LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Policy Bulletin

TITLE: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS AND HIGH SCHOOLS

NUMBER: BUL-1600

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Office of the Superintendent

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ROUTING
All Employees
All Locations

POLICY:

In order to provide students and teachers with a more personalized and caring learning environment, to provide a rigorous, standards-based curriculum in an identifiable context to all students, and to provide a portfolio of quality options for students, teachers, and parents, District policy requires the design of new secondary construction school configurations and the redesign of existing secondary school configurations into smaller learning communities of approximately 350- 500 students. Currently, large comprehensive secondary schools can serve more than 5,000 students and offer a wide range of courses in a departmentalized structure. This bulletin establishes guidelines and procedures for the implementation of Small Learning Communities in new and in existing secondary schools.

GUIDELINES: The following guidelines apply:

Characteristics/Attributes: Small Learning Communities (SLC) will incorporate common characteristics or attributes in their design: Unifying Vision/Identity, Rigorous Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment, Equity and Access, Personalization, Accountability and Distributed Leadership, Collaboration/ Parent and Community Engagement, and Professional Development (Appendix A).

Process for New Construction Schools: 1) The local district superintendent and school principal, with teachers and community stakeholders, create the vision, initiate the design, and determine the focus of each Small Learning Community in the host school. 2) The local district superintendent completes and submits a proposal for a new school SLC design Proposal to the Central SLC Committee for recommendation to the Superintendent of Schools for approval. 3) The Superintendent approves or disapproves the proposal. In the event the plan is disapproved, the Office of School Redesign will provide technical assistance and the plan will be resubmitted to the Superintendent of Schools.

Process for Conversion Schools: 1) The school principal works with all school stakeholders to initiate the design process and to determine the impact of potential Small Learning Communities on programs at the school. 2) The principal presents the general work plan and school impact report to the School Site Council for information and input. 3) Individual SLC design team(s), composed of representative stakeholders, submits a letter of intent to the School Site Council. 4) With the assistance of the school's planning team and local district support staff, the individual design team(s) develops a proposal and school impact report and presents them to the School Site Council for recommendation to submit to the local district superintendent. 5) The local district superintendent recommends that the proposal be submitted to the Central SLC Committee. 6) The Central SLC Committee recommends that the proposal be approved by the Superintendent of Schools. 7) The Superintendent approves or disapproves the proposal. In the event that the plan is disapproved, the Office of School Redesign will provide technical assistance and the plan will be resubmitted to the Superintendent of Schools.

Professional Development and Technical Support: Professional development and/or technical support will be made available to design teams upon submission of their letter of intent. This support will be provided by staff from the local district and/or from the Office of School Redesign.

Appeals: It is intended that school design teams be provided with appropriate technical assistance so that all proposals will ultimately be approved by the Superintendent. In the event that a proposal is not approved, the design team has the right to appeal the decision to the Board of Education.

Central Small Learning Community Committee: This committee is responsible for recommending that SLC proposals be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools for approval. In addition, this committee advises the Superintendent on specific issues related to the implementation of Small Learning Communities. Membership includes representation from the following stakeholder groups: students, parents, community, local district staff, United Teachers of Los Angeles, Associated Administrators of Los Angeles, and central office staff. Various ex oficio members will be included on an as-needed basis.

Timeline: 1) New schools will open structurally as Small Learning Communities and are expected to fully align with the attributes at the start of their second year. All students and teachers will be assigned to a Small Learning Community. 2) Conversion schools will begin the process at different times, depending on factors such as Program Improvement status and readiness to move forward. Although some may take less time, it is anticipated that schools could take up to three to five years to phase in from conceptualization to full implementation with alignment to the attributes. The goal for the converted school is that all students and teachers will be assigned to a Small Learning Community at the completion of the redesign process.

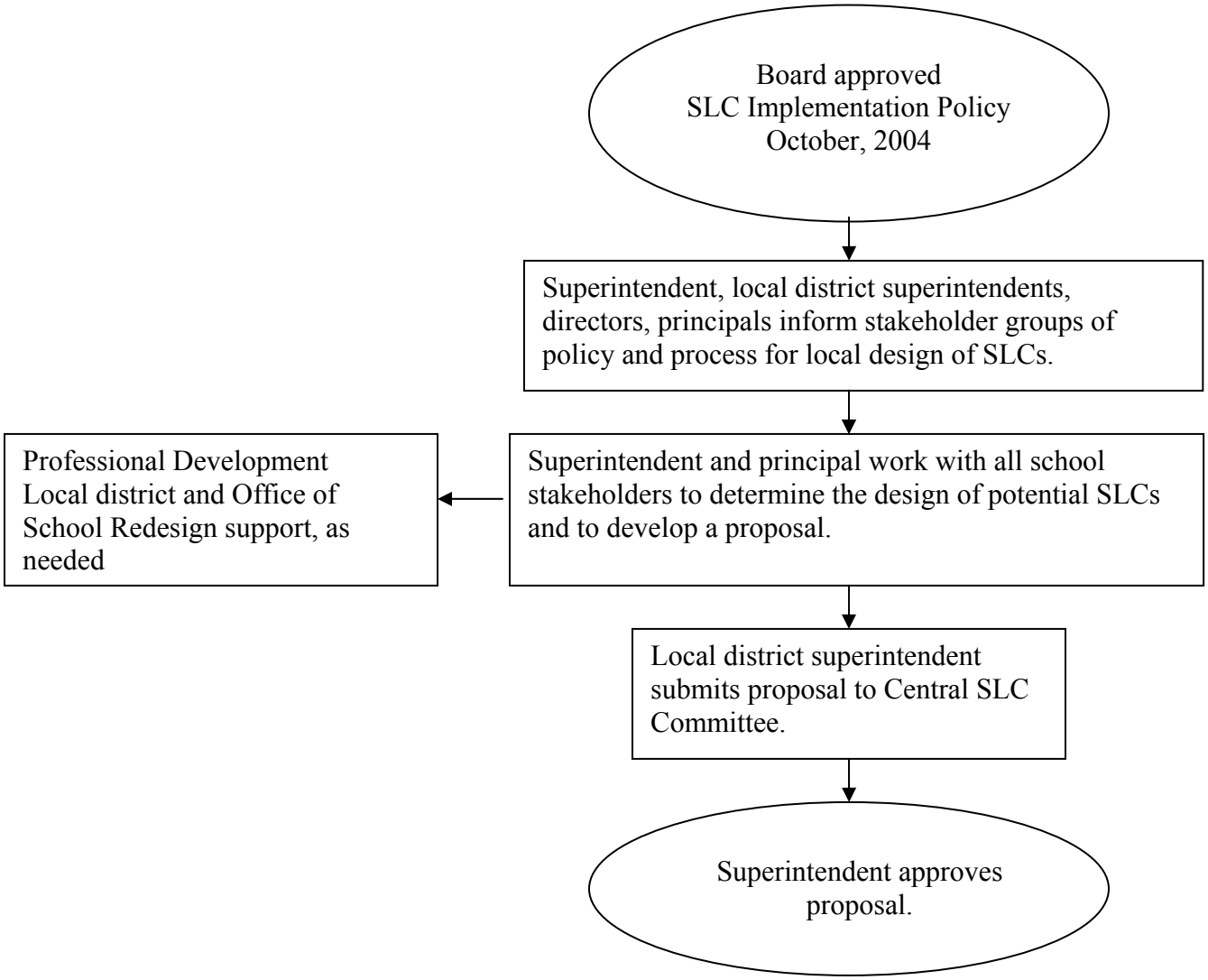
School Impact Report: SLC design teams will be required to submit a school impact report with their proposals. This report is intended to ensure that that school facilities and resources are equitably shared and maintained, allowing for smooth transitions from the former comprehensive high school to fully integrated Small Learning Communities.

AUTHORITY: This is a policy of Superintendent of Schools

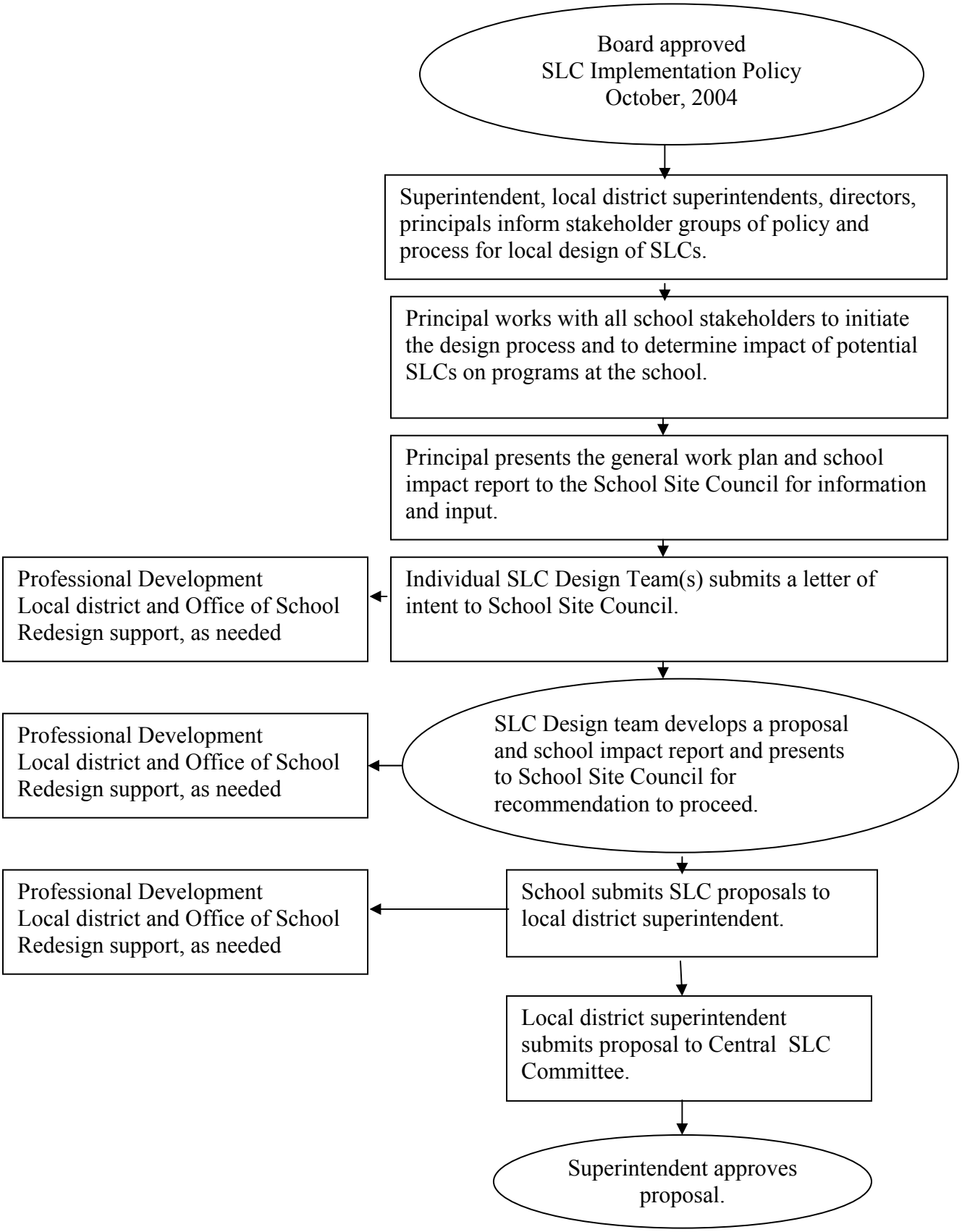
RELATED RESOURCES: Office of School Redesign (213) 241-8379.

ASSISTANCE: For assistance or further information, please contact your local district Small Learning Communities administrator.

SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION STEPS FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION SCHOOLS



SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION STEPS FOR CONVERSION SCHOOLS



Appendix A

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Small School Learning Communities

Characteristics/Attributes of Small School Learning Communities
(REV. 11.18.04)

Los Angeles Unified School District's "Small Learning Communities" will have the following core of common characteristics or attributes guided by Board policy and the Superintendent's priorities as referenced in Closing the Achievement Gap: Improving Educational Outcomes for Under-Achieving Students. All attributes and practices should result in increases in student performance of standards and decreases in the achievement gap.

1. **Unifying Vision/Identity:** A shared vision created by a group of educators, support staff, students, parents, and community who comprise the small learning community and who assume responsibility for the learning of every student through a distinctive and focused standards-based curriculum.

2. **Rigorous Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment**: A standards-based educational program embodies high expectations for every student so that they achieve grade-level standards, use appropriate technology, district adopted textbooks, and materials to support instruction, meet high school graduation requirements and A-G college entrance requirements, and are prepared for post secondary experiences and the world of work.

   Instruction is adapted based upon learning needs within a rigorous culturally relevant and linguistically responsive curriculum; student performance is measured to report on progress and accomplishments and to inform future instructional practices. Multiple forms of standards-based assessments are used including some benchmarks by the district. Additionally, school indicators are used as measures of school progress including, for example, attendance, dropout rates, number of high school graduates, etc.

3. **Equity and Access**: Every student will participate in a rigorous quality curriculum that is culturally relevant and linguistically responsive to their unique learning needs, thereby eliminating achievement gaps between groups of students.

4. **Personalization:** A demonstration of sustained and mutually respectful personal relationships where every student is well known by a group of educators who advise/advocate for them and work closely with them and their families over time. The size of the Small Learning Community is appropriate to its vision and mission, generally ranging from 350-500 students.

5. **Accountability and Distributed Leadership**: Members of the Small Learning Community work together, share expertise, and exercise leadership to ensure that student achievement is the intended result of all decisions. They retain primary responsibility, appropriate autonomy, and are accountable for making decisions affecting the important aspects of the small l learning community.

Appendix A

6. **Collaboration/Parent and Community Engagement**: All members of the Small Learning Community are viewed as critical allies and are significantly included in the school community (i.e., students, teachers, support staff, parents, administrators, business, and community partners). An ongoing partnership is aimed at supporting continuous improvement of student achievement. Authentic engagement leads to sustained participation in critical school decisions and implementation of school efforts.

7. **Professional Development**: Small Learning Communities demonstrate implementation of central and local district training and resources. Continuous professional learning is focused on improving practice and performance as a vehicle for school improvement and program coherence. This is accomplished through collaboration, reflection, the analysis of student work and data, and a review of pedagogy. Common planning time is provided for teachers to gain in-depth knowledge of their content standards to work on lesson design review student work and performance data. Professional development is monitored and assessed regularly for effectiveness and implementation to ensure continuous school improvement.