

## Mayor-LAUSD partnership detailed

### Villaraigosa has 5 years to get results at troubled schools

BY NAUSH BOGHOSSIAN, Staff Writer  
LA Daily News

Article Last Updated: 08/28/2007 09:25:08 PM PDT

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and L.A. Unified will unveil a partnership today that calls for the mayor to oversee two families of schools under a five-year contract that will not be renewed if the schools don't meet goals for test scores and graduation and dropout rates, according to documents obtained by the Daily News.

The partnership - which if successful can be expanded to include more low-performing schools - appears to model charter schools, giving each campus greater control over budget, hiring and curriculum.

The schools in the partnership will report to a nonprofit created by the mayor - the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools - rather than the local districts, but the LAUSD board and the superintendent will maintain ultimate control.

"Nowhere in the country will we have this kind of partnership," Villaraigosa said Tuesday, adding that he expects to see improvements by the end of the first year. "We're excited about this effort. It's a long time coming.

LAUSD Superintendent David Brewer said the schools he eventually will propose for the partnership will go to the school board for approval in the coming months.

"Our mutual goal is to work collaboratively to ensure that children in these schools graduate from high school college-prepared and career-ready," he said.

The district plans to contract with Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, which will provide oversight and set policy, but the group's executive director will be empowered with day-to-day management.

The mayor will manage the partnership and appoint the board of directors - which will include representatives from schools and the community. The draft of the agreement did not include names of appointees.

The plan emphasizes that there must be buy-in from a "significant number" of teachers, administrators, classified staff, parents, students and community members. The draft did not define that number, but the teachers union standard for such agreements is a two-thirds vote.

Interest in joining the partnership schools will be gauged through petitions that could be signed by teachers, administrators, classified staff, parents, students or community members.

By mid-October, Brewer, in collaboration with the board and the mayor, will create a narrow list of schools from which to choose. The chosen schools will be named in September and are expected to open no later than the 2008-09 school year.

The two high schools that will be in the mayor's clusters must have an Academic Performance Index of 1 or 2 - among the lowest ranked schools in the state.

The families will include the feeder elementary and middle schools of the chosen high schools, but not all the schools in the feeder pattern have to be included in the partnership.

Villaraigosa said they will start with two families of schools - as was proposed under his failed legislation, Assembly Bill 1381 - and if successful, expand to include more schools.

There are 20 LAUSD high schools within the city that fit the criteria. Roosevelt and Crenshaw highs are two on the list with whom the Mayor's Office has already had conversations.

Like charters, the mayor's schools will also get freedom from LAUSD policies, except those mandated by state or federal law.

For example, charter school Granada Hills High School can depart from LAUSD policy and create its own requirement that if students have six unexcused absences, they get an F in that class.

The partnership also will work with collective-bargaining units to make existing agreements more flexible for schools so there's more freedom to carry out the reforms.

The district and the partnership also will determine the formula for per-pupil funding, which will likely lead to more dollars reaching the school site rather than being filtered through the LAUSD bureaucracy.

The Mayor's Office will help develop a comprehensive plan for each family of schools and help facilitate services from the county, businesses and other entities to improve social, health, economic and other community services, according to the draft of the plan.

Behind the scenes, the community organizing efforts have already begun.

The Los Angeles Parents Union has already spoken to the mayor about the possibility of involving their parents in organizing for the possible clusters, said Ryan Smith, executive director of the nonprofit group.

And even though the partnership has not officially been announced, resistance to the plan has already begun.

LAUSD parents gathered Tuesday at Breed Street Elementary School - in Roosevelt's feeder pattern - to decry the mayor's possible oversight of that cluster of schools.

About 30 parents and 35 students attended the rally to protest the exclusion of parents and teachers so far in the process and to express a lack of confidence in Villaraigosa's ability to operate their schools, organizer Petra Villanueva said.

Villanueva said she doesn't believe the mayor will engage their community over the next few months to determine whether they will be in his clusters.

"I oppose the mayor because he never works with us and the schools and we were never involved in the new plan," said Villanueva, who has a child at Roosevelt and two grandchildren at its feeder, Euclid Elementary.

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*From the Los Angeles Times*

## Deal would give L.A. mayor say on some schools

**A partnership is expected to be announced today. The deal would take effect in 2008..**

By Duke Helfand and David Zahniser

Los Angeles Times Staff Writers

August 29, 2007

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and his former adversaries from the Los Angeles Unified School District are expected to announce a partnership today that will provide the mayor with a scaled-back version of the authority he has sought over city schools.

Villaraigosa and his senior education aides will play a major role in overseeing two of the city's lowest-achieving high schools and the middle and elementary schools that feed them under an agreement with the Board of Education and schools Supt. David L. Brewer.

"I think you'll see a change in the culture of our schools almost immediately," the mayor said Tuesday of the partnership that would begin to exert its influence over schools in the fall of 2008.

But Villaraigosa must first win over skeptical teachers and community organizers.

The president of the Los Angeles teachers union said he wanted two-thirds of the teachers at any school under consideration to agree before joining the mayor's partnership -- a higher threshold than the simple majority required to convert to a charter school, which operates free from many rules.

"While we are absolutely in favor of partnerships, whether with the mayor's office or other entities, there can be no hostile takeover of schools," said United Teachers Los Angeles President A.J. Duffy. "For a partnership to be productive, the vast majority of the members have to want it."

A spokeswoman for Villaraigosa said today's announcement would not specify a percentage of teachers who must vote for the partnership but instead would call for a "significant number" of instructors, parents and community members to favor such a move.

School board member Tamar Galatzan, a Villaraigosa ally, said Duffy's two-thirds demand would pose too steep an obstacle for grass-roots reformers. "If you make it harder to join [the partnership] than to join a charter, you're going to push schools that don't want to go charter in that direction."

Until recently, Villaraigosa and district leaders had been engaged in a protracted legal fight over legislation that would have given him substantial control over the school district, which has struggled for years to raise student performance and reduce the number of dropouts.

After losing two rounds in court, however, Villaraigosa abandoned his original plan in May and sought the partnership with district leaders, including a new board majority that he helped elect last spring.

The mayor, Brewer and school board President Monica Garcia are scheduled to unveil the outlines of their collaboration at a news conference this morning at John Liechty Middle School in the Pico-Union district near downtown.

The deal calls for the creation of a nonprofit organization -- representing the city, the district, parents and others -- that would contract with the district to manage two families of schools during an initial five-year period. The nonprofit group also would work with the district's innovation division to spread successful practices from the mayor's schools

districtwide.

Some L.A. Unified leaders said Villaraigosa can marshal resources for schools that might otherwise be impossible. The mayor and his deputies already have raised nearly \$2 million in philanthropic contributions for his educational initiatives, his top education advisor said.

Garcia, the mayor's closest ally on the school board, applauded his overtures.

Villaraigosa's aides said partnership campuses would be chosen by the end of this year from 20 of the district's lowest-achieving high schools, including his alma mater, Roosevelt High, in Boyle Heights.

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