In order to improve our educational system, information must be compiled about the individual schools in our community. School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs) are a method of assembling this information that is used widely throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District and elsewhere. The goal is for a completed SARC to be compared to SARCs from other schools so that disparities, as well as their causes, can be identified.

As graduate students in the Teacher Education Program at the University of California, Los Angeles we have examined the existing SARC in detail. With the invaluable help of LAUSD students, teachers, and faculty as well as from students and professors from UCLA we have identified what we see as the major problems with the current SARC. In an attempt to be proactive we have created a new School Accountability Report Card that attempts to solve these problems.

The following are elements of the current SARC that we see as problematic:

1. **The current SARC relies too heavily upon information derived from standardized tests.** The focus deemphasizes elements of the school environment that we feel are more essential to learning (i.e. facilities and the level of agency amongst students, staff and community members). In its current form the SARC demonstrates that schools vary in their standardized test scores and little else. It is our belief that even if standardized test scores improved in a school, conditions could still exist that would impede the education of the student body. Our SARC intends to place the focus on multiple elements of the school so that a more accurate assessment can be made.

2. **The current SARC has no human element.** Our SARC was created with the human players in mind. Schools are a place where our children spend roughly half the time they are awake, five days a week. It is also a place where adults are employed to assist students in learning and growing. Schools are also an interconnected part of the community in which they are situated. Our SARC has been designed to illustrate what life is like for students, staff, and community members whose lives are affected by the school.

3. **The current SARC does nothing to inform the public as to why particular questions were asked.** Our SARC is divided into two categories (Facilities and Agency), each of these categories includes an introduction section explaining the questions to follow, their importance to the cause of improving our schools and the social theory behind them.
4. The current SARC does not provide details on how to take action in response to the information recorded on the form. The final element of our SARC is a compilation of resources that can be used to make proactive change in our schools.

Included in the pages that follow are two sample SARCs; one on Nightingale Middle School and one on Belmont High School, which are both located in District F of LAUSD. Our scope is not exhaustive; we would invite concerned parties to invent new categories for this form. It is our sincerest hope that this format for the School Accountability Report Card will be utilized by students, teachers, faculty, community members, and politicians to take a new look at the state of affairs in our schools and to begin to organize to rectify the situation.

Facilities & Learning Resources/Materials

As stated in the introduction to our SARC, we deliberately created a facilities category because we feel that this category is grossly overlooked in the State and (by extension in the) LAUSD SARC. Upon viewing the information on “school facilities” in the SARC, the school’s physical plant is practically evaded and misconstrued by the fact that each school in LAUSD provides the same two-sentence description: “Major maintenance improvements in campus appearance to promote a positive learning environment. Please call the school for additional information.” Our SARC probes much deeper than these two sentences. Our SARC aims to inquire how facilities affect students’ learning and growing academically. Do the facilities allow students the opportunity to explore and nurture their gifts and talents?

We believe that it is no mistake on behalf of the State and the LAUSD SARC to fail to address the material conditions of the school. Their motives are propelled by their need to hide a facility laden with unequal resources that do not promote high academic standards. A facility that is disadvantaged creates disadvantaged learning opportunities. Moreover, by not evaluating the facilities, the State and LAUSD SARC attempts to hide the racial and class segregation that is perpetuated in the school environment and, by extension, in the community and city at large: the State would rather let these deep-seated, historical issues go unquestioned.

To borrow from Jonathan Kozol, very raw and savage inequalities indeed manifest themselves in the material conditions of the schools, which deprive students of the essential educational opportunities to learn and better themselves. As these students struggle, other students in the State enjoy an abundance of quality education in facilities that are far from inferior. Facilities that are deficient do affect student learning by (potentially) wearing down their stamina and defeating their ambitions. Precisely because the State and LAUSD SARC do not ask the following questions, we have decided to do so.

1. Are the bathrooms on your campus (check all that apply):
   - enough for the population of students
   - clean
   - equipped with doors that lock properly
   - open during school hours
   - open during class time
   - supplied with enough toilet paper, seat covers, soap, paper towels
   - none of the above

1. a. How do the conditions of the bathrooms at your school make you feel
   - That the school cares about my basic needs
   - That the school does not care about my basic needs
2. Are the water fountains on your campus (check all that apply):
   - clean
   - enough for the population of students
   - working properly
   - none of the above

2.a. How do the conditions of the water fountains of your school make you feel?
   - That the school cares about my basic needs
   - That the school does not care about my basic needs

3. Which of the following extracurricular sports are offered at your school (check all that apply):
   - Baseball
   - Basketball
   - Boxing
   - Football
   - Golf
   - Soccer
   - Softball
   - Swimming/Water Polo
   - Tennis
   - Track & Field
   - Volleyball
   - Wrestling
   - Other ____________________
   - None of the Above

3. a. Are the areas provided for athletic activity (check all that apply):
   - Clean
   - Enough for the population of students
   - Safe
   - Well maintained

   Please include a picture(s) of the playing fields/grounds.

3. b. How do the conditions of the athletic areas at your school make you feel?
   - That the school cares about my athletic needs.
4. How many teachers have to teach in more than one room each day?
   - 0
   - 1-20
   - 21-40
   - 40+

4.a. How many teachers have to change rooms when tracks change?
   - 0
   - 1-20
   - 21-40
   - 40+

4.b. How many students have to change rooms when tracks change?
   - 0
   - 1 – 500
   - 501 – 1000
   - 1000 +

5. Are inter-session or evening class offered on campus?
   - Yes
   - No

5. a. If yes, what time do daytime teachers need to leave their rooms to accommodate those classes?
   - Before noon
   - Immediately after school

6. How does the distribution of classrooms make you feel?
   - That the school cares about my basic needs.
   - That the school does not care about my basic needs.

7. Students, think about the passing period in which you travel the farthest distance. In that passing period do you:
   - Have time to go to your locker and use the facilities (bathroom and/or water fountains) and walk to class?
   - Have time to go to your locker OR use the facilities and walk to class?
   - Have time just to walk to class
   - Have to run to class

8. Are there enough maintenance workers on duty?
   - Yes
   - No

   During school hours?
   - Yes
   - No

   After school hours?
   - Yes
   - No
8.a. On a scale of 1 - 3, please rate how the maintenance workers at your school are treated:
1- Maintenance workers are NOT treated with respect
2- Maintenance workers are treated with SOME respect
3- Maintenance workers are treated VERY respectfully

9. English Language Learners feel that they are provided the materials and resources that they need in order to pass the SAT 9. Please agree/disagree with this statement in accordance to the following scale.

1 - Disagree
2 - Partly Disagree
3 - Somewhat Agree
4 - Agree

10. Please rate the effectiveness of school facilities and resources in preparing students for college.

1- Students do NOT feel that adequate facilities and resources in order to be prepared for college are provided.
2- Students feel that SOME adequate facilities and resources in order to be prepared for college are provided.
3- Students feel that a MODERATE amount of adequate facilities in order to be prepared for college are provided.
4- Students feel that an ABUNDANT amount of adequate facilities in order to be prepared for college are provided.

Please explain:

11. Are there enough textbooks for each student on campus?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

11.a Do students have a set of textbooks they are allowed to leave at home?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

11.b Are the textbooks:
   ○ New
   ○ In good condition
   ○ In bad, but usable, condition
   ○ In need of replacement

11.c How do the condition of textbooks at your school make you feel?
   ○ That the school cares about my basic needs.
   ○ That the school does not care about my basic needs.

12. Please rate the availability of teaching equipment (overhead, TV, VCR, LCD projector, etc.)

1- Teachers NEVER have access to the equipment they need to aid their lesson plans.
2- Teachers RARELY have access to the equipment they need to aid their lesson plans.
3- Teachers SOMETIMES have access to the equipment they need to aid their lesson plans.
4- Teachers ALWAYS have access to the equipment they need to aid their lesson plans.

13. Do teachers and students have access to printers and Internet accessible computers in class?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

14. Are there enough working computers on campus for teachers and students?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

15. Does a computer lab exist on campus?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

15. a. Is the computer lab:
   ○ Accessible to outside community members (parents)
   ○ Clean
   ○ Equipped well for the population of students
   ○ Open before school
   ○ Open during school hours
   ○ Open during class time
   ○ Open after school
   ○ None of the above

16. Are there technology trainings provided for (check all that apply):
   ○ Students
   ○ Parents
   ○ Teachers
   ○ None of the above

17. How does the state of technology at your school make you feel?
   ○ That the school cares about my technological needs.
   ○ That the school does not care about my technological needs.

**Agency**

“We must press for an educational environment in which youth can develop the capacity and commitment collectively to control their lives and regulate their social interactions with a sense of equality, reciprocity, and communality”
(Bowles and Gintis, *Beyond The Educational Frontier*, 120)

Too often, administrators and government officials claim to be searching for the root of the problems in our schools without talking to the people most directly affected by the problems: the students, parents, and teachers. These communities understand the reality of what is happening in our schools because we experience it every day. Concerned students, parents, and teachers are shut out from decision-making and denied a voice in school policies that affect our lives, especially in urban schools. Our concerns and ideas to make our schools better frequently go unnoticed or unaddressed by administrators and/or government officials. Instead of building a community where everyone’s ideas matter, our schools keep us divided and isolated. They require us to conform to their policies, to compete with each other, and to assimilate and accept mainstream culture. Far from democratic institutions, our schools mirror and perpetuate the inequalities of our society.
We think students, parents, and teachers should be on the forefront of the movement to improve our schools because we are the people most affected by their shortcomings. Instead of having administrators and elected officials at the top make decisions for us, we want to make our schools better from the bottom up. Schools should be places where we analyze and work to reverse inequality, not replicate it. Our schools should work to build a community and equip us with the skills and knowledge needed to take action and to improve our lives.

The following questions are designed to spark discussion around the role our schools play in promoting agency and empowerment of students, parents, and teachers. As you answer the questions, think about how decisions are made at your school. Can students learn if they aren’t engaged, motivated, and active participants in their communities? Are students, parents, and teachers listened to? What rights do we have? What do you think needs to be done to improve our schools?

1. What type of student organizations exist on your campus? (Check all that apply.)
   - Curriculum Development (electives, core classes, etc)
   - Identity organizations (organized around racial/cultural concerns)
   - Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender organization
   - Multicultural organization. Explain:______________________________
   - Political (juvenile justice, peace, police brutality, etc)
   - Student government
   - Student advisory council
   - Other ___________________________
   - None of the Above

2. What are the primary duties/responsibilities of the student organizations you are involved with? Check all that apply.
   - Addressing “isms” (racism, homophobia, stereotypes, ageism, etc.)
   - Addressing school problems (facilities, materials, student population, etc)
   - Advising teachers, parents and staff
   - Community organizing
   - Community service
   - Cultural awareness
   - Educational achievement
   - Fundraising
   - Organizing school functions (prom, pep rallies)
   - Social gatherings
   - Youth empowerment
   - Other ___________________________

3. If you are a member of a student organization, how much do you feel that your voice/opinion makes a difference/is heard by the Administration/adults? Check one.
   - Always
   - Often
   - Seldom
   - Never

4. How active is your student organization(s) outside of school? Check one.
   - Very active
   - Sometimes active
   - Non-active
5. Student/adult interaction at this school is: (Check one)
   o Positive
   o Negative

6. How are problems, such as an increase in school/community violence and racial tensions, handled at your school? Check all that apply.
   o Community forums
   o Dialogue circles
   o Discussions in class
   o Focus groups
   o Intercom announcements
   o School-wide assemblies
   o Other ______________
   o None of the above

7. Does a parent organization/council exist on your campus?
   o Yes
   o No

8. What are the primary duties/responsibilities of the parent organizations at your school? Check all that apply.
   o Addressing “isms” (racism, homophobia, stereotypes, ageism, etc)
   o Addressing school problems (facilities, materials, student population, etc)
   o Creating school policies (security, dress code, etc.)
   o Designing curriculum (bilingual education, electives, etc)
   o Advising teachers, parents and staff
   o Booster club/Fundraising
   o Community organizing
   o Community service
   o Cultural awareness
   o Educational achievement
   o Social gatherings
   o Parent empowerment
   o Other ___________________

9. If you are a member of a parent organization, how much do you feel that your voice/opinion is heard/valued? Check one.
   o Always
   o Often
   o Seldom
   o Never

10. Does the school provide any of the following for parent meetings? Check all that apply.
    o Transportation
    o Food
    o Childcare
    o Translation
    o Accessible meeting times (day and night)
    o Adequate space for meetings
    o Designated parent center
    o Other ______________
11. If parents are not actively involved in a parent organization, how are they informed about school issues? Check all that apply.
   - Letter sent to home
   - Phone call
   - School representative visits home, community center, church, etc
   - Other ________________
   - Not contacted

12. As a parent how comfortable/welcome do you feel on campus? Check one.
   - Always welcome, totally comfortable
   - Occasionally, somewhat comfortable
   - Rarely welcome, mostly uncomfortable
   - Never welcome, uncomfortable

13. How often do teachers have department meetings? Check one.
   - Once a week/bimonthly
   - Monthly
   - Quarterly
   - Yearly
   - Other ____________
   - Never

14. If you are a teacher, how often do you feel that your voice is heard? Check one.
   - Always
   - Often
   - Seldom
   - Never

15. If you are a teacher, are you involved in any of the decision-making for the following? Check all that apply.
   - Curricular development
   - Hiring
   - Professional development days
   - School policy
   - Other ________________
   - None of the above

16. What campus grievances have been filed by the teachers’ union?
Were any resolved? Which ones? How?

**Plan of Action**

“[Our] children have hopes to vote and participate in their communities. [Our] children have desires to challenge themselves and to learn. But those dreams and hopes and desires will be forever frustrated if California continues to relegate these children to learning conditions that should shock the conscience of any reasonable person.”


Have the results that your school produced for this SARC surprised, dissatisfied, or even frustrated you? If so, all of these reactions are natural and understood. But what is important now is the answer to this question: What will you do now? Because the simple fact of the matter is that you should not have to be dissatisfied or frustrated. You and your community deserve more. In fact, it’s the law. As stated in Article IX, section 5 of the California Constitution, “access to public education is a right enjoyed by all, not a privilege available for purchase” (Williams v. State of CA). The state of California has promised this much to its people, have they followed through for your community? Many California organizations including the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) have come to the conclusion that the State has not fulfilled their promise. This is why they have brought a class action lawsuit against the State of California on the behalf of communities all over the state. While the case, Williams v. State of California, has yet to be decided, the point has already been made clear. That is: there is work to be done if we are to better the conditions of our schools. And certainly this work for better schools does not have to take place on the larger scale as with the case of Williams. Perhaps the most effective avenues for change can be found on a
more local level with grass roots organizing. Do you think that students, parents and teachers need more of a say in what is happening in our schools? Get involved! Visit and observe classes. Attend school events. Make your presence known! Talk with other students, parents, and teachers about what problems you see around school. Request your school’s Action Plan and arrange regular meetings with your administrators. Attend and speak up at school board meetings. Let the decision makers know that your concerns won’t be ignored!

The following is a partial list of resources and organizations that can help you organize at your school and make it a more democratic place to learn.

**Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ)** - A coalition of students, parents, and teachers throughout LAUSD committed to holding the District responsible and to transforming schools into more democratic places of learning. Meetings are held once a month and actions are planned around various campaigns. The organization is currently engaged in a campaign around standardized testing and calling for an end to the High School Exit exam.

**CONTACT:**
- Kirti Baranwal (323) 730-8570
- Rebecca Solomon (213) 484-9369

**Youth Organizing Communities (YOC)** - is a student run organization working to build youth power in Los Angeles. YOC organizes to ensure Educational Justice for all youth, by creating campaigns to challenge the existing social and economic inequities. YOC also builds power across California by coordinating a statewide network working for Educational Justice. Campaigns focus on educational access, better schools, and an end to the criminalization of youth, anti-globalization, etc. also organizes annual strike school for youth with skills building and organizing workshops.

**WEB:** www.schoolsnotjails.com
**PHONE:** 323.780.7874

**Teaching to Change LA**
**PHONE:** (310) 206-8725

**for more information on Williams v. State of California, visit:**

http://www.publicadvocates.org
http://www.idea.gseis.ucla.edu/resources/williamscase/index.html