AGENDA

1. Welcome
   Tamika Lang, The Boeing Company, Council Chair

2. Introduction of Topic
   David Rattray, Executive Vice President, L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce

3. Introduction of Speakers
   Deane Leavenworth, Leavenworth Endeavors, Council Co-Chair

4. Presentation – Edgar S. Zazueta, Senior Director of Policy & Government Relations, Association of California School Administrators

5. Presentation – Cristina de Jesus, President and CEO, Green Dot Public Schools California

6. Q&A – Facilitated by Deane Leavenworth, Leavenworth Endeavors, Council Co-Chair

7. Informational Items
   - Ed Source, Dissent within statewide task force adds tension to California’s charter school debate
   - Learners today, Leaders tomorrow

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Edgar S. Zazueta, ED.D.
Senior Director of Policy and Governmental Relations
Association of California School Administrators

Edgar Zazueta, Ed.D. currently serves as the Senior Director of Policy and Government Relations for the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). In this role, he leads the policy advocacy and political engagement efforts for the largest umbrella administrator organization in the United States. Zazueta joined the organization in 2015.

Prior to joining ACSA, Zazueta served as the Chief of External Affairs for Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). In this capacity, Zazueta represented the superintendent and board of education before community organizations and led legislative advocacy at the federal, state, and local levels of government for the second largest school district in the country. Zazueta’s tenure with LAUSD spanned nine years.

Prior to his service with the district, Zazueta worked as a legislative consultant for state Senator Denise Moreno Ducheny. Zazueta advised Senator Ducheny on K-12 education, higher education and numerous other state budget-related issues. In 2003, Zazueta was selected to participate in the prestigious California Senate Fellows Program in Sacramento.

In 2002, Edgar Zazueta was one of twenty (20) individuals selected nationwide to participate in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Fellowship program in Washington, D.C. While in the nation’s capital, he worked for the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. In this role, he traveled around the country collecting data in various Latino communities and assisted in the development of an advisory report that was presented to President George W. Bush on the status of Hispanic education in the United States.

A native of Southern California, Zazueta earned his Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science from California State University, Fullerton, a Master’s in Public Administration from the University of Southern California (USC) and his Doctorate of Education in Organizational Change and Leadership from the Rossier School of Education at USC.
Cristina is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Green Dot Public Schools California, a non-profit network of public charter schools. She has helped build the foundation of Green Dot’s success with a role in nearly every initiative and undertaking to boost student achievement across the network having originally joined Green Dot as the founding principal at Ánimo Inglewood Charter High School in 2002. As CEO, she oversees our twenty-two middle and high schools across Los Angeles serving 11,500 students. She plays an integral role in the collaboration with Green Dot’s Teachers’ and Classified Employees Unions and she is part of the core team working on Green Dot’s national expansion work.

Before being named President and CEO, she was Green Dot’s Vice President of Curriculum and Instruction for two years before serving as Chief Operating Officer and Chief Academic Officer. Prior to joining Green Dot, Cristina was an English and History teacher for seven years in the Santa Monica/Malibu School District and earned National Board Certification in Early Adolescent/English Language Arts. Cristina has earned a Masters of Education, a Masters of Education Administration, and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from UCLA.
Dissent within statewide task force adds tension to California’s charter school debate

Ed Source
July 25, 2019
John Fensterwald

Sitting on Gov. Gavin Newsom’s desk is a document that has added fuel to the roiling debate over legislation that would limit the growth of charter schools in California.

Newsom hasn’t taken a public position on the 13-page report by the California Charter School Policy Task Force, which he asked State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond to convene.

But the four members affiliated with charter schools on the 11-member task force say they’re concerned that the report misconstrues what the group supported. They are particularly critical of a package of proposals that Thurmond presented to the task force, put to a vote and then included in the report. Thurmond ran the task force meetings and oversaw the writing of the report.

Thurmond dismissed the criticisms as off-base and defends the wording of the report and the decisions behind it. Some committee members agree with him.

Newsom and Thurmond appointed the task force with equal representation of labor unions and charter schools.

The four members affiliated with labor unions were:

**Dolores Duran-Flores**, legislative advocate of the California School Employees Association;

**Lester Garcia**, political director of SEIU Local 99;

**Alia Griffing**, political director of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 57;

**Erika Jones**, a Los Angeles Unified elementary teacher and board member of the California Teachers Association.

The four members affiliated with charter schools were:

**Margaret Fortune**, president and CEO of the Fortune School of Education and chairwoman of the California Charter Schools Association;

**Cristina de Jesus**, president and CEO of Green Dot Public Schools;

**Beth Hunkapiller**, an administrator with Aspire Public Schools;

**Gina Plate**, vice president of special education for the California Charter Schools Association.

The other three members, representing the interests of school districts, were:

**Ed Manansala**, superintendent of El Dorado County and board president of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association;

**Cindy Marten**, superintendent of San Diego Unified, the state’s second largest district;

**Edgar Zazueta**, senior director of policy and governmental relations for the Association of California School Administrators.
The disagreement highlights the struggle Newsom and the Legislature are having as they determine the future role and growth of charter schools. California has more than 1,300 charter schools. They serve more than 10 percent of the state’s 6 million public school students.

During the next two months, Newsom’s advisers, charter school advocates and detractors will be negotiating language in Assembly Bill 1505, which could substantially restrict charter school growth. Its author, Assemblyman Patrick O’Donnell, D-Long Beach, and its co-sponsor, the California Teachers Association, are citing some of the contentious proposals in the task force report to support their positions. Their ability and that of charter advocates to sway public opinion on charter school reform could shape a potential deal on the legislation.

Earlier this year Newsom asked Thurmond to create the task force and report back by July 1 on two key issues: how to weigh a charter school’s fiscal impact on school districts and how to change the way a school receives authorization to operate.

In consultation with the governor’s office, Thurmond appointed representatives from both sides of the charter controversy. The task force’s meetings were not open to the public, with Thurmond’s staff taking notes but with no formal minutes.

EdSource reached out to all 11 members and spoke with the eight who responded. They differ on some pivotal details.

After meeting weekly for nearly three months, the task force issued a report with 13 proposals considered by the group: four recommendations, listed first, reached by consensus, and then seven more approved by a narrow majority. Thurmond included two other proposals that were discussed at length; one wasn’t voted on and the other narrowly failed to get a majority vote.

The most far-reaching of the consensus recommendations was approved toward the end of the task force’s work, after hours of draining and, members said, sometimes emotional discussions. It calls for giving school boards “additional discretion” over a charter petition by allowing them to consider the impact that a charter school would have on a district. “Fiscal” impact isn’t included but related factors are: whether additional charter schools would saturate a district, whether a charter petitioner could prove a need for the program it is proposing and whether a district is already offering a similar program to what the charter school proposed.

The report implies charter and union representatives made difficult tradeoffs to reach that recommendation. In giving a school board more authority to reject charter petitions, task force members “recognized there needed to be a balance with appeal rights,” it said. Agreeing not to recommend changes to the appeals process was a big concession from those who favored more restrictions.

The other three consensus recommendations are less provocative:

- Give school boards another month to decide on a charter application.
- Compensate district schools for a year for the loss of revenue from students transferring to a charter schools.
- Create a state agency to develop guidelines for authorizing and monitoring charter schools and training districts in using them.

**Seven proposals backed by the majority**

What’s in dispute is the package of seven proposals that Thurmond presented during a meeting on May 7. Thurmond called it a “framework” of issues for consideration. In creating the list of proposals, Thurmond said he included issues that already had come up. He said he considered it an even-handed list, but charter school advocates didn’t view it as balanced.
It included stronger restrictions on charter schools than the consensus recommendations, including some contentious issues initially proposed in Assembly Bill 1505:

- Imposing a one-year moratorium on establishing new virtual charter schools.
- Eliminating the State Board of Education from hearing appeals.
- Substantially limiting grounds for new charter schools to appeal to a county board of education.
- Prohibiting districts from authorizing charter schools located outside district boundaries.
- Allowing authorizers to consider fiscal impact in the authorization process.
- Establishing clear guidelines for charter authorizers.
- Updating charter school law to include new school accountability metrics and requirements.

Some task force members, including those affiliated with charter schools, told EdSource they disliked that they were asked to vote on the entire package with a yes or no vote, with no opportunity to amend it, after less than an hour of discussion at the end of a meeting. It passed 6-3, with two members having left the meeting early.

The four task force members affiliated with labor unions voted for the package, as did San Diego Unified Superintendent Cindy Marten and Edgar Zazueta, senior director of policy and governmental relations for the Association of California School Administrators.

But Zazueta said that he and others assumed they were taking a “straw vote” on a group of ideas that the task force would take up at a subsequent meeting.

“I believe there was merit in all of the issues,” he said, but there needed to be more discussion in an effort to try to reach a consensus on the items. “My assumption was we would come back” to them, he said.

In retrospect, he said, “I would not have been prepared to support the framework as a package without further fleshing it out.”

Task force member Margaret Fortune, president and CEO of the Fortune School of Education and chairwoman of the California Charter Schools Association, said that she didn’t expect to see the seven proposals in the final report. Listing each item as approved by the majority inaccurately implied that most members endorsed each recommendation on its own.

Only the consensus recommendations have “credence or credibility,” she said. “The rest of what has been included in the report is political noise.”

But Thurmond strongly disagreed, saying the report was a “complete and factual” account of every major topic that the task force considered and to leave out the vote “would be a glaring omission,” he said.

He said one mission of the task force was to review the issue of charter schools’ financial impact, “so I knew we had to have recommendations, even if not supported by the whole group,” he said.

Thurmond said that those who have complained about the majority recommendations simply “weren’t happy with the outcome of the vote.” He said they didn’t complain that the report included a proposal with a majority vote that went their way. That occurred when charter representatives helped defeat a proposal that would have changed a single word in statute to give school boards broad latitude to reject charter petitions. Instead of stating that school boards “shall” approve charter petitions that meet the legal criteria, it would have read “may.”

Task force member Erika Jones, a Los Angeles Unified elementary teacher and board member of the California Teachers Association, agreed with Thurmond that the list of majority proposals should be in the report.
“The public deserves to see what we discussed,” she said. The items contained “nothing new,” she said. All of the items were chosen from a “brainstorming list.”

“No one was blindsided,” she said.

But Cristina de Jesus, president and CEO of Green Dot Public Schools, said she too viewed the vote on it as a “pulse check” for a later discussion when all members were there. And the package was put on the agenda for the following two meetings in May, but, for reasons that aren’t clear, the task force didn’t subsequently discuss it.

Thurmond said any member could have raised it at any point, but none did. He said that he called every member to invite alternative proposals but none were submitted.

Thurmond included the framework in the draft report that was emailed to members on the evening of May 30. He invited feedback during a one-hour phone meeting the next morning. With little time for comments, Thurmond invited members to email or call staff with additional thoughts. Charter representatives said they emphasized to Thurmond and members of his staff they didn’t want the package of seven proposals included. Zazueta said he suggested omitting the proposals that conflicted with the more important consensus recommendations.

Thurmond and staff made wording changes but kept the basic structure intact when releasing it publicly a week later.

In the public debate since the release of the report, distinctions between the consensus and majority proposals have become blurred. Task force members from charter schools point to the consensus recommendations as reason to exclude the majority’s proposal to restrict the right of appeal. This contradiction “undermines the significance of folks coming together and their ability to put forward a united position,” Plate said.

“Now there is confusion,” De Jesus said.

But Marten, who favors including fiscal impact and restricting the right of appeal, said she saw no contradiction. The consensus recommendations represent “the floor” — the minimum restrictions the task force approved — while the majority-vote proposals represent “the roof” — controls that should be passed, she said.

Thurmond said he understood that the report “would never make everyone happy.” But it tells the full story about what happened, he said. “The task force did very important work, great work,” he said.
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Speakers, Titles & Organizations
- Edgar S. Zazueta
  Senior Director of Policy & Governmental Relations
  Association of California School Administrators
- Cristina de Jesus
  President & CEO
  Green Dot Public Schools California

Moderator
David Rattray
Executive Vice President, Center for Education Excellence & Talent Development
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
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Speakers’ Twitter Handles
- Edgar S. Zazueta: @EdgarZazueta
- Cristina de Jesus: @cdejesusgdps

Speakers’ Organization Twitter Handles
- Association of California School Administrators: @ACSA_info
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