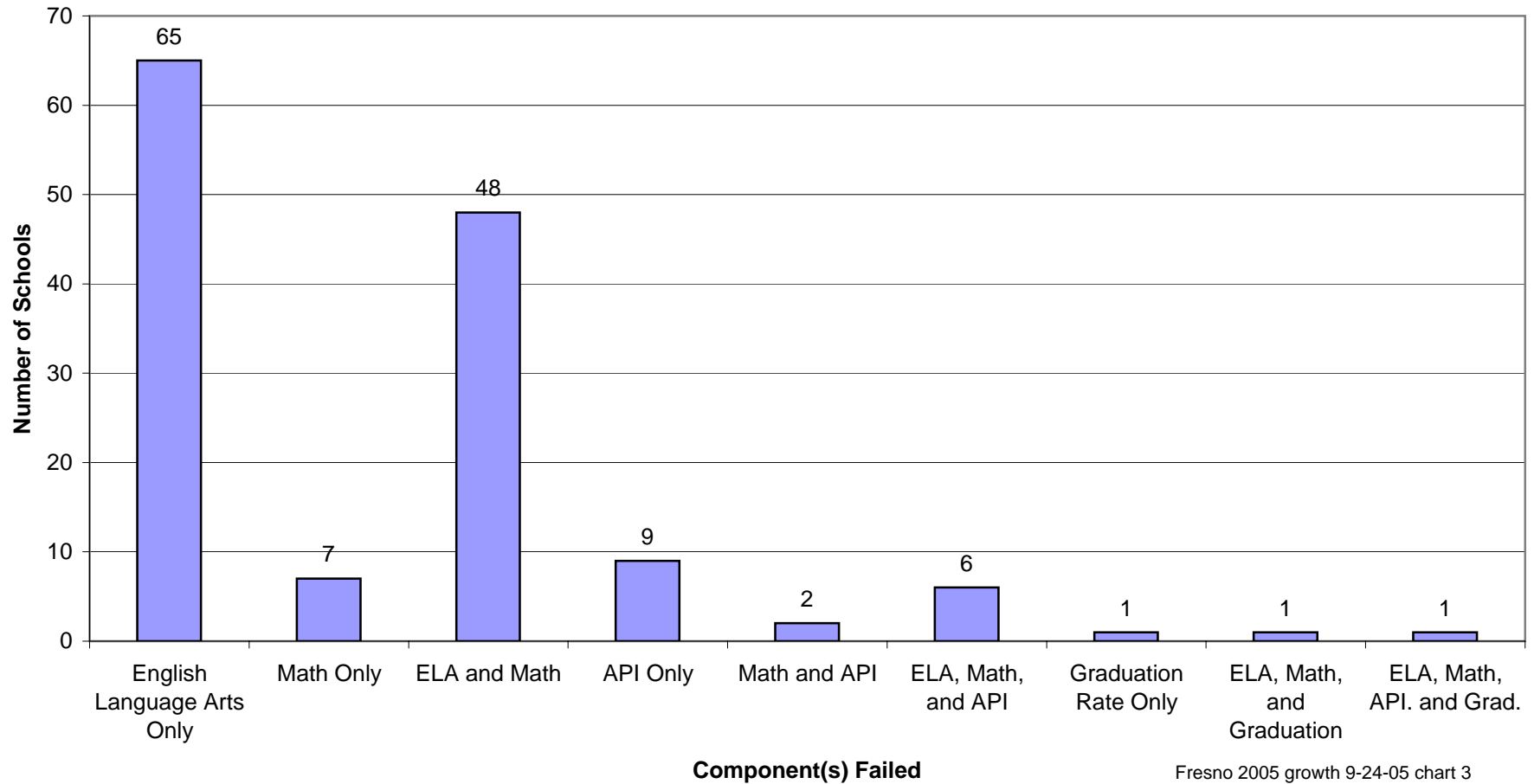
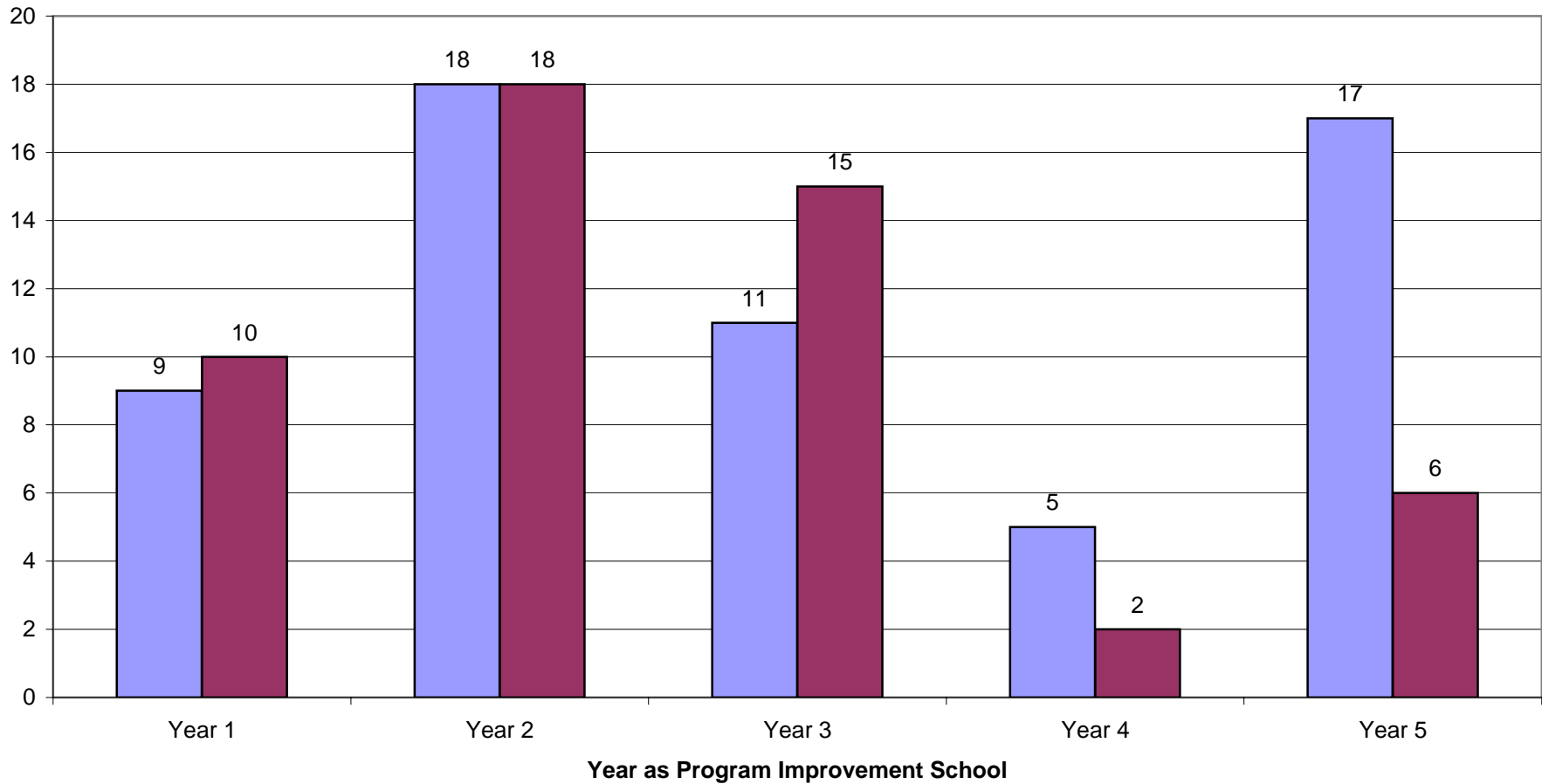


Exhibit II - 14
Number of 2005-06 Program Improvement Schools
By Year in Program
Fresno USD and NON-Fresno USD Schools

■ Fresno USD ■ NON-Fresno USD



PART III

STUDY PROCEDURES, FINDINGS, AND DISTRICT PROFILES

This study is a comprehensive assessment of the status of school district organization in Fresno County. As such, it was necessary to examine every one of the thirty-four school districts in the county—an effort that was time-consuming and involved collection and manipulation of large amounts of data. This Part describes the research activities, displays summaries of data for 34 districts (District Profiles), presents conclusions regarding districts that were the subject of further investigation, and describes the follow-up activities with those selected districts. The Appendix contains detailed information for all districts and for many individual schools in the smaller districts.

Study Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To provide the County Committee with accurate, up-to-date information on key characteristics of the educational system in Fresno County.
2. To assess whether the present organizational pattern
 - a) facilitates appropriate education of children,
 - b) enhances public-school-district responsiveness and effectiveness,
 - c) promotes efficient utilization of public funds,
 - d) contributes to community well-being, and
 - e) ensures equitable treatment of students and taxpayers.
3. To identify potential organizational options which might be considered to ameliorate any observed weaknesses or problems that are caused or reinforced by the existing organizational pattern.

Study Questions

In Part I, the criteria found in State law that govern decisions on school district reorganization were outlined. These criteria are intended to prevent bad results from reorganization.

In contrast, our approach was to consider what organizational changes might have good results; that is, improve student achievement, enhance educational opportunities by

making a broader curriculum available, improve the articulation of instruction from Kindergarten through 12th grade, meet the demands of population growth by providing adequate facilities, strengthen the bonds between district, school and community, and increase efficiency in the use of resources.

The fieldwork and analysis consisted essentially of four parts:

- Collection of data.
- Description of the existing situation along important dimensions.
- Identification of problems.
- Development of potential solutions to the problems (options for the County Committee to consider).

Exhibit III-1 shows the questions that we attempted to answer for all districts through (1) conversations with administrators, board members, faculty, and community members, and (2) through analysis of record data. Student achievement information, which is not called for in the interview guide, was obtained exclusively from databases maintained by the California Department of Education.

In sum, Study Objective #1 included the following questions:

- What is the status of student achievement in the district and/or school?
- What is the trend of district enrollment? Growing or falling?
- What is the financial condition of the district? (Financial condition and changes in enrollment are closely linked under the California school finance system.)
- What are the socio-economic characteristics of the students?
- Given the socio-economic characteristics of the schools, is student achievement better or worse than in schools with similar student bodies?
- Do facilities have adequate capacity and are they in satisfactory condition?
- Is home-to-school transportation provided efficiently?
- Does the district have problems finding and retaining qualified personnel (particularly teachers)?
- Are the needs of special education students being adequately met?
- What are the strengths and weakness of the academic program?
- What are the strengths and weakness of articulation within unified districts and between feeder elementary and unified and high school districts?
- Are there community conflicts in the district?
- Does the community have a sense of “ownership” of its school or district?
- What has been the organizational history of the district?
- Is there support or opposition in the community regarding reorganization?

Exhibit III-1

Fresno County School District Organization Interview Questionnaire

Enrollment

- Please give us a rough estimate of the projected enrollment in your district for the next five to ten years.
- Do you foresee any major housing developments in your district?

Financial Status

- How would you characterize the financial condition of the district?
- Roughly what percent of your general fund budget is projected to be the ending balance as of June 2005? How does that differ from the ending balance of June 2004?
- Did you have to lay off any staff for 2004-05? Have you reduced staff/pupil ratios this year?
- How has the current State fiscal situation affected your district?

Pupil Characteristics

- What are the characteristics of your student population? Do you expect it to change appreciably?
- Is parent involvement good, fair, or poor?

Facilities

- Are you experiencing overcrowding in any of your schools?
- Are you adding portables to provide adequate classroom space?
- Do you expect to build additional schools in the next few years?
- Are you expecting to close any existing schools in the near future?
- Are your schools in need of renovation?

Transportation

- Roughly what percentage of your budget is used for home-to-school transportation? Do you expect that percentage to change appreciably in the next few years?

Exhibit III-1 (Cont.)

Fresno County School District Organization Interview Questionnaire

Personnel

- Are you having problems getting fully certificated teachers? If so, in what areas of the curriculum?
- Are you able to find and retain good principals?
- Are there occupational categories that you have difficulty filling adequately?

Special Education

- Are the special education needs of your students being adequately met?

Academic Programs

- At the high school level, are you able to provide adequate options for students (for example are you able to offer AP classes, advanced foreign languages, advanced science and math courses, vocational education, etc.)
- Are State Standards fully implemented in your district?
- How would you characterize the articulation of elementary, middle, and high school programs?

Community of Interest

- The state lists several criteria that impact district organization. One of these is “community of interest.” Community of interest may be variably defined. The concept includes such consideration as: homogeneous housing developments, usage patterns of parks, traffic patterns, geographic factors like rivers or freeways, political factors such as city boundaries, and neighborhood and regional shopping patterns? Describe the “community or communities of interest your district encompasses?”

Reorganization History

- Have there been attempts in the last few years to reorganize your district (either to merge with other districts or for portions to break away and form new districts)? If so please describe.

(End of Exhibit III-1)

First Stage Activities

The following activities were carried out and ultimately led to the selection of specific districts for further meetings and evaluations:

Review of the history of reorganization in recent decades in Fresno County. Extensive files on school district reorganization efforts are maintained by the Fresno County Office of Education. Some of these attempts were successful and some failed. We studied the following reorganization efforts to gain some understanding of the political and social forces at work in Fresno County:

- Creation of Golden Plains USD in 1989
- Sierra unification in 1991
- Riverdale unification in 1994
- Cantua secession attempt in 1996
- Caruthers unification in 1998

Of particular interest in these events is the attitude and position of the communities and school leaders in the small districts involved. Small elementary districts that have rejected unification in the last fifteen years include Westside, Burrel, Monroe, Raisin City, Big Creek, Pine Ridge, and Alvina.

Review of the 2001 Reorganization Study of Washington HSD and Feeder Districts. Data and arguments for and against reorganization were studied.

Interviews of the Superintendents of all thirty-four districts In Fresno County. Over about a two-month period project staff met with all the superintendents of the county's school districts. The meetings were typically at the district office and in some cases involved senior administrators such as the Chief Financial Officer or Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.

Collection and Analysis of Record Data Maintained by the State Department of Education. The following databases were used to develop the District Profiles presented in this Part and the detailed information contained in the Appendix.

- CBEDS (California Basic Education Data System) for enrollments, students classified as English Language Learners, Ethnicity, students enrolled in the Free or Reduced-Price Meals program, and other information submitted by school districts in October of each year.
- STAR (Standardized Testing and Reporting) system for school and grade level test scores including percentages scoring proficient or advanced in terms of California's academic content standards.

- The Academic Performance Index (API) reports for numbers of students classified as socio-economically disadvantaged, Academic Performance Index (API) scores, performance growth or decline between years, and statewide and similar school decile rankings.
- Annual Yearly Progress reports for information on schools meeting Federal criteria for annual academic achievement and the status of schools classified as “Program Improvement Schools.”
- Ed-Data for information on school district finances.

Throughout the study, information from these sources was presented to the County Committee on School District Organization at scheduled meetings.

Information Contained in this Report

In this Part, two-page profiles for each district are shown. Detailed information for each district and many individual schools is presented in the Appendix. The data has been updated throughout the study and is the latest available at this writing. Some information presented to the County Committee at its periodic meetings is now outdated and has been updated in this report.

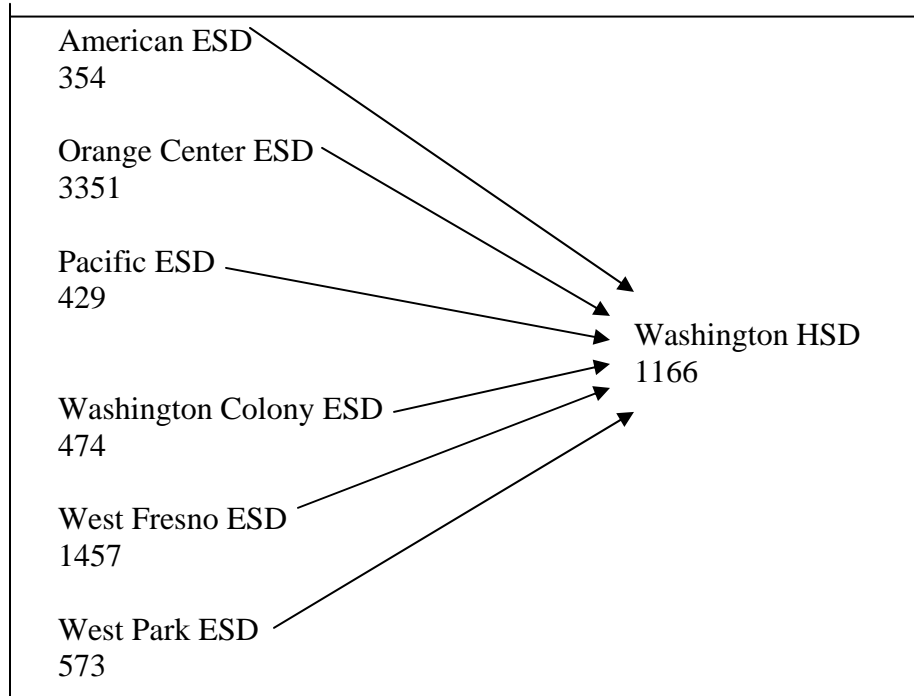
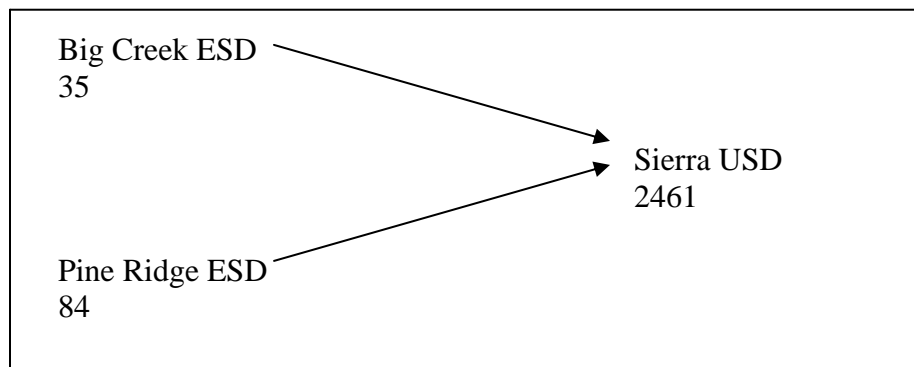
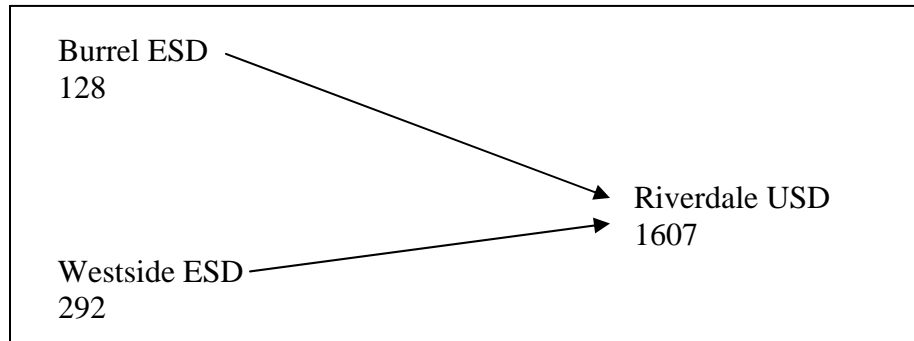
Two-page District Profiles. The District Profiles contain data about enrollment, number and grade span of schools, socio-economic characteristics of the students, statewide and similar school rankings on the Academic Performance Index (API), “Program Improvement School” status, and expenditures per pupil. The profiles also include summary observations on enrollment growth trends, academic achievement trends, financial status, facilities status, transportation programs, communities of interest, and views regarding reorganization.

Appendix Data. The material in the Appendix is organized by district. For smaller districts (those with only one or a few schools) information is presented for the individual schools and includes test score results in English Language Arts and Mathematics at two grade levels. For larger districts, the data is a combination of districtwide and individual school characteristics, but excludes the detailed school-level test score results for selected grades and subjects.

Results of First Stage Activities

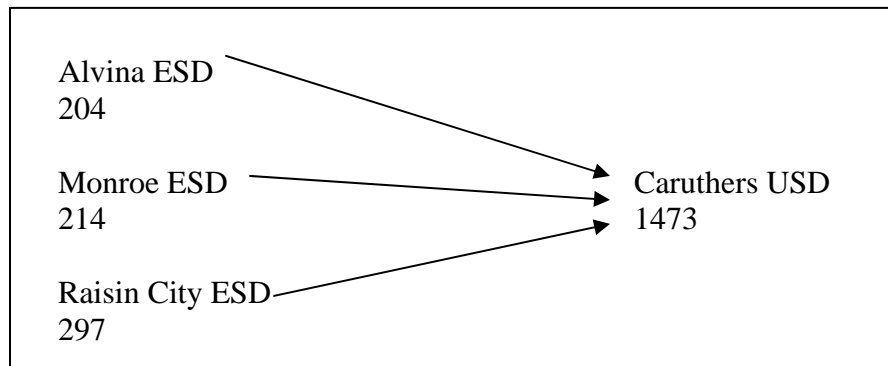
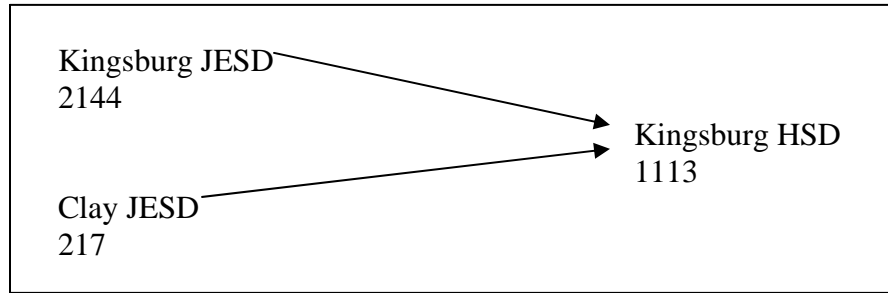
To orient the reader not familiar with the existing organization of school districts in Fresno County, Exhibit III-2 diagrams the feeder school pattern in the county. There are essentially three organizational structures in the county.

Exhibit III-2
Feeder School Pattern in Fresno County
(with 2004-05 enrollment)



Fresno feeder school charts

**Exhibit III-2 (cont.)
Feeder School Pattern in Fresno County**
(with 2004-05 enrollment)



Unified Districts with No Feeder Districts

<u>District</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
Central USD	12,375
Clovis USD	35,344
Coalinga-Huron JUSD	4,385
Firebaugh-Las Deltas USD	2,454
Fowler USD	2,191
Fresno USD	80,760
Golden Plains USD	1,921
Kerman USD	3,798
Kings Canyon JUSD	9,250

Exhibit III-2 (cont.)
Feeder School Pattern in Fresno County
(with 2004-05 enrollment)

Unified Districts with No Feeder Districts (cont.)

<u>District</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
Laton JUSD	792
Mendota USD	2,383
Parlier USD	3,558
Sanger USD	8,863
Selma USD	6,304

(End of Exhibit III-2)

1. Unified districts with no feeder districts. These fourteen districts provide K-12 education with no students from other districts coming in for high school. Many of these districts have unified in the past, such as Coalinga-Huron, Golden Plains, and Firebaugh-Las Deltas.
2. Unified districts with feeder elementary districts. There are three unified districts (Riverdale, Sierra, and Caruthers), which serve students from Kindergarten through 12 and also provide high school education for feeder elementary districts. Burrel ESD and Westside ESD feed into Riverdale, Big Creek ESD and Pine Ridge ESD send high school pupils to Sierra, and Alvina, Monroe, and Raisin City feed into Caruthers.
3. High school districts with feeder elementary districts. There are two high school districts, which educate pupils only in grades 9-12 and receive their entire enrollment from elementary feeder districts. Kingsburg ESD and Clay ESD feed into the Kingsburg High School District. American ESD, Orange Center ESD, Pacific ESD, Washington Colony ESD, West Fresno ESD, and West Park ESD all feed into the Washington High School District.

After collection of all the data described above, and much discussion and serious deliberation among project staff members focusing on the districts, schools, and the answers to the Study Questions listed above, the districts were assigned to three tiers to guide further study activities.

1. **Tier I. Districts with serious problems that might be mitigated through reorganization.** These are:
 - **Fresno Unified School District.** Fresno USD is plagued by extremely low student achievement, long-term financial problems that may or may not be fixed by recent administrative and contract changes, declining enrollment due in part to low achievement, financial turmoil, and the decaying reputation of the district, lack of consistency in the curricula of the elementary schools, weak articulation between elementary and high school instruction, and socio-economic segregation running from south to north.
 - **Washington Union High School District and its six feeder elementary districts.** Weak sustained articulation and coordination between the high school and the elementary schools was identified. Student achievement was found to be extremely low in two of the elementary districts, very low in two districts, and near average in two districts. District enrollments declined several years ago, but are now stable—future enrollment changes are uncertain. One district is climbing out of bankruptcy. Some problems exist in retaining fully-certificated teachers in the high school. Widely divergent views exist on whether there should be unification in whole, in part, or not at all.

- **Westside Elementary School District.** Westside ESD, which feeds into Riverdale USD, has experienced declining enrollment since 1996-97 (down 30% with a few intervening years of stability). Simultaneously, student achievement as measured by the Academic Performance Index, has declined precipitously (from a “5” to a “1”). Communication between the elementary district staff and the unified district staff has been weak, as has communication between the two Governing Boards.
2. **Tier II. Districts without the serious problems described above but having trends, which should be monitored.**
- **Raisin City-Caruthers USD.** Raisin City ESD is a small elementary district whose enrollment and academic achievement should be assessed periodically.
 - **Laton USD.** Laton should be watched for declining enrollment and continued improvement in student achievement.
 - **Parlier USD and Golden Plains USD.** These two districts have chronic low achievement and may require outside assistance or reorganization to change.
 - **Big Creek ESD, Pine Ridge ESD, Clay ESD, Alvina ESD, and Monroe ESD.** All of these districts have very low enrollments and, if they decline, would be candidates for unification.

3. **Tier III. Districts which, it appears, would not realize significant benefits from reorganization at this time.**

Taking into account all the dimensions—enrollment, achievement, financial condition, community interest, articulation, facilities, transportation, and availability of qualified personnel—it appears that the other districts in Fresno County are not prime candidates for reorganization at this time.

Second Stage Activities

Second stage activities focused on the Tier I districts. Additional interviews, data collection and analysis, and give-and-take sessions with Governing Boards and administrators were held. Activities included the following:

Fresno Unified School District

- Analysis of the geographic distribution of student achievement in the district.

- Meeting with new Superintendent, new Director of Finance, and former Governing Board member.
- Analysis of alternative district configurations centering on high schools and feeders.
- Analysis of new accountability plan and new organization chart.
- Analysis of racial/ethnic configurations across high school attendance areas.
- Analysis of FCMAT report on district finances.
- Analysis of “Choosing Our Future” report from blue-ribbon citizens committee.
- Analysis of financial information from Fresno County Office of Education Superintendents office.
- Individual meetings with all the members of the FUSD Governing Board.

Washington HSD and Six Feeder Districts

- Meeting with superintendents and Board members of all districts (6-30-05).
- Meeting with superintendents and Board members of all districts (9-15-05).
- 1st Education Summit with superintendents, Board members, and certificated staff of all districts (11-7-05).
- 2nd Education Summit with superintendents, Board members, and certificated staff of all districts (1-23-06).

Westside ESD and Riverdale USD

- Meeting with Westside Governing Board and superintendent (6-28-05).
- Meeting with Riverdale Governing Board and superintendent (8-4-05).
- Review of data on Westside student participation in Riverdale district activities.
- Meeting with superintendent and Governing Board of Burrel ESD (10-4-05).

Based on these activities and on-going data reviews and updates, the findings, recommendations, and options outlined in the next Part were developed.

District Profiles

Notes on the Contents

1. October, 2004, Enrollment. Latest available enrollment from the CBEDS database.
2. Grade span. Shows the number of schools for each type of school grade span in the district.
3. Socio-economic indicators. Compares districtwide measures with countywide measures. The number of students enrolled in the Free and Reduced-Price Meals program is an indicator of the income-level of the families of the students in the school. English Language Learners are students who have a primary language other than English *and* who, based on oral and literacy tests, lack the clearly defined English language skills of listening, comprehension, speaking, reading and writing necessary to succeed in the school's regular instructional program. A student is classified as "Socio-economically Disadvantaged" in the STAR test system if the student participates in the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program *or* if neither of the student's parents has attained a high school diploma.
4. Academic Performance Index. The Academic Performance Index (API) is a composite score for a school on tests covering several academic subjects taken by students in grades 2 through 11. The statewide decile rank shows in which of ten groups a school has scored, with "1" being the lowest ten percent of schools and "10" being the highest ten percent of schools. The "similar schools comparison" compares a school against other schools with similar socio-economic and other characteristics, with "1" being the bottom 10% of comparable schools and "10" being the highest.
5. Program Improvement schools. Program Improvement schools are identified according to the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. Four academic criteria are used to identify a Program Improvement School: (1) Percent of students proficient in English Language Arts; (2) percent of students proficient in mathematics; (3) API growth; and (4) graduation rate (where applicable). Basically, to be a Program Improvement School a school has to (1) Fail to meet a goal two years in a row and (2) be a Title I (i.e., low income) school. The District Profile shows the number of schools that are Program Improvement schools and the number of years those schools have been so classified.

6. Expenditure Per Pupil. The district Profiles compare the total expenditure per pupil of the district to the statewide average for the type of district (elementary, unified, and high school). The data are for 2003-04.

7. Order of the Profiles is as follows:

Unified Districts With No Feeder Districts

Central USD

Clovis USD

Coalinga-Huron USD

Firebaugh-Las Deltas USD

Fowler USD

Fresno USD

Golden Plains USD

Laton USD

Kerman USD

Kings Canyon USD

Mendota USD

Parlier USD

Sanger USD

Selma USD

Unified Districts With Feeder Districts

Caruthers USD

Alvina ESD

Monroe ESD

Raisin City ESD

Riverdale USD

Burrel ESD

Westside ESD

Sierra USD

Big Creek ESD

Pine Ridge ESD

High School Districts and Feeder Districts

Kingsburg HSD

Kingsburg ESD

Clay ESD

Washington HSD

American ESD

Orange Center ESD

Pacific ESD

Washington Colony ESD

West Fresno ESD

West Park ESD

Central Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 12,375

Number of Schools:

K-6	11	7-8	2
K-8	1	9-12	1
Alt. K-12	1	Cont. 9-12	1

District Enrollment Trend: Central is growing rapidly. It now has over 12,000 students, up from about 7,000 in 1993-94. There is much vacant land and extensive development underway. There are 27 builders working in the district and about 5,000 homes under construction. The district expects to build 20 to 25 schools in the next 15 to 18 years serving an enrollment of 27,000 to 30,000 in 2020 to 2023.

	Central	Countywide
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	48	66
% of Students English Language Learners	17	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	50	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API

Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	2		2	5	1	1	1	3		
Similar Schools Comp.		1	5	1	3	2	1			

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement**

Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	1	1	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend: The district has a highly diverse student body--multi-ethnic and ranging in income from poor to wealthy. School performance reflects the economic range with statewide API decile scores from "1" to "8." The district has experienced a general pattern of declining scores over the past few years. Rapid growth (resulting in school changes by both students and staff and the rapid addition of new staff) has had a negative impact on short term improvements in student achievement.

Central Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,278
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

The district appears to be in sound financial condition. Steady enrollment growth has produced surplus revenues (revenues above the marginal cost of staffing classes). The reserve is at the state -required 3%.

Facilities

Despite the rapid growth, there is no overcrowding. The district has no schools on a year-round schedule. They have a small number of portable classrooms (about 10). Central USD will be building schools for the next fifteen to eighteen years. A new high schools is planned to be constructed in the next couple of years (a bond measure passed in 2004).

Transportation

The district runs 70 full-time buses. All students living north of Herndon are bussed. Many students are bussed because sidewalks have not been fully developed, leaving stretches of street without a sidewalk. With infill construction and related sidewalk construction, about 80% of students will walk to school. Currently, 40% to 60% of enrollment is bussed.

District Organization

The community identifies with Central High School--a strong athletic tradition. The district is the community center. There is no feeling of being a part of Fresno though Fresno City does make the development decisions in Central.

The district was unified in 1982 when six elementary districts and a high school district joined together. There have been no significant changes in the district since 1982. There is currently a transfer of property from Fresno USD that is before the State Board of Education.

There is no movement in the district for any type of reorganization.

Clovis Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 35,344

Number of Schools:

K-6	28	Comm. Day 4-8	1
7-8	4	Alt. K-12	1
9-12	4	Cont. 9-12	2

District Enrollment Trend: Clovis USD has grown every year since 1993-94--up 29% through 2004-05. The district contains more than 200 square miles, much of which is vacant land. Clovis is projecting enrollment to grow from the current level to 45,000 in 2011-2012.

	<u>Clovis</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	29	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	9	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	29	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Statewide Comparison				1	1	4	2	6	12	8
Similar Schools Comp.			3	1	4	2	5	9	5	5

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Student achievement has been consistently outstanding in Clovis USD. Eight elementary schools are in the top 10% of elementary schools in California as measured by the Academic Performance Index.

Clovis Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,611
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

Facilities

The district is building its fifth high school now and will have five administrative areas in 2006

District Organization

The communities of interest in Clovis are based on the area organization of the high schools and feeder schools.

There is no interest in Clovis in reorganization. There are no movements and it appears that no one wants to secede, even though the district is rather large

Quail Lake is a development in Sanger USD which is adjacent to Clovis USD. The area is up scale and the high school in Clovis USD is much closer to the community than is Sanger High. Families in Quail Lakes and West Tarpey Village would like to join Clovis, which would probably accept the areas, but Clovis would not initiate efforts to consolidate these areas. Right now, many of the families in Quail Lakes are able to send their kids to Clovis USD because of employment in the Clovis district.

Coalinga-Huron Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 4,385

Number of Schools:

K-K	1	6-8	1
1-2	1	7-8	1
2-4	1	9-12	2
K-5	1	Cont. 9-12	1
4-6	1	Comm. Day 7-12	1

District Enrollment Trend: Coalinga-Huron has grown very slowly, but steadily, over the past decade. There is the potential for substantial growth, but the stumbling block is water. It is conceivable that 8,000 dwelling units will be added by 2025. Coalinga has 16,000+ residents, a community college, and two major State facilities (Pleasant Valley State Prison and Coalinga State Hospital). The community of Huron is expected to grow slowly.

	<u>C-H</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	69	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	42	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	76	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	2	2	2							
Similar Schools Comp.	3	1	1			1				

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	1	1	2	1	1

Academic Achievement Trend The schools in Coalinga Huron have shown little improvement over the past six years as measured by the Academic Performance Index. The two schools in Huron have produced results in the bottom 10% of all schools in the State, and in comparison to schools that are socio-economically similar, every year for the last six years.

Coalinga-Huron Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$7,079
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

The district appears to be financially sound. The budget reserve is at the statutory 3% requirement.

Facilities

Existing facilities are adequate for the current enrollment. The district will have to add schools if the potential development occurs, but right now it is a "wait and see" situation.

Transportation

Approximately 20% (800 pupils) are bussed to and from school.

District Organization

Coalinga is an isolated town (it is 15 minutes west of Highway 5) and there has been no reorganization in more than 15 years.

Some residents of the community of Huron have recently expressed an interest in establishing an independent unified district. The financial viability of an independent Huron USD needs to be thoroughly analyzed.

At times in the past there have been discussions between Coalinga-Huron and Westside ESD about consolidation. However, this idea has never progressed far. It is not clear what the advantages would be to Coalinga-Huron, and the leadership of Westside has expressed no interest in any consolidation.

Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 2,454

Number of Schools:

K-3	1	Comm. Day 7-12	1
4-5	1	Cont. 9-12	1
6-8	1	9-12	1

District Enrollment Trend: Firebaugh-Las Deltas has grown steadily in small increments since 1993-94. However, In 2004-05 there was a small decline in the October enrollment numbers. High unemployment in the area may be having an impact on the size of the student population. This will have to be monitored.

Nevertheless, there is some development in progress--500 to 600 new homes may be built, stemming any decline in enrollment.

	<u>F-LD</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	88	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	40	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	91	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	1		3							
Similar Schools Comp.		1				1	1	1		

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	1	0	1	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Except for the primary school (K-3), the schools in F-LD perform fairly well given the high rates of English Language Learners and pupils from low-income families. In particular, three schools compare well against other schools with comparable socio-economic characteristics. The six-year API decile rankings show steady improvement since 2002.

Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,604
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

District will have about a 7.5% General Fund ending balance in June, 2005.

Facilities

The district is not adding portables. It is scheduled to build a new school within the next five years.

Transportation

Transportation consumes about 3% of the district's General Fund budget.

District Organization

An independent community in the western valley, there appears to be no need or interest in consolidation in Firebaugh-Las Deltas.

Fowler Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 2,191

Number of Schools:

K-2	1	9-12	1
K-5	1	Comm. Day 7-12	1
3-5	1	Cont. 9-12	1
6-8	1		

District Enrollment Trend: Since 1993-94, Fowler USD has gained only 77 students, but there have been some minor ups and downs during the period. In five years, there may be as many as 2,500 pupils attending Fowler schools; and in ten years the population may reach 3,000. Malaga and Fowler communities are seeking growth and there is some "high-end" development to the north and west.

	<u>Fowler</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	69	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	23	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	71	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison		1	1	1	2					
Similar Schools Comp.	1		1				1	1	1	

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	1	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Three of the five schools do very well in comparison to schools with similar socio-economic characteristics. The areas that need the most improvement are Algebra and instruction for English Language Learners. Overall, relatively strong academic performance given economic and linguistic backgrounds of many students.

Fowler Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,589
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

Fowler is financially stable and healthy due to conservative spending practices. The June, 2005, ending balance should be about 10% of the \$14 million budget. Relatively low annual expenditures compared to average elementary school district in California.

Facilities

No overcrowding at this time. The district added 13 portable classrooms during the summer of 2004. Fowler expects to build an elementary school in the next five to eight years housing about 400 to 500 students on the west side in response to community growth. All of the elementary schools are more than 50 years old, but they have gone through modernizations. The high school is scheduled for modernization in the next year or so.

Transportation

Transportation costs encroach on the General Fund.

District Organization

Fowler USD is comprised of two communities: Fowler and Malaga. The school district is dedicated to providing a high-quality education for pupils in both communities. Fowler USD was unified in the 1960's. The district has nicely sized schools (the high school has about 680 students) and is able to offer a substantial program including eight Advanced Placement courses.

Fresno Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 80,760 (Includes district-sponsored charter schools)

Number of Schools:	K-6	54	5-8	3
	7-8	12	6-8	2
	9-12	10	7-12	4
	K-4	1	8-12	1
	K-7	2	K-12	2
	K-8	3	Spec. Ed. K-12	1
	1-6	2	Cont. 9-12	3
	2-6	1	Cont. 7-12	1

(Schools with enrollment greater than zero in October, 2004.)

District Enrollment Trend: After many years of growth, enrollment in Fresno USD declined in 2004-05 and continued losses are expected. Contributing to the decline are families moving out of the area, high dropout rates, the reduction in services caused by the poor financial condition of the district, and the existence of more attractive alternatives.

		<u>FUSD</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):	% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	81	66
	% of Students English Language Learners:	29	27
	% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	83	67

(Data is for October, 2004, except for % Socio-economically Disadvantaged which is based on STAR data for Spring, 2005.)

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	39	17	4	4	5	1	4	5	3	2
Similar Schools Comp.	39	17	6	9	2	1	1	3	4	2

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement

	<u>Number of Years in Program</u>				
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	9	18	11	5	17

(Based on Spring, 2005, data. Schools are PI in 2005-06.)

Academic Achievement Trend Student achievement in Fresno USD is extremely low--particularly in the elementary and middle schools. More than half of the elementary and middle schools scored in the bottom 10% of schools statewide. There has been a minuscule amount of improvement in the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in reading and math over the last three years.

Fresno Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$7,594
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

(Source: Ed-Data 2003-04 General Fund Expenditures excluding capital outlay, other outgo, and direct support/indirect costs.)

The FCMAT report has made it clear that the district faces huge financial problems that if left unresolved will lead to fiscal insolvency and potential State takeover. It is not clear that Fresno USD has yet solved the post-retirement benefits liability problem.

Facilities

Facilities management in Fresno USD has suffered from high turnover in the top leadership position. The generally poor fiscal controls in the district have plagued management of capital outlay projects. There is an open question about whether funds have been spent consistent with State requirements.

District Organization

The key issue is whether reform leading to improved student achievement is possible without reorganization of the district. Fresno USD is very large and bad practices are deeply ingrained. Other urban districts (such as Long Beach, San Diego, and Los Angeles), even larger than Fresno, have shown substantial improvement without reorganization. The new administration in Fresno has undertaken numerous promising reforms and only time will tell whether they make an appreciable difference.

The district is configured socio-economically and ethnically in such a way that splitting the district into smaller units will be difficult to achieve without legal challenges over socio-economic or ethnic segregation. The district's demographics require that any feasible reorganization plan divide the district into vertical north-south swaths.

Golden Plains Unified School District (continued)

<u>Financial Status</u>	2003-04 Expenditure Per Pupil	\$9,649
	2003-04 Average Unified District	\$7,151

The district has high revenues compared with other elementary districts in California. The district appears to be in sound financial condition. In 2004-05, it has about a \$4.5 million reserve with an \$18 million budget. The savings will be used for renovation projects. The district cannot pass bonds for construction projects because of the poverty in the community.

Facilities

The facilities are adequate in terms of capacity even if there is some growth. The schools can handle about 200 more students without adding portable classrooms. However, some students would have to be bussed to Helm because San Joaquin elementary school is at capacity (this school has 15 portable classrooms at the present time). The district would like to add a 7-8 school which it is believed will result in improved academic achievement. There are, however, land and community issues to overcome.

Transportation

The district has a large busing program, but most of the cost is covered by the State Transportation Allowance--hence transportation costs are not a great burden.

District Organization

The district was unified in 1989, bringing together five districts. There has been some dissension in the small towns about equality of resources allocated to the schools since the unification. This may be a problem of perception rather than reality. There is no movement afoot to reorganize the district--either to break it apart or to add another small elementary district such as Westside ESD.

Kerman Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 3,798

Number of Schools:

K-4	2	9-12	1
5-6	1	Comm. Day 7-12	1
7-8	1	Cont. 9-12	1

District Enrollment Trend: Kerman Unified has grown steadily since 1993-94. It is expected that growth will continue at 1% to 3% per year for the next ten years. Growth studies indicate that construction will yield about 200 students per year which would exceed the expected 1% to 3%. However, the growth has not yet started.

	Kerman	Countywide
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	76	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	33	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	84	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison		1		2	1	1				
Similar Schools Comp.			1	1		1			2	

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Kerman demonstrates a strong academic program in two ways: (1) Two of the elementary schools are in the 9th percentile (top 20%) of schools with similar socio-economic characteristics; and (2) the same two schools have significantly improved their statewide decile rankings over five years (rising from "3" to "5" in one case, and from "4" to "6" in the other). Also, it is interesting to note that in Kerman the higher the incidence of low-income pupils and lack of English language proficiency (with one exception) in the individual schools, the higher the academic achievement of the school. This is very rarely found in California school districts.

Kerman Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,368
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

The district has gone through some difficult fiscal times, having cut budgets by about \$1 million in two consecutive years. The district has recovered and it is expected that there will be a 5% reserve in 2004-05.

Facilities

Two elementary schools and one of the high schools are overcrowded. The other high school is at maximum capacity. Kerman has added portables at two of the elementary schools. The district is planning to build a new high school in 2009--it owns a 20-acre site for that purpose.

Transportation

Transportation encroaches on the General Fund by about \$279,000 in 2004-05.

District Organization

Kerman is an incorporated city. The school district unified in 1983, blending the city constituency with the agricultural residents. No known interest in reorganizing the district.

Kings Canyon Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 9,250

<u>Number of Schools:</u>	K-5	3	9-12	2
	K-6	6	Alt. K-12	1
	K-8	3	Cont. 9-12	1
	6-9	1		
	7-8	2		

District Enrollment Trend: Kings Canyon has grown steadily for more than a decade, and growth is predicted to continue at 3% for the next five years. Affordable housing has attracted families to the area. An enrollment of 10,000 is expected by 2010-2011.

		<u>KC</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u>	% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	74	66
	% of Students English Language Learners:	44	27
	% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	82	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	2	3	5			3				
Similar Schools Comp.	3	2		1	2	1	2		1	

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	1	3	3	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Kings Canyon is heavily populated with students from low-income families lacking English language proficiency. Most schools perform in the bottom 30% in the State, but several compare well against schools with similar socio-economic characteristics. In general, one does not see steady improvement in academic achievement. While it may be a result of change in the composition of the student body, the API at Washington elementary school illustrates the lack of progress--the API at that school has actually declined from "7" (statewide comparison) to "3" over five years.

Kings Canyon Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$7,086
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

Financial condition is stable and solid. A reserve at the end of 2004-05 of 4% is expected. Uncertainty about State funding has been a problem.

Facilities

There is some overcrowding now that the district has quit the year-round program. Portables are being added at some sites. Kings Canyon recently opened two new schools and will open a second high school in August, 2005. The district also recently completed a \$50-\$60 million modernization program, funded from local bonds and State "hardship" funds.

Transportation

Kings Canyon covers 600 square miles, some of which is remote and mountainous. The district operates its own bus system and transportation costs run about 3.2% of budget.

District Organization

There are multiple communities of interest in the district: Reedley, Orange Cove, Dunlap, and Squaw Valley. Some time ago the constituents of one school expressed an interest in withdrawing from the district. However, that movement did not go anywhere.

Laton Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 792

Number of Schools:

K-5	1
6-8	1
9-12	1

District Enrollment Trend: From 1993-94 to 1999-00, enrollment in Laton USD declined by 13%. Since the latter year, enrollment has been stable at about 790. Some growth is possible in the future. Eventually there may be some housing developments in Hanford that will contribute to enrollment. Loss of students to charter schools has hit the district hard.

	<u>Laton</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	75	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	45	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	86	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison			1	1	1					
Similar Schools Comp.				1		1			1	

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	1

Academic Achievement Trend Laton has struggled to improve academic achievement and it appears that in the last couple of years this effort has begun to pay off. However, one school, Conejo Middle School, has been in the Federal Program Improvement program for five years. Its greatest weakness appears to be mathematics. The three schools in the district tend to perform fairly well compared to schools with similar socio-economic characteristics.

Laton Unified School District (continued)

<u>Financial Status</u>	2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,912
	2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

Facilities The district is in good shape financially now, but it has had to deal with deficit spending in recent years. Some reductions were necessary in the central office staff.

Transportation Laton is a member of the Southwest Transportation JPA.

District Organization There have been some informal discussions about school district organization involving Laton, Riverdale, and Caruthers. The Laton Board of Trustees terminated the participation of Laton in these discussions. The district needs to be monitored to see whether the enrollment decline has permanently stopped. But there has been little change in the last five years.

Mendota Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 2,383

Number of Schools:

K-3	1	9-12	1
3-6	1	Cont. 9-12	1
7-8	1	Comm. Day 7-12	1

District Enrollment Trend: Enrollment in Mendota USD has grown steadily since 2000-01. It is possible some 800 dwelling units will be added over the next five years. A new federal prison is being built near Mendota which will be completed in 2008. The impact on the school population is uncertain; in other places where prisons have been built, the impact has been small. Most of the prison employees will commute from cities larger than Mendota.

	<u>Mendot</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	81	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	70	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	98	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison		2	1	1						
Similar Schools Comp.						1	1			2

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	1	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend: The most impressive aspect of student achievement in Mendota is the high performance compared to schools with similar socio-economic characteristics. Two of Mendota's schools are in the top 10% of similar schools, and the other two are in the top 50%. Mendota has a very high percentage of students with limited English proficiency (70% compared to 25% statewide). The English language deficit is most apparent in McCabe elementary school which has been a Federal "Program Improvement" school for two years.

Mendota Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$7,349
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

District finances appear sound.

Facilities

The facilities are at capacity now, but planning is underway for a new junior high school which will open in about 3 years. This will free up the old junior high for elementary grade pupils.

Transportation

Seventy percent of students live in the town of Mendota and 60% of all students in the district are transported to and from school. Transportation costs run about 5% of total expenditures.

District Organization

There is no interest in reorganization in this small farm community miles from Highway 5 and from Fresno. The elementary and high school districts unified in the late 1980's.

Parlier Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 3,558

Number of Schools:

K-3	1	7-8	1
K-6	2	9-12	2
4-6	1	Cont. 9-12	1

District Enrollment Trend: Parlier USD's enrollment has grown 40% since 1996-97. Continued growth at 3% per year is predicted.

	<u>Parlier</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	80	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	60	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	99	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	3		1							
Similar Schools Comp.	1		1	1					1	

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	3	0	0	1

Academic Achievement Trend Nearly 100% of students are classified as socio-economically disadvantaged (defined as a student who either participates in the free/reduced-price lunch program OR neither of whose parents has received a high school diploma). Parlier has shown virtually no improvement in student achievement over the past five years as measured by the Academic Performance Index (API) All schools, except Martinez elementary school, are in the bottom 10% of schools across California.

Parlier Unified School District (continued)

<u>Financial Status</u>	2003-04 Expenditure Per Pupil	\$7,458
	2003-04 Average Unified District	\$7,151

The district has been characterized as in a "survival mode." While there have been no major cutbacks, there is no room for "frills." The fiscal 2005 ending balance is expected to be 4%. It is reported that the State has delayed full funding of categorical programs and has made some reductions late in the school year. This practice is particularly difficult for Parlier because of its heavy reliance on categorical program funding.

Facilities Parlier's facilities meet the district's needs despite steady enrollment growth. There is no overcrowding--the district just opened two new elementary schools and completed expansions at the junior high and senior high. They are not adding portable classrooms at this time but will need to build another elementary school in two years. The schools are in good condition and the district has received funding for modernization.

Transportation The district does not bus many students; most live in Parlier and walk to school. The district runs its own bus system.

District Organization The city of Parlier and its immediate environs largely define the school district's community of interest. There are no issues regarding reorganization that are salient in the community.

Sanger Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 8,863

Number of Schools:

K-6	8	Ind. Study K-12	1
K-8	3	Hallmark Ch. K-12	1
3-8	1	Comm. Day 7-12	1
7-8	1	Cont. 7-12	1
9-12	1		

District Enrollment Trend: Sanger USD has grown each year since 1998-99. The district may grow as much as 500 students per year to reach 15,000 students by 2015. Potentially there will be 35,000 additional residents within the Sanger USD boundaries by 2025. 4,700 new homes are planned just north of the city of Sanger.

	<u>Sanger</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	70	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	26	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	67	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	4	1	3	2	1	1	2		1	
Similar Schools Comp.	5	3	1	2	1	1	1		1	

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement**

	<u>Number of Years in Program</u>				
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	1	2	3	1	0

Academic Achievement Trend Academic progress has been uneven. Sanger High has improved from an API statewide index of "3" in 2001 to an index of "6" in 2004; similarly, Quail Lake Charter has improved from "6" to "9" over three years. Other schools have stagnated and a few have declined. Seven schools are currently "Program Improvement" schools under federal criteria because they have failed to meet all academic criteria for two years in a row.

Sanger Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$7,194
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

The district's finances are in good shape. Aggressively sought budget decreases three years ago. The last two years Sanger was forced to give zero raises and zero increases in benefits. A 4% ending balance is projected for 2004-05. Mid-year budget cuts caused by State fiscal woes were difficult.

Facilities

There is some overcrowding in the schools. Have added portable classrooms the last three years but none in 2004-05. The district has opened four new schools in the last three years (mostly charter schools). Modernization has been completed.

Transportation

Sanger spends about 2.2% of its General Fund for transportation above the State Transportation Allowance.

District Organization

Sanger USD includes a number of neighborhoods that are somewhat isolated, such as Fairmont, Centerville, Sanger City, and Del Rey.

Developers want Sanger USD to give up portions of the district (NW of city) to Clovis.

No significant efforts underway at this time to reorganize the district. Most lively issue concerns the parts of Sanger that are adjacent to Clovis. Sanger officials oppose transfer of territory to Clovis USD.

Selma Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 6,304

Number of Schools:

K-1	1	9-12	1
K-6	6	Cont. 7-12	1
2-6	1	Selma Ind. 7-12	1
7-8	1		

District Enrollment Trend: Selma USD has grown year-after-year since 1993-94. Recent growth has been strong (up 3.7% in 2004-05) and is expected to continue in the 3% neighborhood. There are currently 4 or 5 housing developments and 1 large development. Growth is occurring throughout the district.

	<u>Selma</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	70	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	34	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	75	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	1		3	2	2	1	1			
Similar Schools Comp.				1	1	1	1	3		2

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	1	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Selma High has made great strides in academic achievement as measured by the Academic Performance Index (API). It has risen from a statewide decile ranking of "3" in 1999 to a "7" in 2004. Except for 2001, it has risen one decile rank every year. Selma High is also in the top 10% of schools with similar socio-economic characteristics, as is Garfield elementary school. Three other schools also scored high compared to similar schools (White, Terry, and Lincoln).

Selma Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,413
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

The financial condition is stable with about a 5% end-of-year balance. As a result of the State's fiscal condition, Selma has had to lay off both classified and certificated staff.

Facilities

Space is adequate and all schools have been modernized. No need to build new schools at this time.

Transportation

District spends about 2.5% of its budget on student transportation.

District Organization

The community as a whole is very supportive of Selma USD. District negotiates with the City about meeting the needs of the school system to handle growth. No initiatives underway concerning school district reorganization.

Caruthers Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 1,473

Number of Schools:

K-8	1
9-12	1
Cont. High	1

District Enrollment Trend: The school district will grow as the community of Caruthers grows. The Chamber of Commerce is considering whether to push development or remain small. Growth will be slow in the next five years but may increase rapidly if the community wants to develop along the Manning Avenue corridor.

		<u>Caruthers</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u>	% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	81	66
	% of Students English Language Learners:	35	27
	% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	76	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison		2								
Similar Schools Comp.		1			1					

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	1	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Academic achievement is not showing signs of significant improvement. The district is in the bottom twenty percent of all schools statewide in performance on the API. The high school does somewhat better than the elementary school in comparison to schools with similar socio-economic characteristics. The district is becoming slightly lower income and growing slightly in English Language Learners.

Caruthers Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,876
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

Financial condition of the district appears sound. The ending balance for 2004-05 will be about 12.5%. The State's fiscal situation has resulted in some cash flow issues.

Facilities

The district is experiencing some crowding problems at the elementary school. Not a problem at the high school. Caruthers has added five portable classrooms in the last two years. The district may build an alternative school--the existing continuation school is on the high school campus.

Transportation

The Southwest Transportation cooperative program is excellent. But transportation does cost \$237,000 out of district funds beyond the State allowance for transportation (this amounts to about \$160 per pupil per year).

District Organization

The school district and the community are highly integrated--the district is the center of the community. Attempts to unify Caruthers and its feeder districts in the late 1990's were only partially successful--Caruthers High and Caruthers Elementary unified; but Monroe, Raisin City, and Alvina opposed unification.

Alvina Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 204

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: The district will remain small, growing to no more than 220 in the short term. The area is zoned agricultural. However, if the I-41 corridor is developed, enrollment could grow quickly.

<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u>		<u>Alvina</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:		67	66
% of Students English Language Learners:		9	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:		65	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Statewide Comparison				1				
Similar Schools Comp.			1					

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District **by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement** Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Student achievement declined from 1999 to 2002. However, the last of couple of years have seen some improvement. The API has grown for three straight years and performance in mathematics has improved steadily to where 73% of fifth grade students in 2005 scored proficient or advanced in this subject (compared to 44% statewide).

Alvina Elementary School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pup	\$6,451
2003-04	Average Elementary	\$6,745

District finances are reported to be sound. Ending balance for 2004-05 was projected to be in the low double-digits. Recently dropped one class, but have managed to easily deal with the State fiscal problems.

Facilities

No overcrowding in the school. However, have added 6 portable classrooms since 1992. No new schools are foreseen in the next few years. Air conditioning and heating improvements in the cafeteria are underway.

Transportation

Partner in the Southwest transportation cooperative. Expenditures for transportation are a small percentage of the total budget--not changing.

District Organization

Alvina wants to stay small. The community would have to see proof that unification would produce benefits for Alvina students.

Monroe Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 214

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: Monroe has a cyclical enrollment pattern ranging from about 150 to 200 depending on the agricultural economy. The district is zoned agriculture and no significant housing developments are foreseen.. The district has been in existence about 120 years.

		<u>Monroe</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u>	% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	88	66
	% of Students English Language Learner:	35	27
	% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	82	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison				1							
Similar Schools Comp.								1			

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement**

	<u>Number of Years in Program</u>				
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Compared to schools with similar socio-economic characteristics, Monroe performs well. For three straight years it was in the top 10% on the Similar School Comparison. However, it did fall down to the top 40% in 2004 when the district lost ground on its API score (dropping 14 points--but it rebounded with a 20 point gain in 2005).

Monroe Elementary School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,574
2003-04	Average Elementary District	\$6,745

The district appears to be in excellent financial condition. The 2005 ending balance will be about 11%. The district has set aside another 22% in various funds for future construction and library books. The State's fiscal problems have resulted in some cash flow problems but it has been manageable.

Facilities

There is no overcrowding in the schools and the district has no need for portable classrooms. There are no plans for new schools. Renovations are planned, but handicapped access to four bathrooms must be dealt with first.

Transportation

Monroe participates in the Southwest Transportation JPA, spending about \$37,000 (about \$170 per pupil) above its State allowance for transportation.

District Organization

The "community of interest" is not Caruthers (into which Monroe feeds)--if anything it is Selma which is a major shopping center. Monroe is equidistant from Caruthers and Selma, but Selma is viewed as the community.

Monroe is not closed-minded on unification but needs proof it will help the students--they are not convinced that is the case. Unification must be accompanied by more revenue and stronger Monroe representation on the Caruthers school board (currently Monroe shares one board member with Alvina).

Raisin City Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 297

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: Enrollment has grown slightly over the past three years. Unclear about future student population. It could expand rapidly if the Manning Corridor is developed over the next 5 to 10 years.

	<u>Raisin City</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	92	66
% of Students English Language Learner:	57	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	99	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison		1								
Similar Schools Comp.						1				

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend The district has very high enrollments of English Learners, low-income pupils, and socio-economically disadvantaged students. Except for 2003 (and this could be a data issue), the district has done fairly well compared to other similar districts. In 2005, the performance of 5th grade students in mathematics rose tremendously, from about 3% proficient or advanced the prior year to 45% proficient or advanced.

Raisin City School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$8,166
2003-04	Average Elementary District	\$6,745

The district financial condition appears to be good. They have been saving for renovation projects. The ending balance will be about 14% in June, 2005 compared to 10% in June, 2004.

Facilities

Facilities can be characterized as "OK." Four "high-quality" portables have been added. No plans to build or close a school in the next few years. Renovation is need in the cafeteria kitchen, library, and need labs and a gym.

Transportation

8% of district budget is spent on transportation.

District Organization

Raisin City is its own community of interest covering a large geographic area. The school is the center of the community. Some indications that the community perceives that its students are treated as "second-class citizens" by Caruthers.

Strong opposition to unification in Raisin City.

People in the area believe that the Golden Plains USD unification "wasn't working."

Riverdale Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004):

<u>Number of Schools:</u>	K-4	1	Comm. Day 7-12	1
	5-8	1	Cont. 9-12	1
	9-12	1		

District Enrollment Trend: Enrollment growth in Riverdale has been slow, but increases of about 1.5% to 2% are expected during the next five years.. Two significant residential developments are planned in the area. One, with 80 homes has already started construction. It and the other development with 75 units should be fully occupied in the next five years.

		Riverdale	Countywide
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u>	% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	77	66
	% of Students English Language Learners	25	27
	% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	82	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison					1	2				
Similar Schools Comp.									1	2

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	1	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Riverdale schools have shown steady improvement in student achievement over the past few years. The schools in the district are excellent in comparison to other schools with similar demographics. The high school offers an array of Advanced Placement courses and vocational programs. Improved understanding by teachers of exactly what is called for in the Statewide Standards has resulted in progress in student achievement.

Riverdale Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,122
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

The district appears to be in excellent financial condition. It has a General Fund reserve of 40% built up over the years from ADA growth. Riverdale has also obtained a lot of grant money which they have used to support the basic program. The district will use its savings for capital outlay--a new district office and high school renovation.

Facilities

No overcrowding in the schools. They are not adding portable classrooms. The district owns 32 acres which may eventually be used for a new elementary school. It would probably be built in phases and be completely K-6 in 10 to 15 years. The district does not want two schools with same grade levels. The high school needs some renovation, but the elementary schools have been substantially renovated in the last five or six years.

Transportation

The district participates in the Southwest Transportation JPA. Not including State Transportation aid, Riverdale spends about 3% of its budget on transportation and busses about two-thirds of enrollment to and from school.

District Organization

In 1995-96, Riverdale ESD and Riverdale HSD unified. The stimulus was the financial plight of the high school district. The unification vote did not include feeder districts Burrel ESD and Westside ESD.

Unification of Burrel or Westside has not been an immediate objective of the Board. The fact that Burrel and Westside are both in precarious positions with respect to enrollment raises a question in Riverdale about the financial impact of unification if enrollment were to decline.

Burrel Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 128

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: Burrel declined from 140 students in 1999-2000 to 120 in 2003-04; but it has rebounded to about 130 during the 2004-05 school year. The district is projecting fairly flat enrollment in the near term, but there is the possibility of some growth in the next few years owing to the opening of four dairies. Also, there is the possibility of some small residential developments in the district over the next several years.

	<u>Burrel</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	88	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	36	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	83	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison				1						
Similar Schools Comp.										Not available for schools with < 100 pupils

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Despite the low-income status of many of the students' families, and the high level of English Language Learners, Burrel students achieve just slightly below the statewide average. The district has shown growth on the Academic Performance Index for five straight years.

Burrel Elementary School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$8,182
2003-04	Average Elementary District	\$6,745

The district is in good financial condition. It has a 25%--\$250,000--General Fund reserve. Growth in the late 1990's enabled the district to accumulate a solid reserve. Burrel reduced the teaching staff by one during the period of enrollment decline, but it still has sufficient teachers for 150 pupils.

Facilities

There is no overcrowding and the existing school could easily serve 150 pupils with open-space to spare. There are no portable classrooms, but a portable is used for the library. The district is eligible for a State-funded portable for a lab/classroom or a preschool.

Transportation

95% of the students are transported to and from school. While Burrel is not a member of the Southwest Transportation Agency, it does contract with that entity for services. About 8% of district expenditures are for transportation.

District Organization

There is little or no interest in the community to unify with Riverdale USD. During the period of enrollment decline from 2000-01 to 2003-04, there was some consideration of under what conditions the district would want to explore or seek unification, but this discussion was informal and never an agenda item.

The Board of Trustees is open-minded on the question of unification, but clear-cut proof of the benefits for the students would have to be demonstrated.

Burrel parents fear losing autonomy and fear not getting their fair share of resources in a unified district.

The district works closely with Riverdale in a number of areas: transportation, articulation, special education, and preschool.

Westside Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 292

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: Westside ESD has suffered significant enrollment declines since 1996-97. Enrollment has dropped from 420 students to about 290 in 2004-05--a decline of 30%.

A number of factors have contributed to the decline: (1) Williamson Act retirements which make land unavailable for development of housing; (2) Federal reclamation of land that is contaminated with selenium; (3) Decline of housing stock due to lack of maintenance; (4) A General Plan in the area which requires 20 acre parcels; (5) Better housing available for workers in towns outside of the Westside school district; (6) Large ranches have reduced number of employees; (7) Ranches no longer need workers year-round.

	<u>Westside</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	91	66
% of Students English Language Learners	30	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	89	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	1									
Similar Schools Comp.	1									

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	1	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Paralleling the decline in enrollment has been a decline in student achievement in West side ESD. In 1999, Westside was in the number "5" statewide decile rank on the Academic Performance Index (API)--that is, in the top 60% of schools statewide. The district's ranking has dropped steadily since that year and in 2004 it was in the bottom 10% of elementary schools across the State. Westside's similar schools decile rank has also fallen precipitously, from the top 10% in 1999 to the bottom 10% in 2004. On the positive side, it appears that English Language Development programs have taken effect, resulting in fewer pupils classified as English Language Learners; and there has been steady improvement in mathematics scores over the past three years.

Westside Elementary School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$7,191
2003-04	Average District	\$6,745

The district has begun reducing staff. In 2004-05, the district had a reserve of \$350,000 which has cushioned the need to cut expenses in light of the enrollment decline. It appears that district enrollment may stabilize at about 290, preventing the need for further staff cuts.

Facilities

The school has a capacity of 1,000 students, and it is on a 36 acre parcel.

Transportation

95% to 98% of enrollment is bussed to and from school.

District Organization

The Governing Board of Westside is opposed to unification.

The district feeds into Riverdale USD which is the most logical consolidation partner if and when that occurs. It is also conceivable that Westside could join with Coalinga-Huron or Golden Plains. The Board would want to consider all options if and when declining enrollment results in financial problems that degrade the instructional program.

Sierra Unified School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 2,461

Number of Schools:	K-5	2	Comm. Day	1
	Comm. Day K - 6	1	Alt. 9-12	1
	K-8	3	9-12	2
	6-8	1	Adult Ed.	1

District Enrollment Trend: Excluding enrollment in the University High Charter School (which is housed at CSUF), Sierra USD experienced a 13% decline in students since 1996-97. District projections indicate that enrollment will likely be between 2,000 and 2,100 over the next five years. There are no major developments planned for the coming five years, but some small projects involving 50 to 90 homes may add some students. However, the generation rate for the new residences will probably be low.

Sierra Countywide

Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):	% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	32	66
	% of Students English Language Learners	1	27
	% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	20	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison								4		1
Similar Schools Comp.									2	3

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Student achievement in Sierra USD is excellent and high standards have been maintained over the last six years as evidenced by consistent performances on the Academic Performance Index. Significantly, Sierra schools rank high when compared to schools with pupils having similar socio-economic characteristics.

Sierra Unified School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$9,098
2003-04	Average Unified District	\$7,151

Sierra USD has one of the highest revenue limits per pupil among unified districts in California. The declining enrollment has caused some reductions in teaching and classified staffs, but these have been handled through attrition, retirement incentives, non-reelection, and lay-offs. The District has dealt with declining enrollment with minor disruption and has maintained a 5% reserve.

Facilities

No overcrowding in the District. Even at highest enrollment, almost a decade ago, there was substantial excess capacity. The middle school, with 450 pupils, could easily serve 1,000. The District currently utilizes 11 portable classrooms. The District owns 20 acres for long-term needs. All schools have been renovated in the past seven years.

Transportation

About 6% of budget is spent on home-to-school transportation. Eighty-five percent of students are bussed.

District Organization

Big Creek and Pine Ridge Elementary Schools decided not to join the Sierra High feeder districts when unification took place in 1991-92. They were included in the voting process and voted overwhelmingly to support the proposed reorganization.

Some 7th and 8th grade students from both Big Creek and Pine Ridge attend middle school in Sierra USD. SUSD provides some services to the two ESD's such as Nutrition Services, transportation coordination, and academic articulation coordination.

The existing close working relationship between the three districts probably would not be substantially improved by unification.

Big Creek Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 35

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: Enrollment has been on a downward trend since 1993-94 when Big Creek enrolled 128 students. Enrollment has declined each year since 2000-01 from 80 to the current level. The decline in students reflects the decline in employees at the So. Cal. Edison hydro facility at Big Creek. Some new jobs may come to the area to stabilize enrollment at its current level.

	Big Creek	Countywide
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	29	66
% of Students English Language Learner:	0	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	11	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API

Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Statewide Comparison							1		
Similar Schools Comp.	Similar School Ranks not calculated for small schools (< 100 pupils)								

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement

Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend The level of academic achievement has been steady over the past four years. The district's one school was in the top 30% of schools statewide in 2003 and 2004. About 60% of students were proficient or advanced in English Language Arts in 2004 (compared to statewide average for 3rd grade of 31%) and 50% were proficient or advanced in math (compared to statewide average of 44% in 5th grade). Grade level scores for Big Creek are not given because of the small number of students.

Big Creek Elementary School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pup	\$18,462
2003-04	Average Elementary	\$6,745

Because Big Creek has a very high assessed value per pupil, it is a "basic aid" district and its revenues are independent of enrollment. In response to declining enrollment, the teaching staff was reduced by one in the early 2000's. District revenues have been stable (i.e., there has been no major changes in assessed value in the district in recent years).

Facilities

Big Creek has excellent facilities, including a swimming pool, 3-lane bowling alley, and a gymnasium. The decline in enrollment has resulted in excess space and some of the classrooms are closed off. The school is used as the community center.

Transportation

About 40% of the students are bused home-to-school, producing roughly 4% of district expenditures. Big Creek has participated with Pine Ridge ESD and Sierra USD in cooperative busing arrangements in the past. However, problems led to the breakdown of coop busing. It may be worthwhile to reexamine the potential savings and feasibility of restarting coop busing in the future.

District Organization

There have been no reorganization proposals since the early 1990s when Sierra USD and Auberry ESD unified. There appears to be no support in the community for unification. The community fears that unification might lead to closure of the school. The community has a big investment in school facilities which serve as a community recreational center. For example, a \$1.4 million bond was recently passed for renovation of the swimming pool.

Parents do not want their young children bused for over an hour to Sierra USD schools--and the time requirement is greater in the winter. Some parents of seventh and eighth grade students want their children to attend middle school in Sierra USD. This option is currently available to these parents.

Pine Ridge Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 84

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: Pine Ridge has had declining enrollment since 2000-01. However, the decline is expected to stop and there is the potential for some growth. There are 800 to 1,000 new homes expected during the next five years--but many of these will be vacation homes and the residences of retirees. Recent increases in preschool applications also suggests the potential for some increase in pupil population in the future.

	<u>Pine Ridge</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	12	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	0	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	0	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Statewide Comparison	1									
Similar Schools Comp.	Similar school comparison not available for schools with <100 pupils									

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement**

	<u>Number of Years in Program</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Pine Ridge has a strong academic record and it is widely agreed that students from this small district do well when they enter high school in Sierra USD. The school has been consistently in the top 20% to 30% of elementary schools in the State in terms of performance on the Academic Performance Index. Reading and mathematics scores are well above the State averages. In 2002, Pine Ridge was selected a "California Distinguished School."

Pine Ridge Elementary School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$13,395
2003-04	Average Elementary District	\$6,745

Pine Ridge is a "basic aid" district that spends more than twice as much per pupil than the average elementary school district in California. The district is reported to be in excellent financial condition with substantial reserves and the highest level credit rating. Despite enrollment declines, there has been no need for layoffs in the past and none are expected in the foreseeable future.

Facilities

With only about 90 students, there is no overcrowding in the school which has a capacity of 270. The district is not adding portables, no new schools are planned, no closures expected, and no renovation is needed.

Transportation

Expenditures for transportation are roughly 5% of total expenditure. Bus drivers are specially trained for steep, snowy, icy conditions. No concerns reported about the transportation program.

District Organization

Local autonomy and local control are high priorities in the community. The district chose to stay out of unification when Sierra USD unified in the early 1990's.

No interest in unification at this time. Long bus rides for elementary students to Sierra USD schools would be strongly opposed.

Cooperative arrangements for 7th and 8th grade students who want to attend middle school in Sierra USD have been developed. It should be noted that at the time of the visits to the district it was reported that 25% of district enrollment was students who live in Sierra USD (their parents often work at Shaver Lake and at other mountain-top businesses).

Kingsburg High School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 1,113

Number of Schools:
 9-12 1
 Cont. 9-12 1

District Enrollment Trend: Kingsburg High School District has grown gradually over the past dozen years. It is expected to continue to grow at the same pace, restricted by the 3% growth limit in the city. The district is predicted to be at about 1,500 in ten years.

		Kings- burg High	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u>	% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	26	66
	% of Students English Language Learners:	5	27
	% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	33	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison								1		
Similar Schools Comp.									1	

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Kingsburg High performs above State averages in English language arts and mathematics. It improved significantly in Algebra I (ninth grade score) in 2005 over 2004. Also, in 2004 greatly improved its performance compare to schools with similar socio-economic characteristics.

Kingsburg High School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,253
2003-04	Average High School District	\$7,171

Steady, manageable growth has helped the district maintain a sound financial position. The end of fiscal 2005 balance should be about 9%.

Facilities

The district appears to have adequate facilities at this time to handle the 10-year growth projection. Modernization projects have recently been completed.

Transportation

Transportation costs run about 1% of budget. Low rate because many students drive to school.

District Organization

Attempts to unify in the past have failed overwhelmingly. Elementary feeder districts have no interest in unification. Arguments against unification include no financial advantage, districts already have excellent articulation plans, and districts are already lean administratively.

Kingsburg Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 2,144

Number of Schools:

K-1	1
2-4	1
5-6	1
7-8	1
K-8	1

District Enrollment Trend: Kingsburg Elementary has been growing slowly over the past twelve years. The community limits growth to 4% per year. Thus, projected growth is 60 to 80 students annually.

	Kingsburg	Countywide
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	44	66
% of Students English Language Learners	10	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	42	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison					1	2	1			
Similar Schools Comp.			1			1		1		

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	1	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Kingsburg schools are in the upper middle in academic achievement compared to other schools in the State. Great improvement was recently shown in Algebra in the junior high school. The 5-6 school has been slipping in its API, but also recently showed improvement in mathematics. Kingsburg is working hard to close the achievement gap between socio-economic groups.

Kingsburg Elementary School District (continued)

<u>Financial Status</u>	2003-04 Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,152
	2003-04 Average Elementary District	\$6,745

Kingsburg Elementary appears to be in good financial shape. The reserve is at about 9%. The State fiscal crisis forced Kingsburg to spend down its reserve which was previously as high as 18%. Facility maintenance has been hit hardest.

Facilities There is no overcrowding and the district has some portables which will be phased out when a new school is built in 2007.

Transportation The district will be joining the Southwest Transportation JPA and expects to achieve substantial savings.

District Organization Efforts to unify the elementary district with the high school district have been overwhelmingly defeated in the past. Unification is viewed as not necessary because there is a strong articulation program in place and cooperation and collaboration are the norm.

Clay Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 217

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: Stable enrollment with slow growth. About one-half the students come from outside the district--mainly Kingsburg. There may be some development near the Kings River. But the Board of Trustees wants to maintain the school at about 220 to 240 by limiting, if necessary, incoming students from Kingsburg, Dinuba, Parlier, Selma, and Reedley.

	<u>Clay</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	28	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	5	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	25	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Statewide Comparison									1	
Similar Schools Comp.				1						

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement

	<u>Number of Years in Program</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend The school has performed consistently in the top 20% to 30% of elementary schools across the State. Math scores have improved considerably in last two years. However, performance compared to Similar Schools has declined steadily over the past six years from the 9th decile rank to the 5th rank.

Clay Elementary School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$5,585
2003-04	Average Elementary District	\$6,745

Excellent financial condition despite relatively low income compared to other elementary districts. The Board of Trustees maintains a 33% to 40% reserve.

Facilities

The district's facilities are good--renovation recently completed. No overcrowding or portables in the district. Do not expect to add a new school in next five years.

Transportation

Clay runs its own bus system. 16% of transportation costs are covered by the district's general fund.

District Organization

The district has existed for about 100 years and there is no desire to change its independent status.

Washington High School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 1,166

Number of Schools:

9-12	1
Comm. Day 9-12	1
Cont. 9-12	1

District Enrollment Trend: Enrollment in Washington HSD has been stable for three years after three years of decline from the high point of about 1,250 in 1998-99. District projections indicate gradual enrollment loss will continue. However, it is possible there may be some housing development even though water and sewer limitations restrict additions to the stock of dwelling units.

	<u>WHS</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	88	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	38	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	77	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison		1								
Similar Schools Comp.		1								

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	2	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Student achievement in Washington HSD is low and has not improved significantly over the years as measured by the statewide API ranking. However, the district has improved its API score each of the last three years by significant amounts. The district serves a low-income, ethnically diverse student population of which nearly 49% are English Language Learners. Poverty and language tend to reduce parent involvement in the school.

Washington High School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$7,722
2003-04	Average High School District	\$7,171

With an overall budget of about \$9.3 million, WHSD appears to be in reasonable financial condition. The district has had to deal with the financial implications of declining enrollment in the past which resulted in a \$1 million overall budget reduction. Currently, the district has an ample reserve in its General Fund.

Facilities

No overcrowding--the high school was designed for 1,200 students. The school is 30-years-old but in good condition.

Transportation

Washington HSD contracts with Southwest Transportation JPA.

District Organization

There are multiple communities within the district's boundaries. Each of the rural elementary school districts (with the possible exception of West Fresno ESD) identifies with the farm center around which the school district developed. West Fresno is more urban and probably identifies with the city of Fresno. Unification in light of the geographic and historic traditions is difficult.

Washington HSD leaders are generally in favor of unification.

American Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 354

Number of Schools: K-8 1
K-8 Comm.Day 1

District Enrollment Trend: Enrollment has been stable for four years at about 350 students. No major housing developments are foreseen in the district.

	<u>American</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	79	66
% of Students English Language Learners	42	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	66	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison			1							
Similar Schools Comp.			1							

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Student performance on the Academic Performance Index (API) fell significantly through 2003. However, since that year, achievement has improved. The Similar School ranking has climbed from "1" in 2002 to "3" in 2004. Overall, student performance in American ESD has been a little below the statewide average.

American Elementary School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,709
2003-04	Average Elementary District	\$6,745

The financial condition of the district has been stable. Recent State fiscal problems have not significantly adversely affected the district. American ESD has maintained a General Fund reserve of about 20% to 25% of its \$2.5 million budget.

Facilities

The district is not experiencing overcrowding. No new schools are expected to be built in the next five years and no schools will be closed. The parking lot and surrounding areas need to be resurfaced. The district is planning a bond measure in 2006 to finance this project.

Transportation

The majority of students are bussed. Transportation costs are about 8.75% of the district's expenditures. The district contracts with South West Transportation.

District Organization

The Governing Board is very concerned about any consolidation with West Fresno and the influence that West Fresno's larger size would have on the American school community. However, the Board is open to discussion about unification, but would have to be convinced that there is a substantial benefit for their students.

Orange Center Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 351

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: Orange Center's one school has bounced around above and below 350 students for the past dozen years. In recent years, it has dropped about 25 students, but enrollment is expected to level off at about 350. About 10% of enrolment is inter-district transfers from Fresno USD. No major housing developments are planned in the area.

	<u>O. C.</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program:	92	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	59	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	96	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison		1								
Similar Schools Comp.			1							

Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend Orange Center has shown some improvement in both reading and mathematics test scores over the past three or four years. However, the district is still in the bottom 20% in terms of its statewide API, and its API compared to similar schools has been on a downward trend. The district is heavily populated with students from low-income and non-English-speaking families. According to the State of California's measure of socio-economic disadvantage, 96% of the enrollment is in that category. The district has met all the academic criteria in the Federal Program Improvement program.

Orange Center Elementary School District (continued)

<u>Financial Status</u>	2003-04 Expenditure Per Pupil	\$7,079
	2003-04 Average Elementary District	\$6,745

Orange Center appears to be in good financial condition. It recently gave teachers a 3.4% bonus on top of the highest salary schedule in the county. Ending balance in June, 2005, will be about 4%. The State's fiscal problems have caused a great deal of uncertainty about the financial future.

Facilities There is no overcrowding and the district is not adding portable classrooms. No plans to construct new schools and the district completed a \$700,000 renovation project about 6 years ago.

Transportation About 85% of students are bused. Transportation costs about 3.85% of budget and the district contracts with the Southwest Transportation JPA

District Organization The school is the community center. The Board of Trustees is opposed to unification. The primary concern is potential loss of control over local programs. There is the fear that unification will result in loss of unique programs and resources. The large West Fresno district could dominate a consolidated district.

Pacific Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 429

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: District enrollment may decline slightly over the next five to ten years. Substantial growth is unlikely in the area until water and sewer systems are installed, which are not planned for the foreseeable future.

		<u>Pacific</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u>	% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	83	66
	% of Students English Language Learners	48	27
	% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	80	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison			1							
Similar Schools Comp.						1				

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend There has been some deterioration in API scores as the enrollment of English Language Learners has increased in Pacific. Nevertheless, the district has historically, and continues, to do well compared with schools with similar socio-economic characteristics. This district, with a high proportion of students classified as socio-economically disadvantaged, scored at the State average in both English Language Arts and Mathematics in 2005

Pacific Elementary School District (continued)

<u>Financial Status</u>	2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,983
	2003-04	Average Elementary District	\$6,745

Pacific has dealt with the State fiscal situation by maintaining a healthy reserve and having available federal funds. It ended the 2004-05 fiscal year with an excess of revenues over expenditures.

Facilities

There is ample space and Pacific may eliminate 3 or 4 portable classrooms. In the past, Pacific added 8 portable classrooms for the purpose of providing class-size reduction. A major renovation was done in 1996-97. No plans to add a new school.

Transportation

Pacific contracts with Southwest Transportation JPA and has some concern that the services could be delivered more cost-effectively.

District Organization

The school is the focus of the community. Many evening and weekend programs are held at the school.

The Board of Trustees and the Superintendent are still unhappy about the 2001 reorganization study. However, if it could be definitively proven that there would be significant benefits for the students, unification might be considered.

A major concern is that higher cost high school programs would drain resources out of the elementary school, and the larger organization would make the Board and administrators less responsive to parents and students.

Washington Colony Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 474

Number of Schools: K-8 1

District Enrollment Trend: Washington Colony ESD has enrolled between 450 and 500 students for nearly all of the last dozen years. Projections indicate that enrollment will remain within the historic range for the next five to ten years. Lack of city water and sewer have been an obstacle to housing development in the region.

		<u>WCESD</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u>	% of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	82	66
	% of Students English Language Learners	23	27
	% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	67	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison				1						
Similar Schools Comp.						1				

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	0	1	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend The district is in the mid-range in terms of both the statewide and similar schools comparisons of the Academic Performance Index (API). Fifth grade student achievement in mathematics has improved considerably over the past three years. From less than 10% of fifth graders scoring proficient or advanced in math in 2002, scores have risen to where nearly 40% are now scoring proficient or advanced. The district's API score has risen each of the last six years.

Washington Colony School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$6,021
2003-04	Average Elementary District	\$6,745

The district is in good financial condition, but recent reductions in State funding have had to be dealt with. An ample fund balance is projected for the end of fiscal 2004-05.

Facilities

Facilities are adequate. A modernization project is scheduled for completion in the Summer of 2005 and the district is applying for funds for a library-media-multipurpose room.

Transportation

The district operates its own transportation system and argues it is more efficient than contracting with the Southwest Transportation JPA.

District Organization

The community of interest for WCESD is primarily Easton.

The district Governing Board concluded after reviewing the 2000-01 reorganization study that there was no advantage for Washington Colony students from unification. They feared that unification would shift resources from elementary grade expensive high school programs, and that they would lose the ability to flexibly meet the needs of their students.

West Fresno Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 1,457

Number of Schools:

K-5	1	One Step Up Ch. K-12	1
6-8	1	W.E.B. Dubois Ch. K-12	1
		Performing Arts Acad. Ch. K-12	1

District Enrollment Trend: The two traditional schools (WF Elementary and WF Middle) enroll about 870 pupils. That enrollment is projected to grow 250 to 350 over the next five years. Another 586 pupils are enrolled in the three charter schools.

	<u>West Fresno</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	94	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	37	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	99+	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	3									
Similar Schools Comp.	2		1							

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement**
Number of Years in Program

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	2	0	0	1

Academic Achievement Trend West Fresno Elementary and West Fresno Middle schools are in the bottom 10% of all schools in the State as measured by the Academic Performance Index. However, in the last two years both schools have moved in the right direction (up) in student performance in mathematics and English Language Arts. The three charter schools are also extremely low performing, but they do not show test score improvement in recent years. All of these schools with the exception of the middle school are in the bottom decile in similar school comparisons.

West Fresno Elementary School District (continued)

Financial Status

2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$8,105
2003-04	Average Elementary District	\$6,745

The district is under State administration. The district ran a deficit and had to borrow \$1.2 million from the State, plus repay \$425,000 in audit exceptions. It is hoped the district will be solvent in three years.

Facilities

The facilities are under capacity. Both the elementary and middle schools could hold another 50 to 60 pupils. Because of expected growth, the district received a planning grant for a new middle school. Most of the renovation was completed recently. But the middle school gym is in bad shape.

Transportation

The district is only 10 square miles. Total annual expenditure for transportation is \$80,000. Southwest Transportation JPA provides services under contract.

District Organization

African-American churches are the strongest social and political force in the community.

There is widespread opposition to unification in West Fresno ESD.

West Park Elementary School District

Enrollment (October, 2004): 573

Number of Schools:
 K-8 1
 Charter Acad. K-12 1
 Rosalyn Charter K-12 Not operational 04-05

District Enrollment Trend: West Park's enrollment has jumped up and down over the years because of the opening and closing of charter schools. In 2004-05, the traditional elementary school had an enrollment of 315 and this level is likely to remain stable. The K-12 Independent Study charter (West Park Academy) enrolled 259 students in October, 2004.

	<u>West Park</u>	<u>Countywide</u>
<u>Socio-economic Indicators (2004-05):</u> % of Students Enrolled in Meals Program	76	66
% of Students English Language Learners:	30	27
% of Students Socio-econ. Disadvantaged:	94	67

Academic Achievement

Academic Performance Index (API)--Spring, 2004

**Number of Schools in Each Decile Rank of the API
Decile Rank (1 = lowest; 10 = highest)**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
Statewide Comparison	2	1								
Similar Schools Comp.	1	1								

**Number of Program Improvement Schools in the District
by Number of Years Classified as Needing Program Improvement
Number of Years in Program**

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Number of Schools	0	1	0	0	0

Academic Achievement Trend West Park elementary school student achievement has improved in the last year or two--3rd grade reading in Spring, 2005, in West Park was 2 percentage points above the State average for percentage proficient or advanced. Also, the API score at West Park elementary school rose about 80 points in 2004-05. In the Independent Study program, only 4% of 11th grade students scored proficient or advanced in English Language Arts compared to 36% statewide. West Park Charter Academy is in its second year as a Federal "Program Improvement" school.

West Park Elementary School District (continued)

<u>Financial Status</u>	2003-04	Expenditure Per Pupil	\$9,459
	2003-04	Average District	\$6,745

The district appears to be in good financial condition with a substantial reserve.

Facilities Facilities are no problem with three surplus classrooms. The school is not in need of renovation.

Transportation Most of the enrollment is bussed. Approximately 8% of district expenditures are for home-to-school transportation.

District Organization The school is the hub of the community, which uses the facility for various activities. The Governing Board opposes unification. It worries that the community will lose control of the program at West Park. They are concerned that unification would bring more red tape and more control by administrators.

PART IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this Part, we present conclusions and recommendations based on a comprehensive evaluation of the organization of education in Fresno County whose system includes thirty-four school districts, several hundred schools, and County Office of Education programs.

General Observations About Education in Fresno County

Beginning in about 2004-05, twenty-five years of rapid growth in total enrollment of Fresno County's public schools will likely take a five-year hiatus, with slower growth then resuming in about 2009-10 and continuing through 2014-15. While most districts have grown steadily through 2004-05, a few districts--Laton, Westside, Golden Plains, American, Pacific, Big Creek, and Pine Ridge—began losing some enrollment in the late 1990s, but expect to be stable for the next few years. Other districts, such as Clovis and Central, will most likely continue with rapid growth. Overall, a 6.5% enrollment increase is projected for Fresno County through 2014-15, compared to 3.5% growth statewide.²

This turning point in the growth rate has been a good time to undertake a comprehensive examination of the status of education and school district organization in Fresno County. This study has found that the system of education in Fresno has the following general characteristics.

- Huge variation among districts in academic achievement.
- Tremendous variation in district and school size.
- While all districts have significant populations of Hispanic students, some districts have nearly all Hispanic students, many have no African-American students, some have virtually no White enrollment, and only a few have a substantial Asian presence.
- Except for a couple of districts, the financial condition of the school systems in Fresno County appear good despite the recent financial woes in the State capitol. Many Fresno school boards have developed skill in amassing large reserves for building projects—necessary because the communities are often too poor to support new bonds.
- School facilities generally seem to be adequate—most campuses are not covered with portables that eliminate playground space as is found in many urban areas.
- Virtually all districts have large numbers of students from low-income families.
- Many districts have high percentages of enrollment that are not proficient in English.

² December, 2005, projection by the California Department of Finance.

- Except in a few corners of a few districts (e.g., the Quail Lake area in Sanger and the Huron community in Coalinga-Huron), nowhere in the county is there much interest at this time in school district reorganization.

General Reasons for District Reorganization

School district reorganization is intended to improve instructional programs and student achievement. It is also intended to enhance the bond between community and school.

In Part I, criteria for evaluating district organization were outlined. In addition, topics for particular focus in Fresno County were adopted by the County Committee on School District Organization. In brief, these subjects for special emphasis are:

- Very small district enrollment.
- Very large district enrollment.
- Persistent enrollment decline.
- Persistent patterns of very low student performance.
- Lack of curriculum articulation between elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Financial incentives to reorganize.

Key Considerations in Evaluating Reorganization Proposals

This study has demonstrated that the school districts of Fresno County confront many challenges. For most of the districts in the county, reorganization is not the appropriate solution, now or in the near future. For a few, district reorganization may be the one best solution.

We have recommended reorganization only in the highest priority cases. Before going through the arduous task of taking a proposal all the way through the complexities that characterize the reorganization process (the process is outlined in the final section of this Part), the potential end result must be worth the effort. The following considerations have guided the proposals and options put forth below.

- The district or districts face palpable, serious, and chronic problems.
- Reorganization will contribute to making the district or districts more effective.

- Implementation of the reorganization is feasible.
- Within the districts affected by reorganization proposals, consideration will be given to those options that would cause the least disruption to the current configuration.

These considerations have been kept in mind in developing the following recommendations and options. The reorganization process is complex. District changes can profoundly affect the lives of many families. So the County Committee on School District Organization is charged with evaluating these proposals, conducting public hearings, soliciting additional information, and reaching a recommendation that, if it calls for reorganization, ultimately goes to the voters in the affected communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Systematic Review

Recommendation #1: Establish an Ongoing, Systematic Process to Review School District Organization in Fresno County.

Public education is an important industry in Fresno County—the school districts receive more than \$1.3 billion in revenues each year, and they are crucial in the lives of more than 190,000 youngsters.

Every seven or eight years each school district in Fresno County should be given an “educational checkup” from the point of view of school district organization. Rather than doing a countywide study every 20 years, each year the County Committee on School District Organization should examine four or five districts to ascertain whether deficiencies in achievement, finances, facilities, personnel, and so forth, meet the criteria listed above for consideration of a reorganization solution. (The Study Questions in Part III could serve as a guide for these “checkups”). An important part of the review would be a public hearing to enable citizens to express any views they have on district organization in their community. Rather than having four or five hearings, several districts could be on the agenda at one meeting. For many districts, the review would be relatively perfunctory, enabling the County Committee to give more time to serious problem areas.

The review should be systematic. That is, a standard set of data collection forms should be given to each district under review. Also, however, more detailed information might be requested in specific cases where there are known problems. Staff within the County Office of Education should support this work of the Committee.

Westside Elementary School District

Recommendation #2: Preferred Option: Westside Elementary School District Should Unify with Riverdale (Option #4).

Westside ESD, a one-school district that feeds into Riverdale USD, has experienced declining enrollment since 1996-97 (down 30%, from 421 to 292 in 2004-05). Though enrollment has been stable the past two years, there could be further declines in the future if available dwelling units continue to decline in the area. It is reported that federal policies retiring wetlands, and ranchers closing the “camps,” will worsen the availability of housing within school-district boundaries. While the district has been able to maintain its fiscal integrity, it has had to make a small number of personnel cuts, including teachers. Continued enrollment declines will require additional cuts, particularly in activities that support the classroom.

During this period of enrollment decline, student achievement compared to all elementary schools in the State (as measured by the Academic Performance Index) has declined from a “5” (in the top 60% of schools) to a “1” (in the bottom 10% of schools).

Also, when compared to schools with similar socio-economic and other characteristics, Westside has fallen from the top 20% in 1999 and 2000, to the bottom 10% in 2003 and 2004.

Communication between the Westside Elementary District staff and the Riverside Unified District staff has been weak, as has communication between the two Governing Boards. Participation of faculty from Westside in meetings to coordinate K-8 and 9-12 programs has ranged from inconsistent to non-existent.

Options to be Considered by the County Committee on School District Organization

Option 1. Do nothing, Maintain *status quo*. This is not a tenable option. The district has serious problems and these may get worse.

Option 2. Do nothing, but closely monitor enrollment, student achievement, articulation, and finances in Westside ESD. Perhaps enrollment has reached the low point of the current cycle. If so, the district can make final adjustments in its expenditures and refocus its efforts on student achievement and better coordination and relations with Riverdale. There is some evidence that in the last year students with limited proficiency in English have made some gains. An annual review of the status of the district is required.

Option 3. Unification with Golden Plains USD or Coalinga-Huron USD. This is an option that the Westside Governing Board would want to consider if the County Committee were to choose to proceed along the path toward unification of Westside. Golden Plains and Riverdale district offices are about equidistant from Westside; and

Helm elementary school in Golden Plains USD is only about 8 miles from Westside. However, the Golden Plains high school, in Tranquility, is farther from Westside than the high school in Riverdale. Coalinga Huron is substantially farther from Westside than Riverdale and Golden Plains.

It is not clear, however, that either Coalinga-Huron or Golden Plains would want to unify with Westside. Such a unification would be perceived by some leaders in both districts as the addition of a burden with little or no benefit. Also, the facts that there is some discussion in Huron about seceding from Coalinga, and some comment in Golden Plains that the unification of that district more than a decade ago was a mistake, do not contribute to a climate favoring the consolidation of Westside with either of these districts.

Students in Riverdale are achieving substantially higher than those in Coalinga-Huron and Golden Plains. It would be advantageous for Westside youth to be part of a district with a relatively strong academic record.

Notwithstanding these points, it is clear that Board members in Westside would want to consider the Coalinga-Huron and Golden Plains alternatives.

Option 4. The unification of Westside ESD with Riverdale. The most logical unification partner for Westside is Riverdale--first and foremost because Westside students already attend high school in Riverdale and are bussed there by the unified district. But equally important is that Riverdale schools have significantly better student achievement records than the Westside elementary school, and it is expected that, given the support resources in Riverdale, Westside performance would improve significantly through integration of the instructional programs.

The greatest concerns in Westside are: (1) Unification will result in the closure of the community school in Westside, resulting in long bus rides for elementary pupils and loss of the community's social and political center; and (2) the Westside community will lose control over the nature and quality of the education program at the local school, implying that quality may decline. While it is impossible to say what changes would occur in the instructional program at Westside, we definitely think such changes would be for the better. Also, it is reported that Riverdale would not close the Westside School in the foreseeable future because the district does not have elementary school facilities to house the Westside students.

Riverdale also has some concerns about unification and would want to ensure that taking on an additional school or district would not result in a proposal that would have significant adverse effects on its operation. It is important to note that Riverdale did not initiate the discussion about absorbing Westside.

Burrel, which feeds into Riverdale high school along with Westside, appears to be a well-functioning very small school without serious, chronic problems. It appears to have a good working relationship with Riverdale and there is the prospect of some

growth if new dairies locate in the area. Consequently, we would not force the issue on unifying Burrell at this time, but mention it below in the general discussion about the many very small districts/schools still operating in Fresno County.

Washington High School District and Six Elementary Feeder Districts

Recommendation #3. Implement and support the collaborative efforts described under Option 2. Request periodic reports to the County Committee on progress. If these collaborative efforts are not sustained, the County Committee should press forward with a proposal to unify Washington HSD and its six feeder elementary districts.

Washington High School District is one of only two non-unified high school programs in Fresno County (Kingsburg HSD being the other). It receives students from six small, rural, elementary districts: American (354 students in 2004-05), Orange Center (351 students), Pacific (429), Washington Colony (474), West Park (573), and West Fresno (larger than the others at 1,457 students including charter schools). Enrollment in the high school (1,166 in October, 2004) has declined by 12% since the peak in 1999-2000 (the future for enrollment in WHSD is unclear with conflicting reports, but there has been an increase during the 2004-05 school year). Excluding West Park and West Fresno (whose enrollments have fluctuated with changes in their charter schools), the number of students in American, Orange Center, Pacific, and Washington Colony has declined from 1,748 in 1997-98 to 1,608 in 2004-05. It appears that enrollment is stagnating in the region because of the lack of sewer and water for housing developments, except in West Fresno which is expecting an increase of from 250 to 500 students over the next five years. For school districts to stay healthy financially (for example, to maintain competitive salaries vis-à-vis Fresno USD), some enrollment growth is very important.

As a result of enrollment loss (in combination with weak State funding), Washington high school has had to make substantial cuts and has about reached the point where additional reductions would seriously weaken the educational program.

In three of the elementary districts more than 40% are English language learners (ELL), and in the other three between 23% and 37% are not proficient in English. The number of ELL has grown in all of the districts over the last decade, except in West Fresno, which already had a substantial number in the mid-1990's. Spanish is by far the most common native language of English learners, and Hmong is second most frequent. More than 70% of the students in each district are from low-income families (as indicated by enrollment in the Free and Reduced-price Lunch Program). These income and language characteristics of the student bodies pose great challenges for the educational enterprise in the six elementary districts.

Not surprisingly, student achievement is at the low end of the statewide scale. Washington Colony students perform the best, followed closely by those in Pacific. A

rung below these two are American and Orange Center. At the lowest level are West Fresno and West Park. (Details are contained in the District Profiles in Part III and the Appendix.)

Consistent with these observations about the elementary districts, Washington High School District has a very high enrollment of students from low-income families (88%) and of English Language Learners (38%). Student achievement is in the bottom 20% of high schools across California, but there has been some growth in the school's Academic Performance Index (API) over the last three years.

In addition to lack of enrollment growth, large enrollments of ELL and low-income pupils who are the most difficult to teach, and low performance on statewide proficiency exams, the region faces the problems of West Fresno ESD (bankruptcy and State takeover) which have cast a shadow on the whole system of education in the Easton area. More than one elementary district in the area noted the history of problems associated with West Fresno as the major reason they were opposed to unification. On a more positive note, the administrator appointed by the State to oversee West Fresno is determined to appreciably improve the district, both academically and fiscally. West Fresno has recently taken several important steps to better articulate curriculum and programs with the High School.

In the elementary districts, there is little interest in unification. But at the same time, there is widespread recognition that something needs to be done to improve student learning. The leadership for change is coming from the high school district whose leaders want to see better-prepared students entering the ninth grade.

Options to be Considered by the County Committee on School District Organization

There are two principal options to consider with respect to Washington high school and its feeder districts: (1) Unify all seven districts; and (2) establish mechanisms to ensure cooperation and collaboration among the districts and set up a means for monitoring and maintaining the communication, cooperation, and collaboration. Other less promising options include (3) unify all districts except West Fresno because of its current financial and academic problems, and (4) unify the feeder districts with other nearby districts such as Fresno USD, Fowler USD, and Central USD.

Option 1. Unify all seven districts. There are four major reasons for unification. One is the economies of scale that accrue to larger units, thereby freeing up additional resources for the education program. The second is articulation, improving the linkages between the elementary and high school programs. The third is the ability to offer a wider array of curriculum choices to students, particularly in middle school and high school. The fourth is accountability, the ability to identify where the buck stops. The unified district must take the responsibility for student performance all the way from kindergarten through high school—and cannot blame another district for the poor preparation of students. A unified district would have about 5,000 students--some would

say an ideal size for a school district. Unification could benefit all the districts. They would share in the revenue from growth that is occurring in several areas (particularly helping those districts with slowly falling enrollment). Articulation between the elementary schools and the high schools could be strengthened considerably. Access to specialists in reading, writing, and English language development could be enhanced. Effective practices could be shared among schools. Finally, in California, the ultimate decision about school district organization is made by the voters in the affected area. Proponents of unification would say. “Why not let the voters decide.”

There are, however, good reasons to maintain the *status quo* in district organization. Each of the elementary districts is a small, rural, farm center that serves as the community center and has a long tradition. Unification would result in some loss of local control over the instructional program and other activities at the school. To some extent, unification would put a central office between parents and the school. There is also the concern that unification would result in less money going to the elementary schools, siphoned off to support the more expensive high school program. Finally, opponents of unification argue that any and all benefits of unification could be achieved through enhanced collaboration.

Option 2. Integration through collaboration. As an alternative to unification, enhanced collaboration with formal structures to sustain and monitor progress might improve achievement and operational efficiency. After four large meetings involving all the districts, the following cooperative initiatives been identified and first steps are underway to make the highest priority initiatives a reality:

- Establish communication channels between the seven Governing Boards.
- Develop new cooperative ways to provide home-to-school transportation at lower cost than the current system.
- Develop and implement a uniform needs assessment in the districts.
- Develop and implement a uniform student assessment system in the districts.
- Develop and implement strategies (such as vertical teaming) to improve curriculum articulation between the elementary districts and the high school district.
- Design a common standards-based curriculum for the elementary schools.
- Identify highest priority needs that are shared by the most districts.
- Collaborate on the upcoming social studies textbook adoption.
- Identify best practices within the districts and in other districts to improve English language arts and specifically writing--especially for English learners.
- Institute a common school calendar to enhance opportunities for collaboration, such as cross-district staff development before the school year begins.
- Put in place a system of cooperative purchasing of textbooks.
- Share music and arts personnel.
- Share Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) support providers.
- All districts work with the Fresno County Office of Education on grant proposal writing and preparation of consolidated application packages.
- Share nurse and speech therapists.

- Share technology support personnel.
- Coordinate the elementary student data systems with the high school system.
- Share equipment for facility and grounds maintenance.
- Establish a centralized book depository.
- Establish student assessment teams that focus on student achievement.
- Develop a common program for community education.
- Establish a regular system of cross-district education summits.
- All Governing Board meetings should have an agenda item at each regular board meeting that focuses on area efforts and activities.

Proponents of this point of view argue that the districts can gain the advantages of unification while maintaining the current district configurations, which preserves a sense of community and access. They also would argue that calling a unification election would be so controversial that it would harm, rather than help, the many collaborative efforts now underway. This would be especially true if the election were to fail. Work has already begun on the highest priority proposals. Structures and mechanisms need to be developed to monitor progress and sustain the effort. District leaders and Governing Board members appear enthusiastic about this undertaking.

Option 3. Unify all of the districts except West Fresno. West Fresno ESD is different from the other feeder districts. Not only is it under State administration because of financial problems, it is also larger than the other districts and much closer to the city of Fresno. The district is large enough to enjoy some economies of scale which the other elementary districts cannot achieve. It has the potential for enrollment growth, and it is one of the most ethnically diverse school districts in the county.

In the final analysis, however, leaving West Fresno out of a unification would not help that district. Arguably, West Fresno would benefit the most from unification. The governance of the district has been the source of its problems, and unification would eliminate that in one stroke.

Option 4. Unify individual feeder districts with a surrounding unified school district. For example, Pacific could join with Fowler USD, a district with 2,100 students. West Fresno could unify with Fresno USD. These actions depend, however, on the larger unified districts accepting the proposal and this is unlikely if the costs are seen as exceeding the benefits.

Fresno Unified School District

Recommendation #4. MAP recommends that the County Committee consider a two-part course of action: (1) The County Committee should proceed to develop a viable new district configuration plan; and (2) at the same time, the Committee should monitor carefully the progress the Governing Board and the Superintendent are making toward getting Fresno USD back on track academically and fiscally. If, under the current district configuration, substantial improvement is noted and the

district is moving in the right direction as determined by the Committee, the Committee can at any time drop the proposal to reconfigure the district.

The problems of Fresno Unified School District are well known and are outlined below. But to start with, some positive notes should be struck. New top-level administrators have been brought in and a contract with the teachers has been settled and ratified. The district is projecting a positive General Fund ending balance for 2005-06.

To extract itself from the achievement quagmire, the district has adopted an Academic Accountability plan calling for performance targets for each school, high expectations, rigorous programs, and districtwide professional development. The excessive decentralization of the past, which resulted in no one being held responsible for poor student performance, is being reigned in as the central office takes responsibility for curriculum, textbooks, teacher training, and principal leadership training.

Whether the reforms will be successful remains to be seen; progress in finances, academic achievement, and district administration need to be monitored closely. Many "new days" have been proclaimed in the district in the past, but they have all failed to prevent the situation the district finds itself in now. The following are the main features of the current situation in Fresno USD.

Student Achievement. Student achievement in Fresno USD is extremely low—particularly in the elementary and middle schools. Whether compared to all schools statewide, or to schools with similar socio-economic characteristics, many Fresno schools score at the very bottom as measured by the Academic Performance Index (a composite score combining all grades and subjects tested). More than half of the elementary and middle schools score in the bottom 10% of schools statewide. (The District Profile in Part III and the Appendix display the data.) In short, Fresno does poorly in comparison to all districts in the State, to other districts in Fresno County, and even in comparison with other urban school districts with similar or worse problems facing them (districts such as San Diego, Los Angeles, Long Beach, San Francisco, and Sacramento have shown substantial improvement without reorganization).

Administration and Governance. It is widely reported that the problems in the district stem from an historical lack of instructional leadership in the central office. There has been a lack of centralized focus on matters of curriculum, content standards, textbooks, intervention in failing schools, and programs for English learners. The district has also lacked competent leadership in many departments other than instruction, and turnover at the top has resulted in no follow-up or accountability (the average tenure for superintendent over the last ten years has been about one year). As a result of this leadership vacuum, control has devolved to the principals who have been on their own and have not been held responsible for either the quality of the instructional program or student achievement.

Financial Condition. The FCMAT report has made it clear that the district faces huge financial problems that if left unresolved, will lead to fiscal insolvency and potential State takeover. The district has lacked adequate systems for aggregating and summarizing financial data upon which key financial decisions are based. High turnover in the position of Chief Financial Officer has not helped. Finally, and unfortunately, it is not clear that the district has yet solved the post-retirement-benefits liability problem.

Enrollment. After many years of growth, enrollment in Fresno USD turned down in 2004-05 and continued decline is expected. Contributing to the decline are families moving out of the area (partially because of a negative perception of the schools), high dropout rates, reduction in services caused by the poor financial condition, and the existence of more attractive alternatives. Falling enrollment results in falling revenues making it more and more difficult to pay for high fixed costs. Staff cuts eventually result as enrollment declines, maintenance is deferred, and attendant general reductions in services ultimately lead to more migration out of the district.

District Size. Fresno is a very large district, but this by itself does not mean that the schools cannot do much better. As noted above, large districts such as Los Angeles, San Diego, and Long Beach have improved student achievement despite their great size.

It was reported that the central administration and bureaucracy are remote and inaccessible. This kind of report is not uncommon in districts with 80,000 pupils. Most educators would argue that a district with about 15,000 students has all the advantages of economies of scale without the drawbacks of a large, unresponsive bureaucracy.

Options, Discussion, and Recommendation. There are basically two options: (1) Split the district into several smaller districts; and (2) Maintain the *status quo*.

MAP's view is that something dramatic must occur if the district is to right itself. Reorganization is one possibility. The district superintendent and Governing Board argue that attempts to reorganize or "break up" the district will only detract from the substantive attempts at reform already under way. It is further argued that reorganization alone will not lead to the improvements required and does not solve any of the district's problems. On the other hand, advocates for splitting the district into smaller, more manageable units insist that the current problems are so severe that success in the district's current configuration is highly unlikely. They argue that delay will mean years lost with little or no improvement, and that immediate action is required.

Although MAP is persuaded that splitting the district into smaller, more manageable units could lead to more effective and efficient management, MAP does not have a specific configuration to propose. MAP investigated alternative configurations revolving around the feeder patterns of the high schools. One option MAP considered would be to divide the district into new districts with each featuring an existing high school and its feeder elementary and middle schools. This option, although it generates new districts of appropriate size, would probably not pass the current legal requirements for the establishment of any new organization since it would lock in place the district's

substantial differences along lines of race and ethnicity. Another option would be to divide the district by combining two or more high schools and their feeders. Although this option would better address the racial/ethnic divisions, the resulting districts would still be fairly large. The district's demographics virtually require that any feasible reorganization plan divide the district into vertical north-south swaths.

If the County Committee decides that it wishes to pursue a reorganization of Fresno USD, the first order of business will be to determine the size and makeup of the new districts that would be created. The State requires that the proposed new districts meet all the criteria set forth in the Education Code. Drawing new district boundaries that provide fair and equitable treatment for all parties is not an easy task and should directly involve the communities affected.

The worst fear of the advocates of reorganization is that the district's current reforms will fail to improve student achievement, fall short in solving the district's fiscal problems, and fail to pull together a competent management team. Meanwhile, years will have passed with no improvement and no action on the radical restructuring that is required.

MAP recommends that the County Committee consider a two-part course of action: (1) The County Committee should proceed to develop a viable new district configuration plan; and (2) at the same time, the Committee should monitor carefully the progress the Governing Board and the Superintendent are making toward getting Fresno USD back on track academically and fiscally. If, under the current district configuration, substantial improvement is noted and the district is moving in the right direction as determined by the Committee, the Committee can, at any time, drop the proposal to reconfigure the district. This would allow the district some time to display that its reforms are working and that a radical reorganization is not necessary, while at the same time assuring the Committee that it was not losing valuable time waiting for reform.

Districts That Need Special Periodic Monitoring

Recommendation #5. Periodically monitor the following districts for the problems (or potential problems) identified.

- **Parlier USD and Golden Plains USD have low achievement in most schools with little improvement over six years.** Parlier USD and Golden Plains USD have large student populations from low-income families with English language deficiencies. For too many years, many of the schools have languished in the bottom 10% of schools statewide. When compared to schools with similar characteristics, these schools do somewhat better, but the bottom line is that very few students become proficient in reading or mathematics in schools that score in the lowest 10%.

- **Big Creek ESD and Pine Ridge ESD are very small with potential ongoing declining enrollment. Clay ESD, Alvina ESD, and Monroe ESD, whose enrollments currently appear stable, are very small and will experience problems if enrollment falls.** Big Creek ESD and Pine Ridge ESD have outstanding programs and graduate students who are well-prepared for Sierra high school. Both districts have had significant declines in enrollment in the recent past, but the downward trend may have flattened out. Both districts are “Basic Aid” districts (i.e., their revenues from property taxes greatly exceed the amount necessary to fund the basic revenue limit in the State school finance system), so declining enrollment does not hurt them financially. Clay ESD, Alvina ESD, and Monroe ESD are very small districts that would suffer if enrollment declined. It appears that many of these smaller districts have no desire to get larger even though their past successes in academic achievement have led to the necessity of maintaining waiting lists.
- **Raisin City ESD is very small and has had little improvement in academic achievement over six years.** The district feeds into Caruthers Unified School District and could potentially become a part of the Unified District.
- **Laton USD has been declining in enrollment but it may have stabilized.** Laton is very small for a unified district (smaller than the State minimum for a new unified district) and it experienced declining enrollment from 1995-96 through 2000-2001 (down about 16%). Since the low point in the latter year, it has stabilized at about 800 pupils. Academic achievement has improved somewhat over the last several years.

Next Steps--The Reorganization Process

The process for school district reorganization is a combination of state, regional and local review. There are multiple ways to initiate the process, including: 1. Agreement by Governing Boards of the affected districts. 2. A petition signed by 25% of the voters in the area affected. 3. The recommendation of the County Committee on School District Organization. For purposes of describing the process, we will assume the initiator is the County Committee.

For example, let us assume that Elementary District X wants to drop its current status as a part of Unified District Y and establish its own unified school district—Unified District Z. Unified District Y objects to the plan—it argues that the loss of District X would have devastating consequences, both financial and educational. The County Committee holds public hearings in order to hear both parties to the dispute and in that process develops a tentative plan for unification. Once the tentative plan is developed, it is sent to the affected districts. Public hearings are then held on the tentative plan, usually within sixty days of its delivery to the districts. Meanwhile the staff of the County Board of Education (or an outside consultant) analyzes the plan to ensure it

comports with the criteria set forth in the Education Code. Usually that is done within 120 days of publication of the tentative plan.

Let us assume that the County Committee, after hearing from the affected parties, and reviewing the report to determine if the proposal meets the state criteria, votes to approve the creation of a new unified district. Then, in most counties in the state, the proposal goes to the State Board of Education. The State Board directs its staff to independently review the proposal to ensure that the state criteria are met, report its findings, and make a recommendation to the State Board. The State Board then schedules public hearings eliciting testimony from both proponents and opponents. There is usually a substantial delay in getting on the agenda of the State Board. It has sometimes taken a year or more, depending on the board's priorities and the number of reorganization proposals it faces. After hearing from staff and opponents and proponents, the state board votes on the proposed reorganization. If the State Board votes *no*, the proposal is dead. If the State Board votes *yes*, the proposed reorganization is then returned to the County Superintendent and is scheduled for election by the local voters. The State Board also decides who may vote in the election. In some cases, when the impact is small, the Board may decide to allow the election only in the district desiring the change, or if the impact is substantial, it may require that the election be held in both the district wanting the change and the district that would lose the territory. If a majority of the voters approve the reorganization, it then takes effect, usually at the beginning of the next fiscal year. Although in some cases, for example if the election were held in May, it may not take effect until a year after the beginning of the next fiscal year.

Fresno County and two other counties have a different, more streamlined process. After the County Committee acts, the proposal, if approved, goes directly to a vote of the affected parties, thereby bypassing the State Board's review and shortening the process appreciably. However, the state does have the capacity, under specified conditions, to review the decision on appeal.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION IN FRESNO COUNTY

Volume II

Statistical Profiles of the Thirty-Four School Districts in Fresno County

Prepared by

**Management, Analysis & Planning
Davis, California
January 2006**

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Notes on the Charts

1. The data format varies somewhat by district, depending primarily on district size (but, for the most part, the same information is displayed for all districts). For example, the data for districts with only one school is shown in school-level charts and graphs. For Fresno USD, on the other hand, with more than 100 schools, some data is aggregated across schools.
2. Enrollments are CBEDS data for October of the school year. CBEDS data is information collected by the California Department of Education annually from every school district in the State.
3. Racial/Ethnic information is also CBEDS data for October of the school year.
4. The Academic Performance Index (API) is a composite score for a school on tests covering several academic subjects taken by students in grades 2 through 11. The statewide decile rank shows in which of ten groups a school has scored, with “1” being the lowest ten percent of schools and “10” being the highest ten percent of schools. The “similar schools comparison” compares a school against other schools with similar socio-economic and other characteristics, with “1” being the bottom 10% of the comparable schools and “10” being the highest. Comparable schools are determined by the California Department of Education.

“Change in API Score Between Years” is a school’s improvement or decline in API score between two consecutive years.

5. English Language Learners are those students for whom there is a report of a primary language other than English on the state-approved *Home Language Survey* **and** who, on the basis of the state approved oral language (grades K-12) assessment procedures and including literacy (grades 3-12 only), have been determined to lack the clearly defined English language skills of listening, comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in the school's regular instructional programs.
6. The Free and Reduced-Price Meals program is a federal program administered by the US Department of Agriculture. Program participation is by application and is based on the income of the child's parent or guardian. It is important to distinguish “enrolled” from “eligible” and “participating.” Here are the distinctions:
 - Eligible = Family meets the economic criteria for participation
 - Enrolled = Student’s family has met eligibility criteria and student is “signed up” to participate
 - Participation = Student is actually receiving free or reduced-price meals

The data presented in the charts are counts of “enrolled” students.

7. The graphs for individual schools show the “Percentage of Enrollment Minority,” which is 100% minus the percentage of students who are recorded in CBEDS data as “White (non-Hispanic).” The pie charts for the districts that these schools are part of show the percentage of students by major ethnic category found in the CBEDS data.

8. “Percent Proficient or Advanced” is the percentage of students who took an exam who scored proficient or advanced on the exam. Lower scores are known as “Basic,” “Below Basic,” and “Far Below Basic.” The percentage scoring proficient or better is used in the No Child Left Behind program to determine whether a school is not performing well and, if not, to classify it as a “Program Improvement School.”