



**MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS & PLANNING, INC**

## **Executive Summary**

# **THE STATUS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE CITY OF LAKEWOOD**

Submitted to  
**Lakewood City Council**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report describes the status of public education in the City of Lakewood. It is a detailed, statistical analysis of selected aspects of the public schools operated by four school districts in Lakewood.

### **CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

In the late 1990s, the citizens of Lakewood undertook the arduous task of petitioning for a reorganization of schools located in Lakewood to form a new Lakewood Unified School District. The proposal was to unify the schools run by four school districts that serve the City: these are Long Beach USD, Bellflower USD, ABC USD, and Paramount USD. After nearly five years of hearings and studies, the California State Board of Education rejected the proposal in February, 2001.

However, community interest in improving the delivery of educational services in Lakewood did not abate after the State Board's decision. The Lakewood City Council took the lead, initiating this project to assess the existing education delivery system serving Lakewood and to develop strategies for improving the schools.

### **PROJECT AND STUDY OBJECTIVES**

This study was designed to develop a thorough understanding of existing conditions in the public schools of Lakewood as a baseline for proposed changes and improvements. The study was guided by the following questions.

- Within each of the four school districts, are the schools in Lakewood treated fairly compared to the schools in the district outside of Lakewood?
- Within the City of Lakewood, how do the resources and programs compare across districts?
- To what extent are Lakewood students acquiring the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are desired for all children in California and that are defined in the Academic Content Standards that have been adopted by the State Board of Education?
- Is the achievement of Lakewood students improving over time, or have the schools failed to correct deficiencies?
- How does student achievement in Lakewood compare to student achievement in other schools in the same district?

- How do the schools in the City of Lakewood compare to each other in terms of student achievement?
- To what extent are students from low-income families acquiring basic skills and meeting the Academic Content Standards?
- To what extent are high-achieving students being provided challenging educational opportunities?
- What are the nature and scope of the Long Beach USD bussing and school choice programs?
- Is there equity in school facilities?

## **DATA SOURCES**

In order to make valid comparisons between schools and school districts, much of the data presented in this study is the standardized information collected by the California Department of Education (CDE). Data sources include the California Basic Education Data System (CBEDS), the Home Language Survey, the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) system, the Academic Performance Index (API) data base, and other standardized data bases administered by the CDE.

Information was also collected from each of the four districts that serve Lakewood. This data focused on current enrollments, school facilities, bussing, where Lakewood residents go to school, and where non-residents who go to school in Lakewood come from.

In addition, discussions were held with district administrators, principals, parents, and teachers. The City of Lakewood's community survey on education issues was analyzed. Demographic maps based on the 2000 Census were prepared by the GIS Analyst for the City of Lakewood. Transportation matrices from the Transportation Branch of the Long Beach USD were obtained and analyzed.

To the maximum extent possible, all data is the latest available and for the 2002-03 school year.

## **FINDINGS CONCERNING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

In the four districts serving Lakewood there are some of the best schools in the State, and some of the weakest. The schools in the City of Lakewood also exhibit a great range in student performance.

**Elementary Schools**

The foundation of all learning is English language skills which are taught in elementary school. The analysis of student achievement in English language arts in terms of statewide academic content standards in the elementary schools of Lakewood has revealed:

- Many students in Lakewood have not achieved proficiency in reading by the end of the third grade--a critical turning point in lifetime academic achievement. Figures 1 and 2 show the percentage of students classified as “economically disadvantaged” and “non-economically disadvantaged” in each elementary school in Lakewood who were proficient or advanced in reading at the end of the third grade in 2002.

As shown in Figure 1, in all of the schools less than half of the economically disadvantaged students were proficient or advanced in reading. In eight of the schools, 80% or more of these students were not reading proficiently.

Figure 1

Percentage of 3rd Grade Students Classified as Economically Disadvantaged Who Scored Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts in 2002

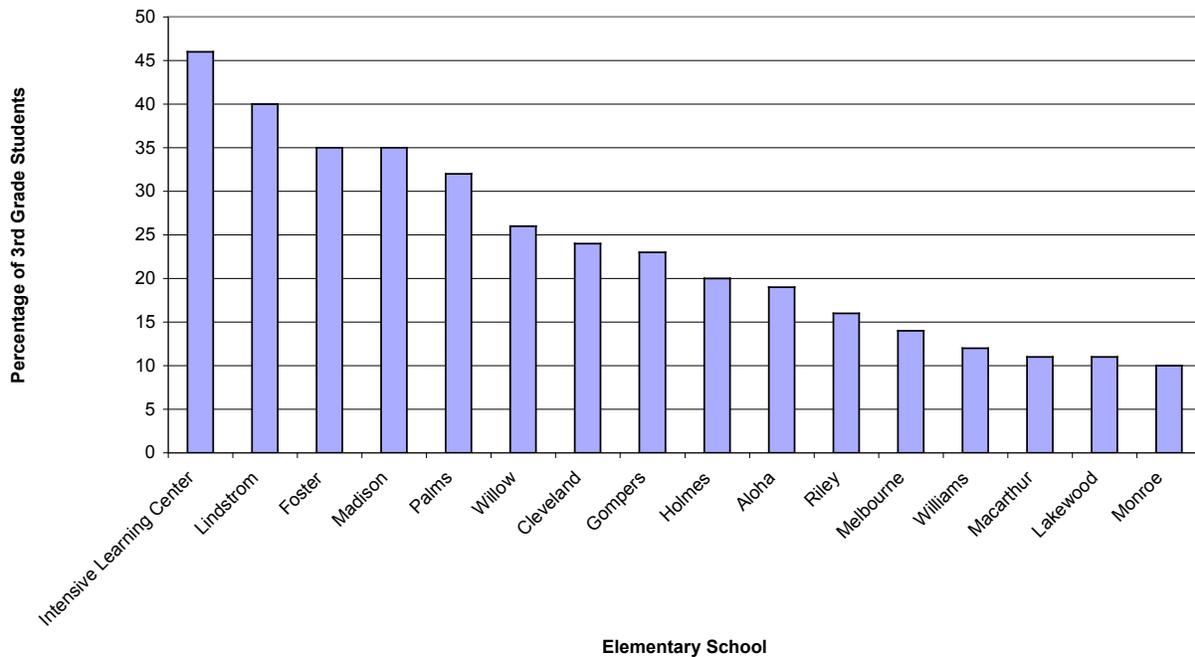
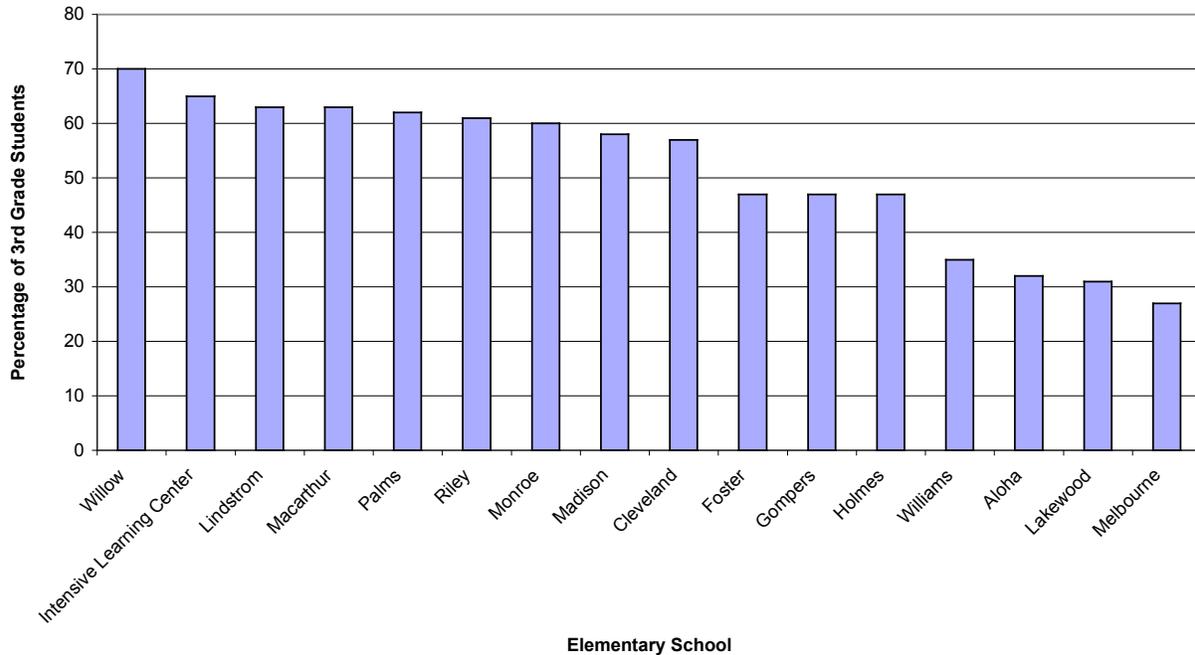


Figure 2 shows that many non-economically disadvantaged students also had reading difficulties at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in 2002.

Figure 2

Percentage of 3rd Grade Students Classified as NON-economically Disadvantaged Who Scored Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts in 2002



A comprehensive measure of student achievement is the Academic Performance Index (API) which, at the elementary level, includes both English Language arts and mathematics, and includes exam results for all students in grades 2 through the highest grade in the elementary school.. The API decile rank (from 1 to 10, with 10 being the best) provides a comparison against all schools in the State and against socio-economically similar schools.

- As shown in Figure 3, the Lakewood schools fall into three groups when compared to all (approximately 5,000) elementary schools in the State:

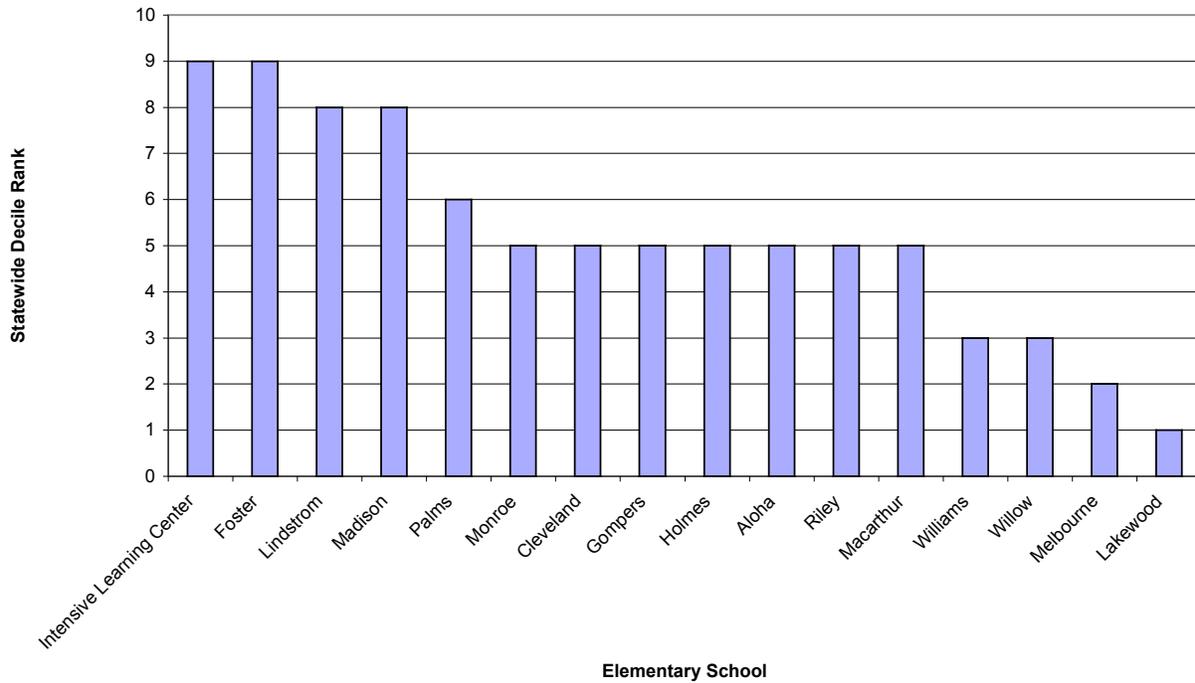
**High Performers:** Intensive Learning Center (BUSD), Foster (BUSD), Lindstrom (BUSD), and Madison (LBUSD).

**Middle Performers:** Palms (ABCUSD), Monroe (LBUSD), Cleveland (LBUSD), Gompers (LBUSD), Holmes (LBUSD), Aloha (ABCUSD), Riley (LBUSD), and Macarthur (LBUSD).

**Low Performers:** Williams (BUSD), Willow (ABCUSD), Melbourne (ABCUSD), and Lakewood (PUSD).

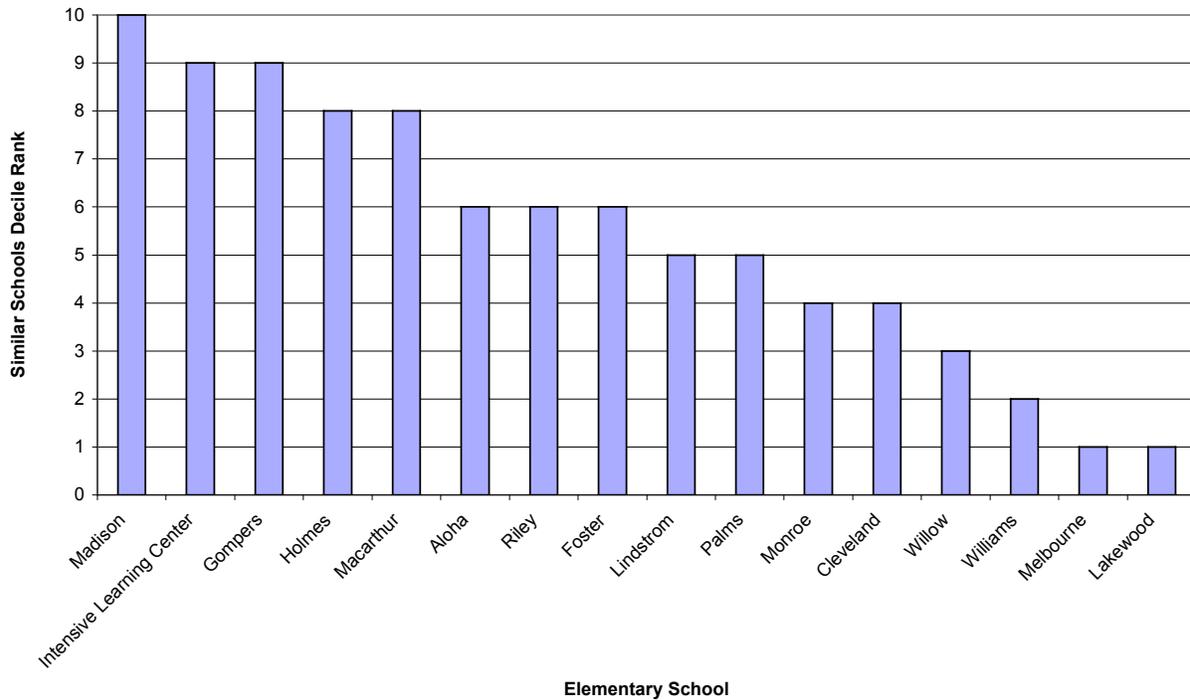
Three of the four high-performing schools are in the Bellflower USD; the middle- and low-performers are found in all of the four districts.

Figure 3  
 2002 Academic Performance Index (API)  
 Statewide Decile Rank of Lakewood Elementary Schools



- Compared to schools with similar socio-economic and school characteristics, as displayed in Figure 4, the performances range from “10” at Madison to “1” at Lakewood Elementary. While the schools do not break down into clear-cut categories as with the statewide comparison, several of the Long Beach USD elementary schools have high similar school rankings though their statewide rankings are not particularly high (Gompers, Holmes, and Macarthur). Madison stands out with an “8” statewide and a “10” for similar schools; Foster and Lindstrom, though high-ranking statewide, are less impressive when compared to similar schools (a “6” and a “5,” respectively); Willow, Williams, Melbourne, and Lakewood scored low in both statewide and similar school rankings; and Intensive Learning Center is in the top 20% of schools on both measures.

Figure 4  
2002 Academic Performance Index (API)  
Similar Schools Decile Rank of Lakewood Elementary Schools



Another indicator of school quality is improvement in the API score over the years. Analysis of the data reveals that:

- The Lakewood elementary schools have shown improvement in their API scores since 1999 when the Index was first calculated. However, only 12.5% (two schools--Intensive Learning Center and Foster) have achieved the State Board of Education’s performance goal for all elementary schools across California. Statewide, 20% of the elementary schools have reached the State Board’s performance standard.

**Middle Schools**

There is only one middle school (Hoover) located in the city of Lakewood. However, many Lakewood middle-school-aged students in LBUSD attend Bancroft and Demille middle schools; and most Lakewood students in ABCUSD attend Tetzlaff, Haskell, and Fedde middle schools located outside of the City of Lakewood.

- Hoover middle school is mid-range in terms of statewide performance (a “6”), but it is outstanding when compared to similar schools (a “10”).
- In ABCUSD, Tetzlaff scores the best statewide (an “8”), while Haskell and Fedde are in the bottom half in terms of statewide performance. All three schools do poorly compared to similar schools, with a score of “4” or lower.

- In LBUSD, Bancroft is the highest performer, with an “8” statewide and a “9” compared to similar schools. Demille does poorly in the statewide comparison (a “3”), but very well compared to similar schools with a “9.”
- None of the middle schools that serve most of the Lakewood students has achieved the State Board of Education’s statewide performance goal. But only 13% of middle schools throughout the State have accomplished that objective.

### **High Schools**

There are thirteen comprehensive high schools in the four school districts that serve Lakewood students, and three (Mayfair HS, Artesia HS, and Lakewood HS) are located in the City. Two of the high schools not located in Lakewood are outstanding—both Whitney and Cerritos in ABCUSD have scores of “10” in the statewide comparison—but few Lakewood residents go to those schools.

- Mayfair (in BUSD) and Lakewood (in LBUSD) are average performers in terms of both statewide and similar school comparisons.
- Artesia (ABCUSD) scores poorly in both comparisons—in the bottom 20% compared to all high schools and to similar schools.
- None of the high schools that serve most of the Lakewood residents has achieved the State Board of Education’s performance goal; but only 4% of all high schools in the state have reached that level.

In addition to the API results, other indicators of student achievement at the high school level were examined in this study including advanced placement exam results, graduates completing the UC/CSU high school course requirements with a grade of “C” or better, dropout rates, high school exit exam results, and the Scholastic Aptitude Test used in college admissions. Highlights are:

- Artesia, Mayfair, and Lakewood high schools had lower participation rates in the advanced placement (AP) examination program than the statewide average for high schools. Whitney, Polytechnic, Wilson, and Cerritos, compared to the Lakewood schools, had a higher percentage of students taking AP classes and exams, each student took more exams, and more students earned passing scores.
- Only about a third or less of the Artesia, Mayfair, and Lakewood high school graduates completed the UC/CSU course admission requirements with a grade of “C” or better. Artesia with about 13% and Lakewood with about 26% are below the statewide average of 30%; Mayfair had 35%.
- On the most widely used college entrance exam (the Scholastic Aptitude Test—the SAT), Lakewood and Artesia high schools were well below the statewide average performance; while Mayfair was right at the average.

## **FINDINGS CONCERNING ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS**

The schools in Lakewood face all the challenges of an urban district in California in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These include large numbers of students who do not speak English, a mixture of languages in each school, many pupils from low-income families, and many pupils whose parents have only a high school education, or less. These challenges are exacerbated by school sizes that are clearly too large, and the future could hold continued enrollment growth (probably, however, at a slower rate than in the last decade).

- Since 1993, enrollment in Bellflower USD has grown by 40%, in Long Beach USD by 27%, in Paramount USD by 24%, and in ABC USD by 5%. The rate of growth appears to be slowing.
- The schools in Lakewood are, for the most part, extraordinarily large. Elementary schools with 700 to 900 pupils are the norm. Two of the three high schools in Lakewood have more than 3,000 students.
- Twelve of the twenty-one schools in Lakewood have higher percentages of low-income pupils than Los Angeles County and the statewide average. Seven of the schools have more than 70% of their students from low-income families.
- There are significant differences among the schools in Lakewood in the prevalence of English Learners (EL).

Excepting Williams Elementary, three of the four elementary schools in Bellflower USD (the higher-performing ILC, Foster, and Lindstrom) have low percentages of EL students (less than 7%). Lakewood Elementary in Paramount USD also has less than 7% EL.

In contrast, both Long Beach and ABC schools in Lakewood serve many EL students, with eight of the eleven elementary schools in these two districts having more than one-fourth of the students classified as English learners.

- The City of Lakewood, the enrollment in the schools in Lakewood, and the total enrollment in the four districts all exhibit a high degree of racial/ethnic diversity.

### **Dimensions of a Lakewood Unified School District**

If the City of Lakewood were to become a unified school district, there would be approximately 13,394 resident students in the district who currently are enrolled in the public schools of the four districts (9,898 in Lakewood, and 3,496 outside of Lakewood). With the formation of a LUSD, it is likely that additional resident students would return from private schools and other school districts, thereby increasing district size somewhat. The breakdown by level is as follows:

<u>School Level</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Number of Sites</u>	<u>Students Per Site</u>
Elementary Schools	6,784	16	424
Middle Schools	2,082	1	2,082
High Schools	4,528	3*	1,510
Total	13,394		

\*Not including the Paramount Alternative Academy which houses approximately 290 pupils.

If two of the elementary schools were converted to middle schools, then average enrollment in the middle schools would be 694 and average enrollment in the elementary schools would be 485. The Paramount Alternative Academy site could serve as an alternative school or a continuation high school, with about 300 pupils. Enrolling about 500 pupils at each elementary site would permit removal of virtually all of the portable classrooms. If a district were created as described above, then approximately 12,778 students would have to return to their districts of residence as follows

<u>District</u>	<u>Number of Non-Residents Enrolled in 02-03 In Lakewood Schools</u>
ABC	1,758
Bellflower	3,722
Long Beach	6,514
Paramount	784
Total	12,778

Since 3,496 pupils would be returning from schools outside of Lakewood to the new LUSD, the four districts would have to house an additional 9,282 students (12,778 – 3,496). The net students returning by district would be:

<u>District</u>	<u>Number in Lakewood Schools</u>	<u>Lakewood Residents Outside Lakewood</u>	<u>Net Returning To Home District</u>
ABC	1,758	1,412	346
Bellflower	3,722	136	3,586
Long Beach	6,514	1,842	4,672
Paramount	784	106	678
Total	12,778	3,496	9,282

## **FINDINGS CONCERNING STUDENT MOBILITY IN THE LONG BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

The Long Beach USD operates an enormous and complex system of student transfer from home attendance area to school of attendance.

- In 2001-02, 39,031 students attended school outside their home area. Of these, 16,393 were bussed by the district, and 22,588 provided their own transportation to school.

The driving factors for student movement across many miles and throughout the district are:

- (1) An excess of students compared to school capacity living in the southwest and northwest areas of the district (two example: 7,120 students live in the Polytechnic HS attendance area while the school enrolls about 4,600 students; and 2,500 students live in the attendance area of Lincoln Elementary which enrolls about 1,200).
- (2) District policies that allow a pupil to attend a “school of choice” within a complex set of regulations and procedures.
- (3) Magnet schools which enroll students from throughout the district
- (4) Federal laws that require school choice for pupils in schools that are low-performing.
- (5) State laws promoting choice, including provisions relating to child care and parent employment location.

The result is that:

- 34.5% of elementary students attend a school outside their attendance area.
- 44.8% of middle school students attend a school outside their attendance area.
- 48.8% of high school students attend a school outside their attendance area.

Figure 5 shows where Lakewood residents living in the attendance areas of each of the seven LBUSD elementary schools in Lakewood go to school.

- In total, 72% of Lakewood elementary students go to their home school.
- 13% go to another elementary school in Lakewood.
- 15% go to an elementary school outside of Lakewood.

Figure 5

Where Lakewood Elementary Students Attended School in 2001-02

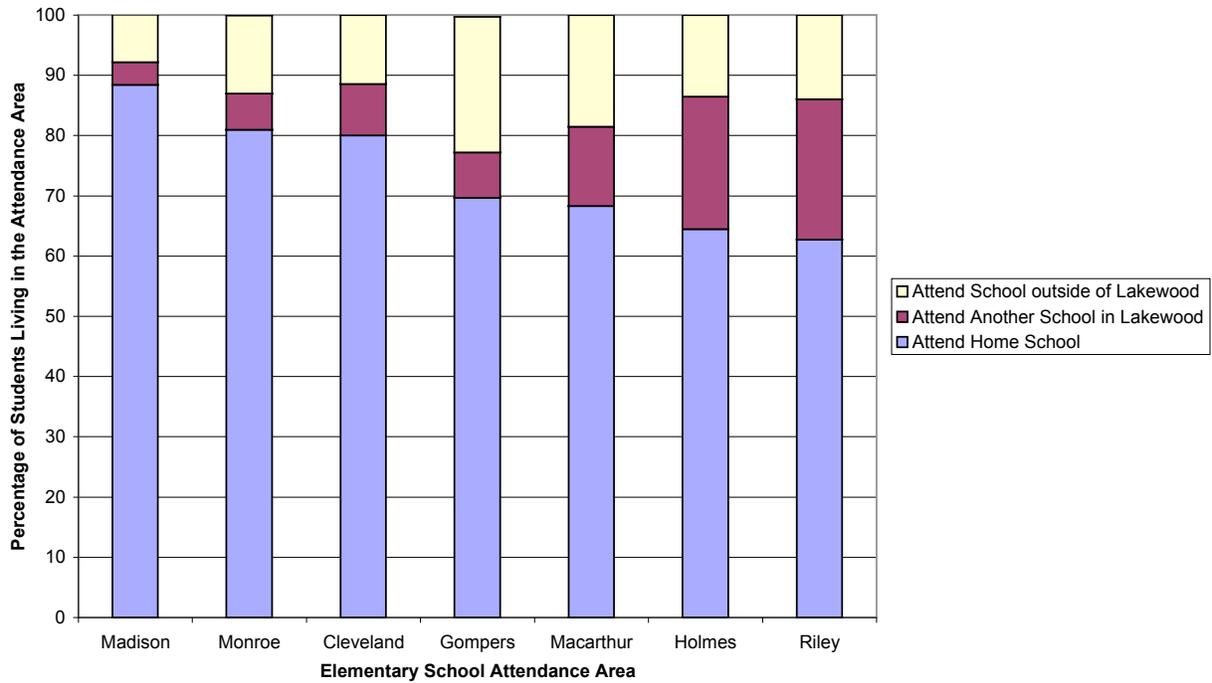
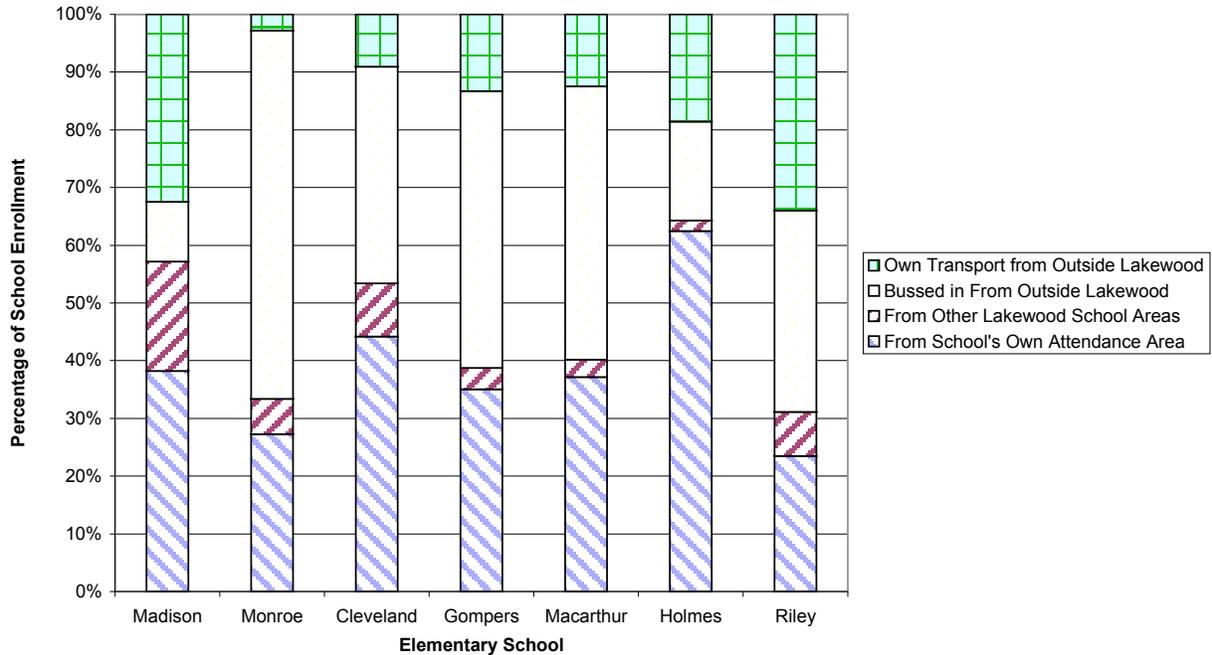


Figure 6 shows where students who attend each elementary school in Lakewood come from.

- In total, 38% come from the schools' own attendance area.
- 37% are bussed in from outside of Lakewood.
- 18% provide their own transportation to go to school in Lakewood.
- 7% come from the attendance areas of other Lakewood schools

Figure 6

Where Students Attending Lakewood Elementary Schools Came From in 2001-02  
Percentage of School Enrollment



The following facts summarize the flow of middle school students into and out of Lakewood:

- Of Hoover’s total enrollment of 1,099 in 2001-02, 506 students came to the school from outside Lakewood. Of these, about 300 were bussed to Hoover.
- Of the 1,605 Lakewood–resident middle school students in 2002-03, 565 went to Hoover, 165 went to Monroe, 598 to Bancroft, 100 to Demille, and 177 to twelve other middle schools throughout the district.

As noted above, 48.8% of high school students attend a school outside of the attendance area in which they live.

- 1,384 students (31% of Lakewood high school’s enrollment) was bussed-in during 2001-02. Of the students who attended Lakewood HS, 44% came from the school’s own attendance area, 20% from Polytechnic, 14% from Jordan, 9% from Cabrillo, and 8% from Wilson.
- 76% of Lakewood resident high school students went to Lakewood High; 6% to Polytechnic, 5% to Millikan, 5% to Wilson, and the balance to Educational Partnership HS and other small schools.

As the data has shown, many Lakewood parents choose to have their children educated in schools outside of Lakewood at all three levels—elementary, middle, and high. Any plan to reorganize the public schools serving Lakewood must take into account not only the facility shortage in LBUSD, but also the fact that Lakewood families have chosen to go to school throughout Long Beach Unified. How to mitigate or avoid disruption of the existing attendance pattern must be addressed in any reorganization proposal.

## **FINDINGS CONCERNING SCHOOL FACILITIES**

All the school districts serving Lakewood, except to a lesser extent ABC USD, have been hard pressed by enrollment growth to provide adequate school facilities.

- Since 1993, Long Beach has grown by the equivalent of 2 very large high schools (with 3,000 students in each), 6 middle schools (with 1,000 in each), and 13 elementary schools (with 600 in each).

Long Beach USD has dealt with the need for space by adding hundreds of portable classrooms to existing campuses.

- Since 1996, sixty-one portable classrooms have been placed on the seven LBUSD elementary school campuses in Lakewood.

Portables are an issue because they typically are not attractive and are often sited in locations that detract from the appearance of the school and the neighborhood while taking up playground space. On the other hand, interviews with principals consistently indicated that teachers prefer the new portables because they are air-conditioned and have more floor and wall space than traditional classrooms. However, teachers do complain about the older portables because they often lack air-conditioning. New portables are usually constructed with conduit for intrusion alarms, fire alarms, cable TV, and internet access. According to the LBUSD facilities branch, a new portable has everything a permanent classroom has.

- ABC schools in Lakewood have many fewer portables than Bellflower and Long Beach schools. Generally, the Bellflower elementary schools have a higher percentage of portables than the Long Beach elementary schools.
- Long Beach USD elementary schools in Lakewood use portables for about one-third of their classrooms. While this is quite high, all other areas of the district have higher percentages and in the northwest area the percentage is about 51%.

Another concern has been overcrowding in the Lakewood schools as a result of bussing pupils in from the Long Beach city-center and the northwest area of the school district.

- In terms of California Department of Education standards for pupils per acre, bussing pupils to the LBUSD elementary schools in Lakewood has not resulted in overcrowding.

- In many areas of LBUSD outside of Lakewood, pupils per acre are much higher than in ABC USD and Bellflower USD. However, in Lakewood, Long Beach USD and Bellflower USD schools are quite similar in terms of student density on campus.
- Three of the ABC schools in Lakewood have much lower densities than the Long Beach and Bellflower schools.
- Mayfair and Artesia high schools are much less crowded than Lakewood HS which is on the critically overcrowded roster. Except for Cabrillo HS, all the other Long Beach comprehensive high schools are also on the critically overcrowded list.

The major problem stemming from bussing has not been campus overcrowding or the use of inadequate school buildings, but the creation of excessively large schools.

### **FINDINGS CONCERNING RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS**

An important focal point of this study was two issues:

- Within each of the four school districts, are the schools in Lakewood treated fairly compared to the schools in the district outside of Lakewood?
- Within the City of Lakewood, how do the resources and programs compare across districts?

Our ability to address these issues is limited by the availability of comparable data. Numbers of full-time-equivalent teachers by subject, class size, teachers fully credentialed, employment of first-year teachers, percentage of teachers with a masters degree, average years teaching, and the availability of computers were analyzed.

- For the measures of school inputs believed to be valid and comparable that were available for this study, substantial differences between schools within districts, and across districts within Lakewood, were not found, except in a few cases.
- The difference between districts that stands out is the number of teachers working on an emergency credential. Lakewood Elementary in PUSD was found to be extremely high in this regard. And Long Beach USD schools, both inside and outside of Lakewood, had significantly more emergency-credentialed teachers than ABC and Bellflower.

However, our indicators of school inputs was limited. Other inputs, such as the quantity of textbooks and whether they are current, school maintenance, custodial services, laboratory equipment, classroom furniture, materials and supplies, support personnel such as librarians, nurses, and counselors, school secretaries, and others should be considered. However, one program feature, the availability of advanced learning opportunities in the high schools was examined in detail, and these findings are summarized in the next section.

## **FINDINGS CONCERNING ADVANCED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

In interviews with parents, citizens, and teachers in Lakewood the most frequently expressed concern was “dumbing down” of the curriculum in Lakewood schools. Regarding the elementary schools, it was emphasized that the Lakewood schools in LBUSD and ABC USD “watered down” the curriculum to the level of the weakest students, thereby neglecting the needs of the more advanced pupils. Concerning the high schools, it was expressed that there was a lack of high expectations and a lack of opportunities to take rigorous advanced courses. Respondents said that in LBUSD certain schools are academically oriented while others are “blue collar,” and that all high schools should offer challenging programs and courses.

Being able to take “Honors” and Advanced Placement (AP) classes is crucial for talented pupils with college aspirations.

- The Lakewood high schools—Artesia, Mayfair , and Lakewood—are far behind such schools as Wilson, Polytechnic, Cerritos, and Whitney in advanced learning opportunities.
- In ABC USD, Whitney HS had 18.61 full-time-equivalent teachers teaching AP classes, while Artesia High had only 1.56 FTE teachers offering AP courses.
- In Long Beach USD, Polytechnic offered 50 AP sections; Lakewood HS offered only 13 such classes.
- Lakewood HS was second to last (ahead of only Cabrillo HS) in Long Beach USD in combined “Honors” and AP subjects (both of which generate extra grade points in the UC-calculated Grade Point Average). It was particularly weak in the Arts and Mathematics.

## **THE CHALLENGE IN LAKEWOOD**

This report has shown the following:

1. Lakewood schools appear to receive equitable treatment from their districts in most respects.
2. The schools in Lakewood, except for Lakewood Elementary in Paramount, appear quite similar in terms of resources such as teacher qualifications, class size, technology, and advanced learning opportunities.
3. Nevertheless, the Lakewood schools vary greatly in student achievement. Several schools can be classified as high-performing. However, others are in the lowest ranks of performance of all 5,000 elementary schools in California; and in every school, there are subpopulations that are performing at levels that will greatly limit their future academic achievement.

Too many students in the Lakewood schools are not meeting the State Academic Content Standards for their grade level. In the crucial skills of English language arts, in many of the schools, 40% to 60% of the economically disadvantaged pupils and 10% to 20% of the non-economically disadvantaged students are performing “Below Basic” and “Far Below Basic.”

The skills that constitute proficiency at the end of third grade have been adopted by the State Board of Education as constituting what children are capable of knowing and should know at that age. Failure to learn these skills in the early grades carries over all the way through school and results, as this report has shown, in dropouts, low SAT scores, lack of preparation to take honors and AP classes, failure on the high school exit exam, and inability to get a grade of “C” in the UC and CSU required “a-g” courses. In short, if you cannot read and compute well by the end of the third grade, it is extremely difficult to ever catch up.

It might be argued that we need not be concerned about achievement in Lakewood schools because they perform at about the same level as statewide average performance. Statewide, 53% of disadvantaged pupils and 20% of non-disadvantaged students score “Below Basic” and “Far Below Basic” in English language arts.

However, the political leadership of the City of Lakewood has determined that this justification is not acceptable. The City Council wants “to raise the bar,” to accomplish the goal of all Lakewood students attaining proficiency in reading, math, science, and social science at each grade level.

Several key factors are at the foundation of the challenge in Lakewood. These are:

- Extraordinarily large schools.
- Long-distance bussing of students which greatly limits parental involvement in the school program.
- Large numbers of English Language learners.
- Large numbers of students from low-income families.
- A broad range of school-readiness and achievement within each school.
- Apparently ineffective methods being used to teach reading as evidenced by the high proportion of students who are not proficient readers by the end of the third grade.
- Four school districts with none closely linked to the municipal government of Lakewood.

## **SCHOOLS THAT WORK**

The schools in Lakewood are not unique. There are thousands of schools across the nation and many hundreds in California that face the same challenges as Lakewood.

There is growing evidence that if schools use proven-effective practices, virtually all students can achieve proficiency in basic skills. The National Research Council has concluded:

“... a strong message from the conference is that *demography is not destiny*. With sufficient will and expertise, there is no reason why achievement gaps cannot be reduced and eventually eliminated.”

The final chapter of this report outlines what are believed to be most effective practices based on investigations ranging from controlled scientific research to judgment based on practical experience. These practices are:

- High expectations
- Effective instructional methods based on research
- Quality preschool
- Full-day Kindergarten
- After-school programs
- Clear standards with aligned curriculum and instruction
- Frequent assessment and analysis of progress
- One-on-one tutoring
- Consistent instructional methods for all students
- Small school size
- Continuous professional development
- Planning and Preparation time for teachers
- Collaborative support among teachers
- Availability of instructional and technology facilitators
- Community and parent involvement
- Highly capable teachers

## **OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION**

In this part, MAP outlines potential next steps for the Lakewood City Council to consider. We offer a wide array of options: some would require substantial investment of time and money, some may not be politically feasible in the current financial and fiscal climate, and others the Council simply may not wish to pursue. The purpose here is to begin a dialogue which will lead to an action plan of “next steps” to improve the education for the youngsters who attend schools in Lakewood.

Before discussing specific alternative courses of action, it may be useful for the Council to consider a set of underlying goals that will guide its future direction. MAP, based on numerous discussions with Council members and interviews with Lakewood citizens, proposes for Council consideration the following six objectives. Council Actions should:

1. Enhance local control of schools in Lakewood.
2. Improve the education quality of each Lakewood school.
3. Provide equal education opportunities for all students throughout the city.
4. Provide challenging opportunities in Lakewood for high-achieving students.
5. Reduce the number of students bussed into Lakewood, while assuring that students who are now bussed are adequately housed.
6. Improve the access and influence of Lakewood citizens in their relationships with each of the existing school districts operating in Lakewood.

Given this set of objectives, in the next part we discuss potential approaches for the Council to pursue. First, we deal with the issue of school district reorganization.

### **Creating a New District.**

Many citizens in Lakewood continue to support the goal of a Lakewood Unified School District. At the same time, the resistance to such a proposal from the four districts affected still remains. In addition to the strong opposition, neither the political nor the fiscal climate in Sacramento bode well for the success of such an initiative. MAP, therefore, does not recommend reorganization at this time, but rather recommends a series of intermediate steps that would not stand in the way of future consideration for reorganization and in the mean time would, if implemented, improve the quality of schools in Lakewood, and meet many of the criteria established by the Council. When, and if, the time is more propitious to renew the push for reorganization, the Council might consider the original proposal or scaled-down versions of that proposal. We have included two additional examples in the full document for discussion purposes.

### **An Alternative Way to Proceed**

MAP has noted the difficulties that being a city effectively divided between four school districts has generated. In none of the school districts is the city of Lakewood an equal partner with the dominant city in that district. One of the complaints we heard repeatedly from Lakewood citizens was that it lacked an effective mechanism to leverage desirable change.

Therefore a good place to start would be with an approach in which Lakewood's presence and leverage could be enhanced.

### **Commission on Educational Excellence in Lakewood**

One way to advance the city's educational priorities is for the Council to appoint a distinguished, "blue-ribbon" panel of Lakewood citizens who would serve as an ongoing, structured, education liaison committee made up of prominent leaders in the Lakewood community. The work of the Commission would be to formalize relations with each of the four district governing boards with the sole purpose of enhancing educational opportunities for students who attend school in Lakewood. The Commission would provide a point of access for citizens who are often frustrated by the sense of remoteness of the four district governing boards, and by lack of clout Lakewood has had in dealing with the four districts. The panel would have the opportunity of developing and portraying a coherent and consistent message about Lakewood's educational aspirations and concerns.

We would further suggest that the Council take the leadership in creating an Excellence in Education in Lakewood fund with contributions from foundations and businesses to provide startup and ongoing support for activities designed to improve the quality of education.

Any number of new initiatives could be pursued and it is important that the City Council and the Commission determine its own agenda, after consultation with Lakewood citizens and the four school districts. Nevertheless, there are several promising avenues the Commission could pursue, including support for the following:

- **Preschool.** Investing in children early often obviates higher costs later. Assuring that low-income students in Lakewood have access to quality preschool programs will better prepare these students for the education they are about to receive. The City Council of West Sacramento, a city adjacent to the State Capitol, has declared the importance of preschool education and is working with its local school district in a concerted partnership to bring high quality preschool programs to its children. There are state, federal and foundation dollars available for such initiatives and both government and foundation program administrators encourage cross-agency partnerships.
- **Comprehensive School Reform** Efforts that have proven success.
  - **Direct Instruction.** Developed out of the University of Oregon, this is a K-6 program with the goal of improving academic performance so that by fifth grade, students are at least a year and a half beyond grade level. It focuses on reading, language arts and mathematics and uses field-tested materials, highly scripted lesson strategies and lots of small group instruction.
  - **School Development Program.** Developed out of Yale University, this is a K-12 program that is much different than Direct Instruction in approach, but

highly successful. The goal is to “mobilize the entire community of adults associated with the school (administrators, teachers, staff and parents) to support students’ holistic development and in so doing bring about student success.” The program features the creation of a comprehensive school plan, a strong professional development component for teachers and staff and heavy doses of monitoring and assessment.

- **Success for All.** Developed out of Johns Hopkins, this is a K-8 program that is focused on guaranteeing that each child in the school will learn to read. It features a research-based, prescribed curriculum in reading writing and language arts, with one-on-one tutoring, family support teams, and an on-site facilitator.
- **Increased Parental Involvement.** Helping parents participate in schools is an important part of building a successful school. Several California school districts have successfully been engaged in cooperative efforts with universities and colleges to enhance parental awareness of the junior high and high school course-taking patterns required in order to become eligible to attend higher education institutions. Others have developed guides to assist parents in helping their kids with their homework, sometimes including Saturday and evening courses for working parents. Still others have successfully sponsored (paid for) home visits by teachers to better connect schools with parents.
- **Increasing Charter School Options.** Many California school districts have taken advantage of California’s charter school program to establish unique elementary and secondary schools designed to foster innovation. For example, it might be possible to enter into discussions with the Long Beach USD to establish a charter high school at Lakewood High. Such a configuration could promote greater community participation and more direct control over the school by residents of the community. This, of course, could only be done with the cooperation of the district, its Board, and the cooperation and involvement of the faculty and staff at Lakewood High. The school could be a “theme” school, emphasizing one or more aspects of the curriculum. The “theme” could emerge from the community and student interest. This option would require a great deal of analytical work—the financial implications of high school charters is especially complex. The proposal would be more attractive, of course, if local businesses and interested foundations were willing to allocate additional funds for such an enterprise. There are foundations that have supported such efforts in other communities.

Not every charter need be for an entire high school. Creating “theme” schools within schools would provide many of the advantages of a charter, and not be so dramatic. The “school within a school” concept involves creating a smaller unit of say 400 or 500 students who would have a separate curriculum focused on an appropriate theme, concept, or learning approach.

- **Professional Development.** Professional development of the faculty is an absolute necessity for successful school improvement efforts. It is, unfortunately, an area where districts often find themselves short of funds. Augmenting district professional development programs would be a big help, especially in tight budget years. Perhaps, professional development activities could be devised that would be particularly appropriate for Lakewood schools as determined in consultation with faculty members and could involve all four districts. It also might be possible to focus the development activities on certain employee classifications, such as principals or counselors. We want to make it clear that professional development is the responsibility of the employing district and we are merely suggesting that those efforts could be augmented with outside support.
- **Vocational and Technical Education.** Generally speaking, vocational and Technical Education is a neglected part of the high school curriculum in California. Students do not have adequate access to high quality, technical training with high academic expectations. It is precisely this kind of training which best prepares students for good jobs or for further education and training. If the Commission were able to energize the business and corporate community to support technical education of the sort envisioned in the California Vocational and Technical Education Plan, many students would be not only better prepared for work but also for college. Part of any such initiative would include business partnerships, which could provide internships and strong linkages with nearby community colleges.

A major problem faced by high schools when offering vocational and technical classes is having up-to-date equipment and materials. Getting the business community to assist schools in attaining the latest technology would be a very important plus.

### **Other Tasks for the Commission**

Not all the functions require raising substantial amounts of additional funds; several merely require the Commission represent the Lakewood constituents on issues that involve the respective school district governing boards. Periodic monitoring and assessment activities are important as well as addressing particular issues that impact Lakewood students. Three areas which deserve further attention serve as an example of the kind of issues the new Commission should follow up on.

**Lakewood Elementary.** One of the areas of greatest concern to the citizens of Lakewood is the performance of Lakewood Elementary in the Paramount USD, one of the lowest performing elementary schools in the state. The federal education act, “No Child Left Behind,” requires that students who attend consistently underperforming schools which do not make adequate yearly progress be given the option of attending other schools, whether in the same district or other districts. Options that would provide choice for parents of children attending the underperforming school should be explored, with students being given the choice to stay in the Paramount District or attend a nearby Long Beach or Bellflower elementary school.

The Commission should analyze the situation carefully, monitor adequate yearly progress, and develop a recommendation after consultation with the affected community and the area school districts, about the best option for students.

**Lakewood High.** As one of the parents we interviewed described it, “What we need is a Poly East.” Lakewood High, as currently configured, offers limited opportunities to high achieving Lakewood students. Many of the residents with whom we spoke argued for converting it into a magnet for excellence, along the lines of Poly High. Hopefully this would entice more Lakewood residents to attend high school near their homes and would reduce bussing to other parts of the district. Offering additional options within Lakewood High, such as Advanced Placement Courses and small magnets, could be the initial step in a phase-in. The Commission should examine the issue, determine feasible solutions and be prepared to work with the Long Beach USD to increase advanced educational opportunities for Lakewood residents.

**School Facilities.** The Commission should work closely with the Long Beach USD governing board and administration to assure that, as much as possible, new bond funds and any new residential development projects provide permanent facilities in Long Beach for Long Beach residents, thereby reducing the numbers bussed into Lakewood.

Again, these are examples of the kinds of topics the Commission might opt to pursue. Each responds to a need as identified through out interviews. The Commission, of course, would be responsible for establishing its own list of priorities, consistent with the set of goals established by the City Council.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our study has determined that Lakewood schools have been treated fairly and equitably by the four districts that serve it. We have also determined that while some schools have performed quite well, others lag far behind. Lakewood schools perform at about the state average, but the Lakewood City Council has determined that average performance is not adequate. The Council desires to do what it can to improve the quality of education for students in Lakewood.

MAP has proposed the formation of a Commission on Educational Excellence, made up of leading Lakewood citizens to study issues in depth, monitor and assess progress, promulgate new initiatives and increase the Lakewood “say” on education issues impacting its citizens. This proposal is an ambitious one and will require a combination of hard work, abiding commitment, and substantial investment in time and money by the Council and the community. Hopefully it will foster a new era of good will and cooperation between the Council and the districts that serve Lakewood as they move together to improve public education in this community.