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ABSTRACT

This analysis is the seventh of a series of seven reports on the ways that the urban fiscal crisis has affected children. The fiscal containment imposed on California schools after the enactment of Proposition 13 in 1978 has resulted in changes in urban high school curricula over the past five years. A telephone survey of school personnel and parents in the state's eight largest urban school districts was conducted to assess the nature and extent of curricular change. Summary conclusions include the following: (1) the elimination of the "comprehensive" high school was seen as directly related to financial constraints; (2) loss of "comprehensiveness" was characterized by the elimination of arts, enrichment, and vocational courses; (3) the primary implications of these changes is that students must now go elsewhere for enriched academic experiences; and (4) all interviewees were alarmed at the prospect of continued reduction and cutbacks in all course offerings outside the core curriculum. Current trends in curricular reform demanding a back-to-basics emphasis may require elimination of those course that have previously been reduced. Statistical data are included on four tables. A list of five references and a copy of the interview questionnaire are appended. (FMW)

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FISCAL CONTAINMENT AND THE EXPENDABLE CURRICULUM

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Abstract:

This paper discusses the relationships between fiscal stress placed on public schools in California after the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, and changes observed in urban high school curricula in the past five years. The general ties between finance and curriculum are presented, the specific influence of the tax limitation measure on California school finance is suggested, and an empirical assessment of curriculum changes in the state's "Big Eight" school districts is reported. Secondary curriculum superintendents and a sample of teachers, counselors, and parents in each district were interviewed for this research. The principal findings include nearly universal perceptions of reductions in course offerings in similar areas across all study districts, and a common understanding of intimate ties between financial pressures and these changes.

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FISCAL CONTAINMENT AND THE EXPENDABLE CURRICULUM

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It should surprise no one that the fundamental effects of fiscal limitations imposed by voters on their governments in the late 1970s are just beginning to emerge and to be understood. For one reason, the piper waited politely to be paid in those states which found some flexibility in their budgets. Treasury surpluses, where they existed, and creative accounting devices have now generally expired; so as the 1980s unfold many public systems face for the first time both reduced real budgets and restricted revenue raising authority. For another, our understanding of institutional responses to the tax revolt has awaited focusing of our conceptual lenses and gathering of enough observations to suggest general patterns of responses to financial crisis.

Nowhere has the drama played longer than in California, even though its voters inaugurated the nationwide tax revolt with the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978. Local agencies dependent on property taxes were spared immediate shock because a huge and growing state budget surplus replaced lost tax collections almost dollar for dollar in the years following the tax cut. And in no institution have the long-run effects been less apparent than for California's schools, which secured a better deal than others at the state capitol as annual bail-out funds were disbursed by the Legislature. Yet we are beginning to see the effects of the financial reins applied to the schools as a result of Proposition 13 in the reduced range of services they are now offering to the

state's children. What has become of the school curriculum since 1978 is the subject of this chapter.

This analysis contributes to a comprehensive study of the effects of fiscal containment on services provided to children and youth in the state of California. Here we explore the linkages between the financial effects of Proposition 13 on the one hand, and the curriculum offered to children in the state's public schools on the other. That financial hardship readily translates into program reductions needs little documentation for anyone concerned with California schools since 1978. Of interest to us instead is a richer story. It is a story of curriculum change at a time when both financial strains AND pointed demands for improved pupil proficiency were playing upon decision makers at all levels of the public school system. As we point out in our conclusions, these demands include policy proposals by the state's newly elected education leadership that would further reinforce the changes we report here. It is also a story of a substantial statewide property tax limit interacting with other major forces shaping California school finance during the past four years. Most important, and at the heart of this discussion, it is a story of just which school-based services are sacrificed, and why, when budgets are squeezed.

At one extreme, rational views of institutional retrenchment suggest that what we find in today's curriculum might be interpreted as an expression of social priorities for schooling--i.e., we retain what is most socially valued when programs are pared. At another extreme, a systems view of schools suggests that curriculum manipulation to accommodate financial losses may be largely governed by what can and cannot be changed by school leaders and policy-makers. In practice, both views

find some support. A part of what is lost in retrenchment seems to reflect the "expendability" of particular courses of study in the eyes of decision-makers. And a part more aptly confirms the presence of structural barriers within and surrounding the schools which deny their leaders the freedom to choose what they lose.

We suggest here that a longer-term view of responses to fiscal containment is beginning to become apparent in California secondary schools. We have chosen to focus on high schools for several reasons--because of the wide range of services they have provided to youth, because these services complement or overlap with those provided by non-school agencies (a companion topic of this volume), and because the differentiated programs at this level appear to have been systematically picked-apart in California as funds have grown short. The results and rationales of this selection are of great interest to us. In contrast, and with great inconvenience to researchers, elementary school programs typified by self-contained grade-level classrooms do not display their curricula as readily and will not be probed in any depth here, although important changes in their offerings have surely accompanied those we are examining.

Our view of school program change under the fiscal stresses caused by tax limitation has developed from a broader conception of curriculum policy-making in public education--so we begin with a brief survey of the various forces that play either steadily or episodically on curriculum decision-makers. Then we describe the role of finance more generally as a contributor to this larger picture, and within this realm, the impact of Proposition 13 on curriculum-relevant aspects of California school finance. Finally, we examine changes that have taken

place in California secondary school curricula since 1978 as revealed to us in interviews with key informants in the state's larger school districts. In this empirical exploration, we asked a select sample of curriculum superintendents, school counselors, teachers, and parent leaders in the state's major urban districts to present their views of which offerings have changed and why in their high schools, and their impressions of where finances have played a critical role in these decisions; and we attempt to portray their responses in the context of the curriculum world we have outlined.

Curriculum Change and Constraint

Curriculum change takes place in both subtle and patent ways. As pressures bear on what schools are willing or capable to do, such as stresses wrought by financial hardship, we would anticipate interpretations of these changes to take place through any of the various conceptions that are commonly applied to school curricula. We could, for instance, take an interest in the effects of external stress on the internal organization of given courses of study--e.g., have field trips been replaced by film strips in honors biology? Or we might track the content of the social studies curriculum when teachers or classes are realigned in retrenchment. Or through the lenses of social psychology, we might observe finance-related employee stress and its impact on the curriculum. Or as historians we might monitor swings in the fundamental purposes of the curriculum, either as articulated in broad policies of governing boards or as revealed to us in portraits of district practice.

For this discussion, we adopt a simpler notion of curriculum than any of these. We concentrate on the "menu" of educational services offered to secondary pupils in California--i.e. we focus on changes of

school program content defined by which courses and services have been withdrawn from or added to listed school offerings over the past four years. We further probe why these decisions were made in the views of a variety of central participants. Our approach is limited because of its inattention to probable changes occurring inside classrooms, and more generally because it does not allow for descriptions of changes within services which have retained their name but not their substance over time. As such, the information we present provides a surface indicator of curriculum change, but an important one as we survey our findings. We also suggest that our findings will tend to underestimate the full range of curriculum dislocation in California high schools since Proposition 13 because of this necessarily partial view it affords. Nevertheless, we have chosen our perspective because programs and courses have been excised selectively and vigorously from the high schools in recent years--that is, the phenomenon defined in this way is substantial--and because conducting this type of inventory is within the resources available to us for this analysis. As a final note, we discovered in our preliminary inquiries that no central office in California monitors the curriculum offerings of schools statewide, and that original data collection was demanded by the nature of our questions.

Forces for Curriculum Change

Analysts have described a host of actors, both individual and institutional, which exert pressure on the school curriculum, often in the name of stability, and sometimes as forces for change. School professionals have always been recognized as instrumental curriculum actors, both administrators with direct access to decision-making processes, and teachers who most directly exert their influence over

curriculum behind closed classroom doors. In addition, teachers have in recent years exercised increasing influence over the school curriculum through the collective bargaining process, and particularly through steadily widening the scope of bargaining to include such aspects as the teaching calendar and personnel reassignment policies.

Both administrators and teachers are generally recognized as forces for stability in the curriculum. First, both groups have been molded in university and college departments of education which tend to present notions of curriculum in unison. And they have passed through other credentialing, hiring, and advancement filters which in effect verify their willingness to conform. And finally, a multitude of efforts to change teacher behavior through sponsored reforms have suggested that teachers often prefer to persist with what has worked for them in the past and are not inclined to change their ways much as years of service accumulate (Lieberman, 1982).

Many actors in addition to school personnel exert influence over curriculum policy-making. School district trustees set broad policies and mandate specific programs or actions affecting curricular offerings. School advisory councils contribute to curriculum decisions surrounding a number of federal and state programs. State boards and departments of education exert pressure on the curriculum through their policy initiatives, and through their regulatory oversight of state and federal programs. State legislatures are also important educational policy actors, both through dispensing financial aid (which in California, after Proposition 13, accounts for a comparatively high 80% of local district spending), and through their mandating or enabling of numerous school programs. The federal government also has left its mark on the

curriculum through funding and partial control over some 30 categorial programs for special pupil populations.

Still more actors play indirectly upon the school curriculum. Text manufacturers can define available curriculum options, especially in those states which adopt a restricted number of approved texts for use in specific areas of their school programs. State university systems establish standards for admissions, including required course preparation, which customarily shape school decisions regarding course offerings and student decisions about what to include in their schedules. And even the College Entrance Examination Board, by creating and administering a small number of tests used widely by colleges for admissions decisions, has a grasp on the curriculum tiller by means of its definitions of what constitute aptitude and achievement.

Finally, the school curriculum has been seen to yield to larger perceived needs of society, as illustrated by the explosion of math and science program innovations following the USSR's Sputnik success in 1957, and also now by what we see as a widespread demand for concentration on "basic" skills development at all levels of school the curriculum.

Both the conservative cast of many of these actors, and also the sheer number of them suggest that the school curriculum will tend to move sluggishly wherever it heads, and that it will be highly resistant to deflections that do not manage to engage a significant coalition of these forces. The character of many of these forces also suggests that a core traditional curriculum will remain at the heart of public schooling and will provide a base toward which the curriculum will tend to return when it is deflected by episodic forces.

Finance and the Curriculum

The overriding connection between school finance and school curriculum is obvious. Resources in the form of people, materials, and facilities are the very stuff of curriculum, and school finance systems deliver and distribute resources to the schools. Finance influences both what is offered to pupils and how offerings are organized and conducted. And finance change guarantees curriculum change, if only because none of the critical curriculum actors are immune to its logic.

The recent history of change in overall support for schools in California shows us both edges of the financial sword, as do similar experiences in many of the nation's school systems. Historical growth has largely given way to decline, and Proposition 13 in California has sharpened the downturn.

Financial Boom ...and Bust in California

In the decades leading up to the 1970s, California schools were buoyed by the state's population influx and fertility, and especially by the post World War II baby boom which delivered a succession of ample pupil cohorts to the school yard. The schools were built up to accommodate advancing numbers of children and the institutions appear to have taken advantage of certain economies of scale in the process. New pupils meant added financial resources in a system generally driven by pupil numbers. And where financial growth was not met by immediate needs for investments in fixed resources such as school facilities, more money led to new program capabilities, decision-making flexibility, and the diversification of the curriculum in the secondary schools.

During this period, forces in league with financial comfort ensured the expansion of courses and services in California high schools. State mandates for everything from driver education to multi-cultural awareness led to the attachment of sundry newcomers to the curriculum. State and federal programs which aimed extra money at specific pupil populations led to courses of instruction designed for their needs. Demands for curriculum "relevance" in the latter 1960s resulted in an increase in elective or alternative ways to engage students in learning--if English III was failing in the school marketplace, perhaps the Counter-culture as Literature would catch on. And a general interest among educators in enabling secondary students to create individualized programs which would match their educational experiences to their interests and talents also supported the expansion of the curriculum.

Further, the well-staffed, highly educated, and very activist California legislature also contributed to the proliferation of programs and experiments in the state's schools. An opinion widely held in education policy circles by the end of the 1960s was that the elapsed time between the appearance of an idea in a national education journal and its legislation into the California State Education Code averaged about three months. While this has never been verified scientifically, the code now warrants ten volumes, thousands of pages, and a dusty corner of district office bookshelves because of its unwieldy character.

The reverse edge of the public finance sword began to gleam at California schools in the early 1970s. Just as growth had afforded flexibility and additions to the school curriculum, withdrawal of financial support hit hard at what the schools had built up in the previous era. Proposition 13 may ultimately be viewed as a watershed for

California's local institutions, but for the schools it merely reinforced a long-evident turnaround. Elementary and secondary enrollments both in the state and nationally have declined steadily since 1971 at about 2 percent per year. Also during this time, the percentage of school bond elections succeeding at the polls began to plummet, cutting off another important source of revenues. And to conspire with these losses, the California legislature began putting the financial brakes on the state's higher spending school districts in 1974 as a result of the Serrano vs. Priest decisions which rendered the California school finance system unconstitutional because of its inequitable dependence on local property tax wealth.

But even with the fiscally dampening effects of these trends and decisions during the decade, nearly all of California's school districts stayed about even with increases in the state's living costs by increasing budgets both in absolute and per-pupil terms from year to year throughout the 1970s. The state's economy remained healthy, which brought surplus funds to the treasury each year, some of which ended up in the schools through growth of state school support. In addition, real property values increased typically 10 to 15 percent annually across the state throughout the decade, and by even more in some school districts. This drove up property tax collections, another important source of funds for schools. On balance, the schools of California were getting neither richer nor poorer when Proposition 13 passed in June of 1978.

Proposition 13 and School Finance

Through its provisions restricting tax rates and assessment growth, Proposition 13 had the immediate effect of cutting real property tax

revenues statewide by more than half. At the time, this meant that 1978-79 school budgets would have fallen 25 to 30 percent short of their anticipated levels in the absence of replacement revenues, and that local agencies more dependent on property taxes than the schools would face even deeper cuts. Fortunately, the state treasury surplus, eyed by the sponsors of Proposition 13 as a source of tax relief, enabled the state legislature to bail out these agencies, although no one knew how long the state's economy would afford the continuance of massive state assistance. At least one change for school funding became clear: The state legislature through its actions was now to be the annual arbiter of school finance, and districts would now have to submit to state-level decisions as to the exact dollar amounts of general revenues available to them.

The precise effect of the tax slashing measure on the level of school support in the ensuing years is problematic, since overall public support for institutions is influenced by a variety of factors. Changes in economic conditions, changing priorities of legislators and school trustees, altered patterns of federal school support, and variable willingness of voters to tax themselves all interact, and this tends to confound analysts in their desires to explain the independent effects of any of them.

We do know the financial fortunes that California schools have experienced since Proposition 13, and the fact that levels of support have declined in these years does not appear to be a coincidence. The post tax-cut years lie in significant contrast to those leading up to them.

Table 1 shows what has actually occurred from year to year since Proposition 13 as the California legislature has appropriated general

Table 1
General California School Revenue Growth
Since Proposition 13 in Context¹

| School Year | Average Growth of General School Revenues from Previous Year | | Conservative Historical Growth Pattern | Average Cost Inflation |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Total | Per pupil | | |
| 1978-79 | 0-1% | 3% | 8% | 9% |
| 1979-80 | 8% | 10% | 8% | 9% |
| 1980-81 | 8% | 10% | 8% | 9% |
| 1981-82 | 3% | 5% | 8% | 9% |
| 1982-83 | 0% | 2% | 8% | 9% |
| Compounded Growth | 21% | 33% | 50-60% | 60-70% |

¹Revenues excluding Federal and State Categorical Programs; based on net block grants from state to districts; source: Office of Associate Superintendent for Administration, California State Department of Education.

operating funds to the state's school districts. In the first school year after Proposition 13, 1978-79, the state bail-out allowed the average district to just maintain its previous year's level of general revenues. This translated to a small increase in per-pupil terms because of continuing enrollment declines. In the two years which followed, continued growth of state revenues permitted appropriations affording 8 and 10 percent budget increases for school districts in general and per pupil terms respectively. The past two years have been much leaner for the schools because of a general economic recession and the exhaustion of the treasury's accumulated surplus. This has yielded minimal growth in per-pupil funding.

As of 1982-83, the fifth school year since Proposition 13 passed, general revenues for California schools have fallen far short of what might have been expected if previous patterns of revenue growth had been maintained, and actual school budgets fall even further short of allowing schools to keep up with general increases in the cost of living. General per pupil expenditures have increased about 33 percent in these years, whereas they might have been expected to increase by somewhat more than 50 percent during this time according to historical patterns. Meanwhile, the general cost of living in the state has progressed by more than 60 percent. The net effect of these years on school finance appears to be that California's schools now have about 20 percent less real resources per pupil than they had in 1978, and have overall budgets 25 percent below those of 1978 in real terms.

The role of Proposition 13 in this pattern results from its several provisions: (1) the removal of nearly \$6 billion immediately from overall tax collections in the state, (2) the loss of progressively increasing annual tax collections if assessments had been allowed to inflate with property values, and (3) from the measure's effective abolition of local tax increases to assist the schools. In effect, the taxing authority that Proposition 13 removed from public officials in California would have been able to more than make-up for the schools' budget shortfalls illustrated in Table 1 and could have eliminated as well the deficits experienced in other local agencies. A continuation of total tax collections at pre-Proposition 13 levels could have provided for school revenue growth at levels previously experienced and at rates approximating those of general cost inflation. These would-have-been tax collections plus the giant state revenue surplus could have combined

to create a very robust public finance picture statewide. In short, Proposition 13 appears to have cut deeply into real school resources.

This portrayal of school finance patterns in California is not a complete rendition, since districts do have revenues in addition to the block grants provided from year to year by the state. Federal funds and state categorical programs for a variety of special needs pupils account for varying amounts of district spending beyond the general assistance just described. For districts without substantial participation in these programs, the block grants account for nearly their entire annual budgets. Urban districts are major participants in these programs, and their overall budgets per pupil far exceed the block grants. For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District's state block grant accounted for only about \$1850 of the more than \$3000 budgeted per pupil for 1981-82. But since the funds beyond state block grants are tied to specific programs, the general revenue patterns we have described are highly pertinent to any discretionary curriculum decisions that school districts have made in recent years, and these changes are what we hope to describe.

Curriculum Change Since Proposition 13

California school finance patterns outlined in the previous section and shown in Table 1 suggest that the curriculum in California schools has been under stiff pressure for the past five years. First, since teacher salaries typically account for more than 80 percent of school expenditures, districts have faced a bind in their relations with teaching staffs. Where teachers have succeeded in securing salary increases of any magnitude, there is pressure to reduce their numbers since this is by far the largest potential source of revenues within district

budgets. And where salaries have been held back because of financial hardship, teachers become more inclined to seek other employment and fewer are attracted to the schools as potential replacements. And administrative responses in this dilemma are not entirely within the control of district leaders because issues of salary scales and teacher retention are subject to collective bargaining agreements reached in concurrence with the teachers themselves. Who must go when layoffs are enacted, and who bails out voluntarily in the melee would have a direct effect on a district's curriculum.

Further, to the extent that the costs of support services and materials have increased on a par with general inflation over these five years--referring to such necessities as office assistance, paper products, transportation, energy, and maintenance supplies--the schools have had to make do with less, since their budgets have not maintained this pace. Areas of the curriculum requiring consumable supplies of any sort, such as science laboratories, manual and creative arts, or organized sports, are likely to have suffered.

While it is widely suggested that effects in each of these expected realms have come to pass in California's schools in recent years, we were surprised to learn that neither state officials nor anyone else queried maintains a systematic record of what the schools actually offer to their pupils and how these offerings have changed from year to year. This is probably due primarily to the fact that all schools seem to comfortably exceed the minimal core curricular offerings required by the state's education code; therefore extensive central monitoring practices have not developed. Even high school graduation requirements are left entirely to the discretion of local districts under current California law.

To assess the nature and extent of curricular changes in California secondary schools since Proposition 13, we conducted a survey of personnel and parent representatives in each of the state's "urban" school districts. Organized as the "Big Eight" school districts in California (for their purposes of presenting a unified voice on many state-level education issues which affect them similarly), these districts listed in Table 2 enroll a fourth of the state's school children. We chose these districts because they represent such a large share of the pupil population, and thus we might gain the most from our inquiry resources. The most important limitation of this selection with respect to characterizing the financial circumstances of districts generally in California is the fact that the districts are all high spending districts, and this has had an independent effect on their finances because of post-Serrano legislation. The total growth of block grant revenue in these districts has proceeded more slowly than that in school districts on average because of continued narrowing-the-gap provisions for spending across school districts in state bailout laws. Perhaps countering this difference which suggests that our sample districts may have suffered more than others, their sheer size might afford these large districts comparative flexibility with certain of their resources; for example, they may be more able to find and transfer staff to cover high priority assignments, or to transfer funds from one program to another to maintain critical services.

The eight study districts are listed in Table 2, along with selected enrollment and state block grant information for the first school year following Proposition 13 and for the school year 1981-82. (Complete enrollment and state funding data for these districts during this time

Table 2
Study Districts ("The Big Eight")
and Selected Statistics¹

| District | (a) Total Block Grants 1978-79 | (b) Block per pupil 1981-82 | (c) Per pupil Budget _____ | (d) Overall Block Grant | (e) 1978-79 | (f) ADA 1981-82 | (g) ADA Change |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Los Angeles | \$1621 | 1897 | +17% | + 7% | 576,401 | 529,600 | -8% |
| San Francisco | 1647 | 1971 | +18% | +10% | 62,670 | 58,115 | -7% |
| San Jose | 1500 | 1968 | +31% | +16% | 37,000 | 32,622 | -12% |
| San Diego | 1407 | 1833 | +30% | +19% | 119,705 | 109,115 | -9% |
| Oakland | 1565 | 1957 | +25% | +12% | 53,038 | 47,498 | -10% |
| Long Beach | 1446 | 1849 | +28% | +30% | 56,355 | 57,206 | +2% |
| Sacramento | 1558 | 1922 | +23% | +14% | 41,825 | 38,864 | -7% |
| Fresno | 1384 | 1811 | +31% | +18% | 51,572 | 46,692 | -0% |

¹Sources: "California Public Schools, Selected Statistics, 1978-79," State of California Bureau of School Apportionments and Reports. And California State Department of Education, Local Assistance Bureau, for 1981-82 data.

period appear in Appendix I.) The data indicate that these districts have experienced changes in finance approximating those portrayed as typical California school district finance patterns in Table 1. Both the growth of total state revenues, and the growth of these revenues in per pupil terms appear to average just under those we reported to be expected overall for school districts during the post-Proposition 13 years. San Francisco and Los Angeles schools have fared considerably worse than the other six districts, while the Long Beach school district has substantially increased its overall block grant (but still short of

amounts needed to offset inflation) because of its increases in enrollments. Actual block grant figures for the current year (1982-83) were unavailable to us, but state school finance legislation for 1982-83 was its most austere in recent memory, and additional growth of state revenues for any of these districts will be minimal or none. So the combination of Proposition 13 and a cooling state economy have cut substantially into the real resources which these districts can spend per year in their schools.

We interviewed by telephone the following people in each of the eight districts in order to assess the location, extent, and rationale for changes in high school offerings in their districts since the passage of Proposition 13: the assistant superintendent for instruction (or the chief secondary curriculum specialist in cases where we were referred to this office), the head of the district's teacher organization, a counselor nominated by the principal of a high school selected at random from the state's public school directory, and the president of the district's parent-teacher organization council. We chose this cross section both to get a sampling of curriculum change from a variety of relatively independent vantage points, and also because we began the inquiry with some suspicion that one's perceptions of curriculum change might be influenced by one's position within the schools. What we found instead was a very high level of consensus among our respondents within each district and across all districts as to what was changing and why in their high schools. Our interview questions are appended to this chapter. The results of our survey are now presented.

Survey Findings

If California's urban districts provide a valid indication, financial constraints imposed upon schools in the past five years have acted along with local and state demands for curricular emphasis on "basic" skills development to substantially alter the range and types of courses of study offered to high school students. Proposition 13, as we just described, contributed to a reduction of the real resources available to school districts of about 25 percent since 1978. Accommodation to these losses was made in all eight of our study districts through reductions of teaching and other staff, restriction of salary growth, and through trimming budgets for materials and support services. Proposition 13 had the additional immediate effect of eliminating nearly all summer school programs. These responses to fiscal constriction were made at the same time that the state legislature and the school boards themselves were calling for increased attention to basic language and quantitative skills in the high school curriculum.

The results of these district accommodations to budget shortfalls, and to mandated reorientations toward the 3Rs in their curricula, can be seen in three major arenas: the organization of the high school curriculum, pupil course selection patterns, and in a common and lengthy list of offerings which have either been eliminated or reduced to traces of their former levels. Each of these responses and results is now taken up in more detail.

The most immediate effect of Proposition 13 was the elimination of summer school programs following its passage. This had been suggested during the Proposition 13 campaign by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Wilson Riles as a probable response to the tax cut, and the

elimination of summer school and adult education programs became a part of the legislature's overall strategy to disrupt as little as possible the "regular" functioning of the state's institutions in the aftermath. This left the nearly one-fifth of the state's school children who regularly attended summer school for remedial, required, or enrichment classes without such opportunities; as we discuss below in regard to pupil class selection patterns, this has altered what they choose to study during the regular school year. This perception of the primary impact of the demise of summer programs was offered by nearly all of our respondents.

While neither remedial work nor required classes would themselves be considered expendable frills in the broad scheme of what schools are supposed to do, the organizational position of summer programs made them extremely vulnerable as the legislature groped in 1978 for least painful ways to allocate budget cuts. Summer school lay outside of the core employment agreements between districts and their staffs which would have required wholesale renegotiation if regular programs were to be raided in efforts to save money. Summer school's loss was much preferred by all parties in the bail-out to the likely alternative--that of laying off district teachers.

But while regular teaching staffs were generally maintained in the year following Proposition 13, repeated reductions in numbers of teachers have been the first order effect of the financial squeeze that has plagued the schools ever since. These reductions have been effected through teacher lay-offs in two of the eight districts examined and through non-replacement of many retiring or resigning teachers in all study districts. And the processes of attrition were fueled by the financial uncertainties that Proposition 13 engendered.

In the spring of 1979, almost a year after the temporary bailout was passed, most districts sent layoff notices to as many as a third of their faculty members in anticipation of funding losses for the next year. The legislature would not enact its budget until June or July, but by state law teachers must be informed by March 15 if they are not going to be rehired for the following school year. Even though state appropriations allowing for continuation of teaching staff eventually passed in July of 1979, some of the teachers given notice had secured employment elsewhere, and a pattern of staff attrition had taken hold. In subsequent years, all eight urban districts simply did not replace many teachers who retired or resigned their posts. This has meant that whatever priorities have reigned in the districts over the past few years, the schools have been restricted largely to their existing (and diminishing) teaching staffs for the purposes of carrying them out. We pursue further implications of this for the curriculum shortly.

Overall Patterns of Curriculum Change

As we indicated above, the patterns of curriculum change described by our respondents were characterized by overwhelming similarity--both among the individuals associated with given districts and across the entire sample. And what were identified to be driving influences behind these changes were also practically universal. Both reflect the effects of continuous reductions in the amount of real resources available to California school districts since, and in part because of, Proposition 13-- effects which are reported to be more severe with each passing year.

At the heart of curriculum change in these districts are reductions in teaching staffs due to wholesale teacher layoffs in two districts and

due in all cases to policies of not replacing teachers who leave employment. Losses of material resources which support programs are also universal in these districts. In addition, the trustees of nearly all of these districts have mandated a new or continued emphasis on the development of basic language and number skills in their school programs. And finally, the state's institution of proficiency tests for high school graduation is reported to have affected district course offerings. These forces have combined to yield distinct organizational implications for school curricula, universally restricted patterns of pupil choice in high school programs, and lengthy and common lists of deceased or diminished subject offerings.

In addition to teaching staff losses, all districts queried have reduced outlays substantially for curricular materials, equipment, and support services in the past five years. Some classes are conducted with fewer texts than pupils, with books not allowed to be taken from classrooms for study or homework. Laboratory equipment is largely not replaced when broken, nor are obsolete or dated materials upgraded through new purchases. Field trips have been eliminated in most schools. All districts report reductions in numbers of counselors and school psychologists. Budgets have simply not allowed for former numbers of professional psychologists, and teachers serving as counselors have been reassigned to the classroom as other teachers have departed. Some districts began to charge fees for participation in athletic activities--typically \$35.00 for a varsity sport--a practice which subsequent to our survey was ruled illegal in a decision stemming from a Santa Barbara court challenge. Parent-teacher organizations have successfully orchestrated fee-charging summer programs in several of the

districts studied, but these manage to serve small fractions of previous summer enrollments.

These dollar saving strategies--toleration of staff attrition, reassignment of support professionals to the classroom, and curtailing of cash outlays wherever possible--have been executed at the same time that districts have been under both formal and popular pressure to reorient their programs in the direction of basic skills development. Both state law and the actions of school trustees themselves have mandated added attention to the 3Rs in California high schools. In addition, the University of California announced the stiffening of its mathematics course requirements for admission to freshman classes for fall of 1984. All of these forces have constrained choices about the high school curricula as decisions are reached about where to realize needed financial savings.

California has a rugged state requirement for demonstration of pupil competencies for high school graduation, at least by national standards. Through laws enacted in the mid-1970s and effective since 1980, not only must pupils pass a district-established test for high school graduation, but they also must succeed on separate tests for each of reading, written expression, and computation skills. State law also mandates preliminary proficiency assessment at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels. In addition to whatever actions districts have taken regarding their curricula to contribute to pupil success on their proficiency assessments, such as remedial instruction, districts are required to maintain summer programs specifically for children who fail their tests for graduation.

The boards of trustees of all districts queried have elevated basic skills as a curricular priority through their own mandates. This has taken place both through the articulation of such priorities into basic statements of district instructional goals and philosophies and through the creation of special emphasis on the basics in specific program decisions. Respondents reported these thrusts to be the result of state proficiency testing requirements and also to derive from the same popular forces that gave rise to legislative initiatives for proficiency monitoring in the first place. The perception that schools are under irresistible pressures to improve the basic literacy of their graduates is apparently universal, and curricular decisions described support this contention.

Largely because of reduced numbers of teachers, high school class sizes have grown larger since Proposition 13 and fewer sections of given classes are offered. The latter of these effects has reduced scheduling options for pupils--options which have suffered from additional changes in California high schools. More than half of our study districts have recently reduced the number of class periods each day. And their schedules have been squeezed further by the fact that pupils can no longer enroll in summer programs to take required courses. This has meant that all required courses must be taken during the regular school year; so less time is available for electives. Some districts at the same time have added to their course requirements for graduation, further impounding discretionary schedule time. Enrollment in remedial classes has increased in response to concerns about passing graduation proficiency tests. By state law, high school students must be given preliminary proficiency tests in the 10th and 11th grades, and districts commonly

use the results of these assessments to place marginal or failing pupils into newly established special classes.

The mathematics and science curricula have uniquely suffered from post-Proposition 13 circumstances in the schools. Non-replacement of teaching staff has resulted in teachers being reassigned to administer to those areas of the curriculum which have been maintained. School districts have for at least a decade reported difficulty securing sufficient numbers of qualified math and science teachers, and incapacity to hire new teachers of any sort has exacerbated this problem. All of our study districts admit to growing numbers of non-majors teaching in these areas, and to customarily assigning teachers to teach such courses without the benefit of specific inservice training for lack of resources to provide such opportunities.

Perhaps the most obvious effect of these changes taken together is seen in the nature of the course catalogue of the state's high schools. All districts studied report long lists of classes and specific support activities which have either been eliminated or reduced substantially since 1978. The same classes and general areas of attrition were cited repeatedly, both across the various observers within each of our study districts and across all districts commonly. With few exceptions, the following course offerings have come under universal fire in the aftermath of Proposition 13:

Widely Reported Course Rejections
Urban California High Schools

honors courses
advanced placement courses
social science electives
 sociology
 psychology
 economics
 international relations

foreign languages
industrial arts
 shops
 drawing
photography
home economics
career education

English electives
 driver education
 fine and performing arts
 orchestra, band, choral music

business education
 "general track" classes

Areas of Curricular Growth

special education
 mathematics (particularly computer classes)
 bilingual education (Spanish-English)
 remedial instruction

Class offering reduction or elimination has resulted through all of the forces and responses outlined above. Music and driver education programs are widespread casualties, having been removed completely in most schools. Industrial arts courses have suffered generally by reductions in numbers of sections offered and by the schools' inability to maintain equipment or purchase supplies needed for conducting them. Many pupils are blocked from taking these or other electives which have been reduced to single time offerings, since they frequently conflict with required courses. Honors and advanced placement courses were once offered for small numbers of students, a luxury now considered unaffordable. Districts report increased enrollment minimums in such classes as calculus or advanced placement chemistry, which have led in turn to their cancellation due to insufficient numbers of takers.

Course consolidation is frequently mentioned as a recent phenomenon, especially in the social sciences and English classes. Districts no longer have sufficient numbers of teachers to offer the range of electives which they built up over the previous decades, nor do pupils have room in their schedules to extend themselves as broadly into such topical studies as the Bible as Literature or international relations. Business and career education programs have suffered systematically from their

reported low priority as districts have reassigned existing staff from year to year, and from their waning popularity among students.

A few areas of the curriculum have experienced growth since Proposition 13 in all of the districts studied. Computer classes have entered the mathematics curriculum nearly everywhere, although offerings are customarily limited to brief appreciation treatments or limited hands-on experience with a minimal amount of recently acquired hardware. Special education classes have grown in response to recent federal mandates for school district accommodation to individual educational plans, and from increases in state and federal funding for these programs over what was available in the mid-1970s. And districts report more remedial offerings directed particularly to pupil competencies assessed on district graduation tests and to deficiencies noted in preliminary competency testing at earlier grade levels.

Some Specific Findings

Our respondents conveyed their understanding of curriculum change in their districts since Proposition 13 in a variety of ways. Their statements usually reflected a general understanding of patterns in the areas queried. Beyond this, they were frequently able to cite known figures or estimates that are indicative of how much, or little, things have changed in addition to the directions of observed changes. Table 3 below presents these harder assessments for each of the eight districts studied.

The changes listed in Table 3 do not include assessments, such as many discussed above, which told of specific areas of curricular reduction without reference to the magnitude of change. The amount of detail and

Table 3
Quantifiable Curriculum Observations in Study Districts

| District | Curriculum Change or Consistency, 1978 to 1983 |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| San Francisco Unified School District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 40 percent reduction in total class offerings 2. 1979: 1200 teacher layoffs, 800 subsequently rehired 3. 1980: 400 permanent teacher layoffs 4. 1981 and 1982: 100 teachers lost through attrition no replacements 5. Elimination of all advanced placement courses if fewer than 12 pupils enrolled 6. Sample high school: 2 pages of courses eliminated from 6-page course catalog 7. 10-year pattern of shifting non-majors into mathematics teaching assignments upheld 8. Elimination of regular summer school. |
| San Diego City Unified School District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical education eliminated, grade 12, and made optional, grade 11 2. 1983: mean age of teachers = 60 years 3. Mathematics requirement for graduation increased from 1 to 2 years 4. No changes in length of school day or number of periods 5. 1983: No new certificated personnel hired 6. Elimination of summer school. |
| Los Angeles Unified School District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 1983, 1000 non majors assigned to math classes 2. Credits for graduation reduced to 150 from 165 3. Cumulative reduction of teaching force of 1500 4. Sixth period dropped for grades 11 and 12 5. Elimination of summer school. |
| San Jose Unified School District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One period per day eliminated, grades 11 and 12 2. Layoffs of teachers with 7 or fewer years of district employment 3. Reduction of 10 units of credit required for graduation 4. Reorganization toward 4-year high schools, 2-year middle schools (grades 7 and 8) 5. Elimination of summer school. |

Table 3 (continued)

| District | Curriculum Change or Consistency, 1978 to 1983 |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Oakland Unified School School District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional year of math required for graduation 2. Additional semester of English required for graduation 3. One-semester of foreign language exploration course added to graduation requirements 4. Elimination of summer school. |
| Sacramento City Unified School District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elimination of all field trips 2. No replacement of retired/resigned teachers 3. No inservice appropriations for teachers assigned to mathematics without college major 4. 1978: 10 percent of teachers laid off 5. Five additional credits required for graduation 6. 1978: reduction of class periods to 5 from 6 7. Cumulative reduction of 30 school psychologists 8. Elimination of summer school. |
| Long Beach Unified School District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elimination of mini-courses, all departments 2. One half of English electives dropped from catalog 3. Total of 50 elective offerings dropped, all departments 4. Additional 1 year of English (III) required for graduation 5. Elimination of summer school. |
| Fresno Unified School District | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional year of math and science required for graduation 2. Additional semester of parenting education and career education required for graduation 3. Increase of required credits for graduation from 225 to 210 4. Stable number of class periods and length of school day 5. Elimination of summer school. |

quantifiable information reported to us varied from district to district, further testifying (it seems) to the lack of systematic record keeping by central offices on the subject of the high school curriculum as we have defined it.

It is also apparent, as we review our notes, that certain districts have fared worse than others over the past five years. Even though similarity of impact is a dominant finding of this research, districts such as San Francisco and Los Angeles have had their troubles compounded by severe enrollment declines. This directly affects the number of teachers maintained on staff, and the cuts in their offerings appear to be the deepest among the districts studied.

Conclusions

Our respondents frequently assessed the curriculum changes in their schools and districts in words that we have some comfort in applying to the larger world of California's urban schools as a result of our survey. The slow, but relentless, demise of the comprehensive high school was the dominant characterization offered. The unquestioned reality of shrinking resources, in part caused by the constraints of Proposition 13, is perceived to be a driving force in this process. And decisions in this depressing environment have widely reflected the need to maintain and augment programs which have some hope of resulting in high school graduates who can read, write, and calculate with minimal facility.

High schools have lost their "comprehensiveness" in several ways. They have eliminated many offerings that extend beyond core requirements because they do not have the staff to teach them, and because reduced regular year schedules and cancelled summer programs have appropriated discretionary schedule time. The arts and enrichment courses in all

disciplines have been the first to go in this process, and the pupils' abilities to use their basic skills to think critically, analytically, or appreciatively have fallen from the school agenda. Work skills classes, such as manual arts training, and business service skills courses such as typing or notehand, have also suffered from low priorities in the eyes of both district decisionmakers and the students themselves. And students who wish to extend themselves beyond the basic skeleton of a secondary education are finding it increasingly difficult to do so within California's urban high schools.

The primary implication of these changes is that students (and parents) who want experiences during the high school years which approximate those which were once commonly available must go beyond the public schools to get them. Community service agencies other than schools are a very limited source of such opportunities, and access to private sources of instruction is generally governed by family financial capacity. Thus comprehensive education in the sense of enriched academic experience may only be available in the more endowed and expensive private schools which are generally oversubscribed and growing in California's urban centers. The distributional consequences of the privatization of services which were once available more commonly to all children, although the subject of another analysis, seem alarming.

Of even more concern is the perception among all of the representatives of California's urban districts included in our research, that these processes begun during the past five years will continue along the same lines for the foreseeable future. If program emasculation to date has its reprehensible character to those attending or serving the schools,

what these schools might be like in another five years begins to stagger the imagination. And recent revelations of a near \$2 billion state budget shortfall for the current school year (far exceeding projections available at the time of our interviews) would surely fuel this pessimism. In short, this examination seems to point to a problem in the making for California's high schools that transcends by far circumstances that are perceived as crisis today.

Finally, current popular calls for school reform in the State of California run curiously up against what we portray as a problem in this analysis. As we go to press, newly elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Bill Honig, Senate Education Committee Chairman, Gary Hart, and the ten-member State Board of Education are vying for a leading role in what is construed as an inevitable movement to stiffen the academic demands for high school graduation. All three are sponsoring the establishment of statewide curricular standards that would generally increase the number of English, mathematics, natural science, and social science courses taken by students prior to graduation. Senator Hart's proposal is exemplary: three years of English, two years of mathematics, two years of science, three years of social studies, and one year of fine arts would be universally required in California high schools. Our analysis above suggests that if these demands were placed on the districts we studied, many more course offerings of the type already reduced would be deleted. Remaining discretionary scheduling time would evaporate as pupils sign up for newly required classes; and it is conceivable that entire teaching staffs, regardless of professional preparation, would be allocated by necessity to the required curricular areas.

So comprehensiveness in our high schools remains in double jeopardy. Sustained financial pressure may continue its work as we have described, and intensifying demands by policymakers for beefed-up academics in the high schools would, if translated into law, add to the growing catalog of expendable school offerings.

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December 8, 1982

REVENUE STATISTICS FOR SELECTED CALIFORNIA SCHOOL DISTRICTS
1978-79 through 1981-82

| | ADA | Base Rev. Limit Per ADA | Total Base Revenue Limit | Min. Rev. Limit Guarantee Amount | Urban Impact Aid Amount | Declining Enrollment Revenue | Total of These Rev. Sources | Local Revenues |
|--------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Los Angeles Unified | | | | | | | | |
| 1978-79 | 535,262 | \$1,523 | \$815,193,721 | 0 | \$20,930,973 | \$26,733,812 | \$872,858,106 | \$284,837,133 |
| 1979-80 | 526,795 | 1,646 | 867,141,116 | 0 | 30,523,304 | 33,817,696 | 931,482,116 | 155,795,026 |
| 1980-81 | 521,228 | 1,768 | 921,572,802 | 0 | 30,990,302 | 16,405,935 | 968,969,039 | 164,241,345 |
| 1981-82 | 525,062 | 1,835 | 989,568,600 | 0 | 32,849,713 | 0 | 1,022,418,313 | 285,876,541 |
| San Francisco Unified | | | | | | | | |
| 1978-79 | 58,517 | \$1,789 | \$104,672,284 | 0 | \$3,234,115 | \$5,429,445 | \$113,334,644 | \$44,999,053 |
| 1979-80 | 55,455 | 1,894 | 105,006,437 | 0 | 4,536,198 | 7,680,239 | 117,222,874 | 14,165,033 |
| 1980-81 | 56,692 | 2,001 | 113,445,794 | 0 | 4,638,937 | 3,029,665 | 121,114,396 | 14,939,856 |
| 1981-82 | 58,184 | 1,961 | 114,086,605 | 0 | 4,917,273 | 0 | 119,003,878 | 34,680,722 |
| San Jose Unified | | | | | | | | |
| 1978-79 | 35,186 | \$1,542 | \$54,244,145 | 0 | \$356,291 | \$1,774,837 | \$56,375,273 | \$20,739,116 |
| 1979-80 | 33,876 | 1,663 | 56,344,245 | 0 | 570,943 | 2,478,213 | 59,353,401 | 19,724,362 |
| 1980-81 | 32,363 | 1,800 | 58,237,542 | 0 | 530,943 | 3,627,495 | 62,395,980 | 22,143,880 |
| 1981-82 | 32,272 | 1,911 | 61,654,688 | 0 | 562,000 | 1,732,805 | 63,950,293 | 27,105,848 |
| Oakland Unified | | | | | | | | |
| 1978-79 | 49,018 | \$1,579 | \$77,380,795 | 0 | \$2,924,158 | \$2,157,170 | \$82,462,123 | \$26,817,968 |
| 1979-80 | 47,740 | 1,697 | 81,031,765 | 0 | 4,133,854 | 1,617,594 | 86,703,213 | 12,860,462 |
| 1980-81 | 47,136 | 1,803 | 84,970,653 | 0 | 4,214,994 | 2,078,880 | 91,264,527 | 13,937,895 |
| 1981-82 | 46,948 | 1,924 | 90,345,792 | 0 | 4,467,894 | 687,004 | 95,500,690 | 22,749,073 |
| San Diego City Unified | | | | | | | | |
| 1978-79 | 112,110 | \$1,426 | \$159,810,563 | 0 | \$1,263,427 | \$4,593,212 | \$165,687,202 | \$67,856,874 |
| 1979-80 | 109,095 | 1,557 | 169,858,122 | 0 | 1,832,754 | 6,150,071 | 177,891,247 | 67,938,554 |
| 1980-81 | 108,872 | 1,690 | 184,003,479 | 0 | 1,832,754 | 2,574,981 | 199,461,214 | 80,947,199 |
| 1981-82 | 109,116 | 1,830 | 199,667,004 | 0 | 1,995,719 | 0 | 201,662,723 | 95,718,876 |
| Long Beach Unified | | | | | | | | |
| 1978-79 | 54,215 | \$1,463 | \$79,340,942 | 0 | \$1,021,104 | \$1,869,135 | \$92,231,191 | \$27,447,232 |
| 1979-80 | 53,803 | 1,592 | 85,629,308 | 0 | 1,521,645 | 902,408 | 88,053,361 | 14,480,607 |
| 1980-81 | 55,350 | 1,736 | 96,124,090 | 0 | 1,521,545 | 0 | 97,646,535 | 15,324,794 |
| 1981-82 | 56,613 | 1,848 | 104,605,539 | 0 | 1,612,944 | 0 | 106,218,483 | 23,524,074 |
| Sacramento City Unified | | | | | | | | |
| 1978-79 | 39,423 | \$1,544 | \$60,805,275 | 0 | \$1,171,594 | \$2,401,670 | \$64,459,529 | \$18,090,870 |
| 1979-80 | 38,228 | 1,666 | 63,678,772 | 0 | 1,672,929 | 2,363,742 | 67,715,443 | 12,543,196 |
| 1980-81 | 38,376 | 1,803 | 69,201,522 | 0 | 1,699,413 | 839,052 | 71,799,987 | 14,019,313 |
| 1981-82 | 38,756 | 1,912 | 74,130,234 | 0 | 1,801,378 | 0 | 75,931,562 | 19,135,209 |
| Fresno Unified | | | | | | | | |
| 1978-79 | 48,724 | \$1,367 | \$66,619,838 | 0 | \$1,479,374 | \$3,589,456 | \$71,588,658 | \$19,053,742 |
| 1979-80 | 46,811 | 1,504 | 70,421,399 | 0 | 2,109,785 | 3,905,895 | 76,437,069 | 17,320,362 |
| 1980-81 | 46,357 | 1,661 | 77,017,520 | 0 | 2,144,159 | 1,598,296 | 80,759,975 | 10,659,402 |
| 1981-82 | 46,732 | 1,795 | 83,916,652 | 0 | 2,272,806 | 0 | 86,139,458 | 23,817,240 |

1978-79 1979-80 1980-81 1981-82

State Income--General Fund (In Thousands) \$16,250,774 \$18,534,148 \$21,104,852 \$21,692,782

source: State of California, Dept.
of Finance: special run

Appendix II: Curriculum Change Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of changes in high school course offerings in your district, 1978 to present?
Which specific areas have been affected and why?
2. Has your school board mandated major curriculum changes or changes of emphasis since 1978?
3. Has teaching staff attrition caused any systematic curriculum change?
Are these retirements?
resignations?
reductions in force?
What areas have been losers?
4. Did your district cancel summer school in 1978? Are there any summer offerings now? (Note, state law requires provision for summer school for those who fail proficiency exams, for special education purposes, and for high school completion.)
Do you now have any cooperative arrangements, such as with Parks dept?
Any planned changes in summer offerings?
5. Have there been any changes in graduation requirements?
Have these changes been in grade level promotion requirements?
6. Have there been any changes in length of school day or number of periods?
With what effect?
7. How have school finance circumstances generally affected curricular offerings in your district since 1978?
8. Do you discern any pattern of change in relations with other youth service agencies in the community? e.g., parks and recreation?