

Chapter 8: Mission High School

Introduction

When the San Francisco school board appointed Bill Rojas as the district superintendent in 1992, they allowed him to control the development of educational policy. Rojas, willingly operating within the boundaries defined by local and state business leaders, demonstrated how systemic reform could be used to eliminate community influence and reduce demands for educational opportunity and equality of resources to a test score. With the help of the court system, Rojas was able to co-opt the goals of the Consent Decree in the service of promoting himself as a successful advocate of systemic reform. Under Rojas, the corporate model of organization and decision-making prevailed — but instead of quarterly profits as the bottom line by which decisions were made, test scores were used.

From 1985 to 1996, members of the Mission High School community in San Francisco committed themselves to improving the educational opportunity of its student body. In doing so, the administrative team of principals, counselors, teachers, parents, and students walked a fine line between satisfying state systemic reform goals¹ and responding to the needs of the community. That these two sources of influence on the development of the Mission High School (MHS) program were in conflict with one another became apparent only when Superintendent Rojas removed Mission's principal, Lupe Arabolos, in 1996. The ostensible reason for replacing Arabolos with Ted Alfaro was the former's failure to raise the test scores of one of the most troubled high schools in the city. The real reasons for Arabolos' removal, however, are more complex. By creating a horizontal network of organizations supporting the academic development of MHS students, Arabolos inadvertently represented a direct challenge to Rojas' vertical control of a \$500 million, 4000 employee, and 60,000 student organization.

From 1994 to 1996, MHS was threatening to become an independent base of power. The program developers at MHS had attracted funding sources that the district administration could not fully control and therefore could not use as leverage to control the people and programs at the school site. More significantly, however, Arabolos had facilitated the creation of *community* — residents and their allies who shared a common set of values and interests bound by sentimental and psychological ties (Logan and Molotch, 1987; p. 20). Rojas hired Ted Alfaro to destroy this community and resubject the residents to a system of values and priorities aligned to those of corporate capitalism.

Upon arriving at the helm at MHS in the fall of 1996, Alfaro immediately began to dismantle the network of programs and organizations that had successfully created community. The programs that Alfaro kept in place and his choice of new programs suggests he was serving both national and local corporate interests. In support of the national BRT agenda, Alfaro ended the Step-to-College program that promoted real problem-solving skills. Instead, Alfaro wished to increase the use of

standardized testing to determine which students should be allowed into college-preparatory courses. From a local perspective, Alfaro's appointment came in the midst of a real-estate boom in San Francisco with particularly the Mission district targeted for gentrification. Alfaro's reforms seemed to be intended to make Mission High School into another marketing tool with which developers could persuade upper-middle class parents to buy houses in the Mission District.

Community Based Reform

Among San Francisco's six comprehensive high schools in the fall of 1996, Mission High School had the greatest percentage of Limited and Not English Proficient students (45) and the second greatest percentage of Educationally Disadvantaged Youth (63). The ninth grade class ranked fourth in Reading Comprehension (42 NCE) and was tied for last place in Math Concepts and Applications (39 NCE).² The 138 students that the Mission mental health team treated from 1995 to 1996 suffered from "anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorders and compulsive-obsessive disorders," primarily caused by violence, poverty, and neglect (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. v). In spite of such obstacles, a core group of Mission school staff was able to implement reforms from 1985 through 1996 that had a fundamental and positive impact on the lives of those at Mission High School and the community that it served. One of the many manifestations of the dramatic changes effected between 1985 and 1996 is in the college acceptance rate. In 1985, only 15 percent of MHS seniors went on to college. By 1996, 85 percent of the graduates went to college (interview with Jake Perea, July 19, 2001).

Lupe Arabolos came to teach in Mission High School in 1985. As a teacher, Arabolos began to work with gang leaders, gaining their trust and respect.³ She also began to work with Professor Jacob Perea at San Francisco State University, bringing the newly established CSU program, Step-to-College, to MHS in 1985. As originally designed, the program would offer summer courses to high school graduates who had been able to maintain a "B" average during their senior year. Successful completion of the summer courses would result in automatic admission to the participating CSU. Perea and Arabolos decided to alter the program, providing after-school courses at the high school campus during the school year. Under Perea's program, SFSU professors offered to teach a college course to MHS seniors at MHS in lieu of a course to SFSU students at SFSU. Successful completion of these college-level seminars in critical thinking meant automatic college credit for the high school senior. To further "demystify college" for these students, the volunteer professors offered counseling as well as academic instruction (interview with Jake Perea, July 19, 2001).

But by 1993, "it was clear . . . that current programs were not sufficient to meet the special needs of an increasingly at-risk population. Teachers felt isolated, students were not connected to the school, and the dropout rate of over 5% was unacceptable" (Arabolos, quoted in Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 5)⁴. The Step-to-College program for seniors was not enough. Steve Phillips was a

teacher at Mission High School during 1991–1992. He recalled there being a “huge cultural gap” between the teachers and the students, and a “lack of organizational vision” on the part of the administration, led by principal Pat Aramendia.⁵ Jose Luis Pavlon was a ninth grade student at MHS in 1993–1994. Jose remembers being disappointed with the ninth grade curriculum. In spite of being placed in the honors courses at Mission, he did not feel challenged. In hindsight, he believes that one of the major problems at the time was the lack of a support system for students when they had problems. He said, “there was no counselor behind the students and no one to mention college to them.” Jose was interested in the growing “schools not jails” movement and joined the Latino Club at school. In December 1993, the advisor of the club, who was also a popular security guard, was fired by the administration. The Latino Club, with the help of community based organizers, staged a walkout and organized an assembly. In April 1994, Jose helped organize a Bay Area schools walk out, starting with a rally at Dolores Park, across the street from Mission High School. The students wanted a culturally relevant curriculum that would challenge them intellectually.⁶

When Superintendent Bill Rojas appointed Lupe Arabolos principal in 1994, Arabolos wished to respond to such student expressions of discontent. As a first step towards expanding reform efforts throughout the school, she established a Task Force to develop an academic program for ninth grade students that would respond to their interests as well as their needs.

Membership on the University Academy Task Force was . . . completely voluntary. The meetings were held on a weekly basis after school hours, including some weekends. Sitting together at the table as equal partners were teachers, administrators, other school staff, parents, students, community members, and university staff, averaging 12–15 people at each meeting (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 5).

But the problem for Mission High School students was not merely a lack of culturally relevant material to maintain the student’s interest in staying in school. MHS is on the border of the Mission district. Many of the students at MHS lived in the Mission, an area of the city that attracts a large number of immigrants from Central and South America. It is a neighborhood that suffers from the lack of city services but it is vibrant and diverse. It also is home to many youth gangs.

The Mission is “home turf” to nine gangs, including two based in the Valencia Gardens and Bernal Dwelling housing projects and one Asian gang operating in the northernmost section of the neighborhood. Estimates on the number of Latino gang members in the Mission are between 300 and 700. Officers Mario Delgadillo and Dave Elliot of Mission station outlined the various Latino gangs in the district, broken into red and blue groups characterized by the color of clothing worn by the members (i.e., bandanas, tennis shoes, or jackets). The blue group includes Folsom Street Posse, Sure Treces (the 13th Street Gang), and the 11th Street Gang, while the red is comprised of the 18th Street Gang, Bryant Street Gang (a.k.a. Bryant Street Posse) and the 25th Street Gang (a.k.a. Little Park Gangsters). The City has failed effectively to coordinate efforts between Mission community organizations involved in gang prevention, street cops assigned to the neighborhood, and the Gang Task Force located at 850 Bryant (Miller, 1992).

As part of a larger attempt to begin to coordinate the community based organizations in the Mission,⁷ the San Francisco State University School of Nursing pulled together a consortium of

health organizations⁸ to establish in 1993 the Mission High School Health Center. From 8am to 4pm, the health center provided to the youth of the community “health education, mental health counseling, physicals, treatment of minor illnesses, immunizations, and referrals for physical and mental health needs” (p. 15). Doctors held regular hours at the Center. Toni Nemias, a Mission High School teacher, who held a license in Marriage, Family and Child Counseling, was appointed to supervise mental health interns. The interns, up to thirteen at one point, were graduate students at SFSU working towards their masters degrees in counseling (p.15). From 1993 to 1996, the original two-room clinic was expanded to include a conference room, community health education room, counseling room, family reception area, administrative offices, a laboratory, and three examination rooms. At the height of its funding, the clinic had eleven paid staff members and a Teen Advisory Board that met twice a week to discuss the degree to which the clinic was addressing the needs of the “whole child.” From 1993 to 1996, the clinic saw, on the average, 30 students per day (Crews, 1996). Outside access facilitated client use after school hours and an evening Rota-Care clinic served people in the community of all ages whether they were insured or not (Ferreti quoted in Aschenbrener; p. 432).

It was not a coincidence that a health center was established at the same time as a ninth grade core academic program was being designed. The administrative team “realized that meaningful reform must consider the physical and emotional health of the students as well as their educational needs. The Task Force developed a comprehensive proposal for the education of the whole child” (Arabolos quoted in Aschenbrener; p. 5). The new proposal and all future proposals were “aligned” with the California Department of Education’s *Vision of the New California High School* and was “incorporated” into the “Action Plan that the school developed for the [western regional accreditation] review taking place that year” (Arabolos quoted in Aschenbrener; p. 6). Superintendent Rojas approved of the Action Plan while at the same time appointing Lupe Arabolos as principal of MHS in the fall of 1994.

The MHS Task Force continued to attempt to adhere to state mandates, which were becoming more narrow and specific over time. In 1992, state prescriptions were still vague enough that Arabolos and her team were able to develop programs that both satisfied state guidelines and responded to the needs and interests of their constituency.⁹ For example, the degree of successful adherence to the state’s 1992 “*Second to None*” report was recognized by SFUSD’s administration when Greg Bender, Associate Superintendent of High School Operations, distributed to the principals of SFUSD high schools copies of Mission High School’s successful application proposal to the state’s High School Networks’ “Second-to-None” Project. Committed to this “Blueprint,” Arabolos and her three vice principals, in the fall of 1994

implemented a shared decision-making Administrative Team approach. All decisions were made collectively [by ad hoc and permanent task forces] in a collaborative approach to problem solving. [The administrators] shared responsibilities equally with one another, and worked cooperatively with the Task Force, staff, and students in an inclusive structure and

open forum (Arabolos quoted in Aschenbrener, p. 6).

The Task Force, led by the administrative team, began systematically to implement each item in the Action Plan. The first task was to establish a program — called the College Prep Summer Enrichment Program — for incoming ninth graders to help them adjust to high school.¹⁰ A ninth grade core program had been developed the previous summer consisting of “a block-scheduled group of three classes — [History of Identity, Literature of Identity, and study skills support class] — taught in an interdisciplinary approach by a team of three teachers who shared the same 75 students” (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 6). LEP students had their own special core program but Special Education students were integrated into the regular core programs (p. 7).

The second task they set themselves was to expand the Step-to-College Program that had already caused a dramatic increase in the college attendance rate. An advanced computer course was added and all the courses were integrated into the school day, offering concurrent high school and college credit (p. 7). This change would allow graduating seniors simultaneously to have an entire semester of transferable university coursework completed. The third task was to expand the role of the Health Center. It continued to provide “primary health care, mental health, education and prevention services as well as management and referrals.” At the request of the Task Force, the Health Center began to “provide staff development, curriculum design, and community outreach” (p. 8). Arabolos called these plans Phase 1.

By December 1994, the Task Force was emboldened by its success and began to envision Phase 2, which included the development of an “Academic Complex” that would link the local elementary and middle schools to Mission High School and SFSU while developing an “interdisciplinary curricular focus on health and science at MHS.” A year later, in December 1995, a meeting among educators, community groups, and business and health officials brought the Mission Academic Complex “focus.” Furious grant writing on the part of the Mission High School Task Force resulted in many grants, the largest of which came in fall 1995 from the U.S. Department of Education, awarding the SFSU Urban Institute \$2.5 million over five years as funding to coordinate the Mission Academic Complex. While many were interested in MAC as an opportunity for Mission youth to learn, starting in kindergarten, about health professions they could eventually enter, the vision by the grant director, Jake Perea, and his allies was much more fundamental. Perea wanted to prove that “all children can learn if they are given the care and respect of the adults working with them and an understanding that health is an important part of the child’s life” (*Vision*, vol. I, no. I, p. 2, Dec 1995, reproduced in Aschenbrener; p. 22–29).

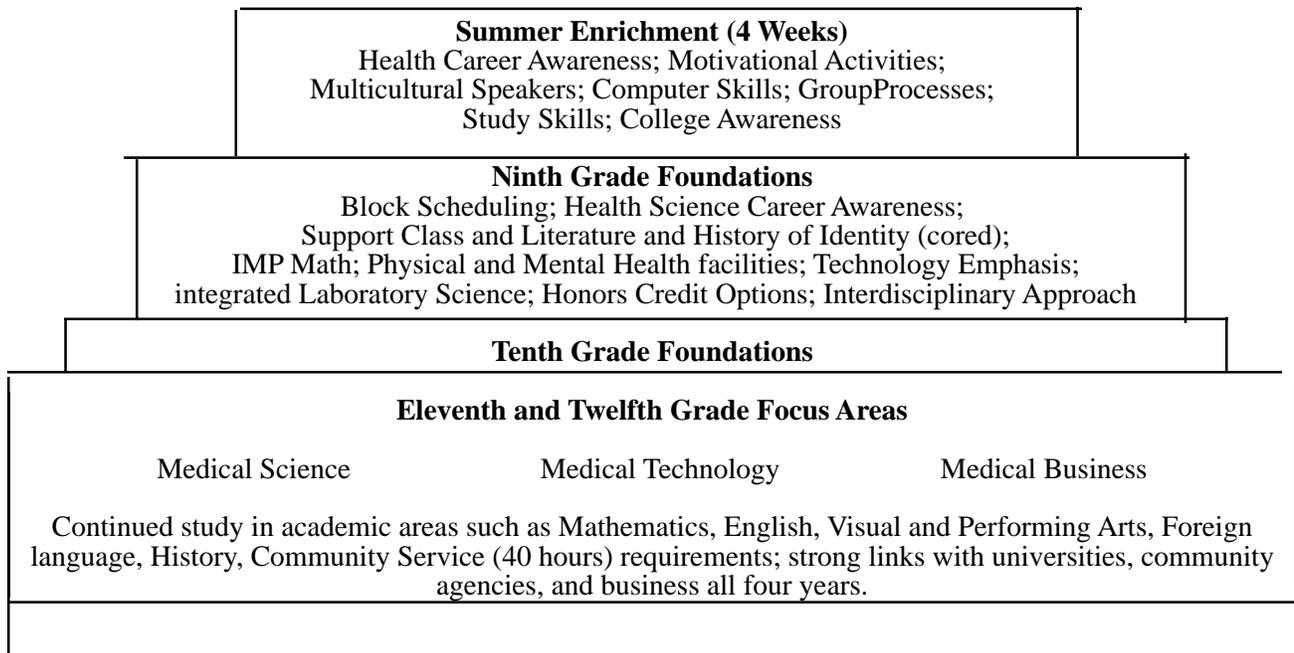
The influence of the California Business Roundtable’s agenda on the developing curriculum at Mission High School seems clear. The CBR commissioned a report in 1988 whose authors recommended that public high schools in California be restructured so that “core foundation skills” are taught in ninth and tenth grade, an “exit exam” be given at the end of tenth grade, and students focus on career education in eleventh and twelfth grades (Berman, 1988). In January 1994, the

California Business Roundtable published a summary of its “goals, strategies, and policy options” in a report entitled *Mobilizing for Competitiveness: Linking Education and Training to Jobs: A Call for Action*. “Goal One” emphasized the desire of the state’s BRT to see K–16 education transformed into “high skill career” training institutions or “career pathways.” One “option” they suggested was to “establish a system of certificates and degrees that provide *transition ladders* going from the *foundation skills* to advanced higher skills in different careers” [my emphasis]. The document put out by the MHS Task Force (see next page) indicates an attempt to respond both to the CBR as well as to the Mission community. That the MHS document fails to mirror exactly the CBR language (as indicated in the table below) suggests that Arabolos and her team had educational goals different from those of the state’s business leaders.

CBR language	MHS language
Career pathways	Educational pathways
<u>High skill career</u>	<u>Focus Areas</u>
	Strong links with business in all four years
<u>Foundation skills</u>	<u>Foundations</u>
Transition ladders	A vision of each year being a building block for the next year

Mission High School

**The University Academy of Health/Science
A Member of the Mission Academic Complex
Educational Pathways under Development**



Arabolos and Perea led a group of parents, students, community groups, staff, and faculty in the creation of an Academic Complex that was consistent with the dictates of the state department of education and with the concerns expressed by corporations through the CBR. But they also indicated a willingness to deviate from the business agenda. Those involved in creating MAC developed a “Blueprint for Success” (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 24) during a series of meetings that occurred in January 1994. Below are the goals and outcomes for the “Mission Academic Health Sciences Complex” as defined by the Mission community. The list below, generated by members of a “site council,” is remarkable for both echoing the language of high-stakes testing but also departing from it.¹¹ (I have underlined the sections that deviate from the high-stakes agenda and attempted to explain the nature of deviation from the BRT agenda in italics.)

Six Goals:

1. Every student . . . will graduate with . . . skills needed to pursue career and higher education pathways for successful employment in high growth industries, particularly those in the fields of health, science, and technology.
2. The Mission Academic Complex offers a challenging curriculum based on current research on student learning as well as high standards and continuous assessment for relevancy and high student achievement. *[The MAC community is concerned not merely with a curriculum’s relevance to needed workplace skills, but also to the relevance of the content to the history and values of the student. The inclusion of courses such as History and Literature of Identity and the commitment to dual immersion math and science courses suggest that “relevancy” in this context is related to the history and culture of the students, the very issues that Mission High School students staged protests about in 1993–1994.]*
3. All educators and other adults involved in the Complex help define and implement the supports and the professional development activities needed to improve networks for teaching, learning, health, and social service. *[The BRT concept of teacher and parent involvement is primarily to develop curricula and academic tutoring to promote higher test scores, not develop complex and horizontal networks of social, physical, and psychological support.]*
4. The Complex supports and promotes . . . faculty, student, and parental participation to ensure the health and well being of young people, parents, and the Mission Community. *[In the BRT’s Continuing the Commitment (1995), the author(s), in attempting to explain what they mean by “learning readiness,” agree that “schools can help students handle the crises in their lives and connect community agencies to students needs.” But, in the very next sentence the author(s) insist that “schools cannot, however, compromise their educational missions in order to provide health care . . .” (p. 11). The staff at Mission High School housed a fully staffed mental and physical health clinic in the basement of the school.]*
5. The Complex is a fully integrated, high-quality academic program that supports and reflects the goals of the Mission District *[not just the district or CBR’s goals].* These goals have been defined by established community planning processes, parents and students, and residents of the Mission neighborhood. *[An essential element of the BRT agenda and of the Total Quality Management model is to keep the determination of the goals of education in the hands of upper management or the state while the site councils are responsible for coming up with the means of fulfilling goals set for them.]*
6. All the partners who form the Mission Academic Complex jointly plan and coordinate

Expected Outcomes: The dual emphasis on preparing the students academically while helping them realize emotional, physical, mental, and social health will ultimately bring about the following outcomes *[the BRT believes that health care is a concern only to the extent it raises test scores]:*

1. Students . . . will demonstrate high academic achievement.
2. Parents and teachers will receive academic and professional training opportunities.
3. More young people in the Mission Community will receive a high school diploma.
4. Children, parents, and teachers will demonstrate responsible decision-making and behaviors that lead to and reinforce healthy life choices. [*Again, it's not just about workplace skills.*]
5. Students will demonstrate high self-esteem and a sense of self-reliance. [*This is a goal of little relevance to the BRT.*]
6. All individuals will be treated with respect and dignity. [*While CEOs would say they appreciate such a goal; nevertheless, their decisions to move their factories to wherever labor is cheapest — whether Appalachia or China — seem to indicate that any concerns for human dignity are outweighed by concerns over profit margins.*]
7. The curriculum instructional strategies, supports, and opportunities provided at the Mission Academic Complex will reflect the diversity of the Mission and San Francisco. [*The imposition of state standards demands the implementation of a uniform, not diverse, curriculum. Emphasis on test scores argues against diversity of instructional methods as well. Research reveals “strong positive correlations between higher scores on standardized achievement tests and ‘direct’ or ‘explicit’ instruction.”*¹²]

While Step-to-College and the Mission Clinic were high-profile programs, other less celebrated programs and reforms were implemented as well. The MHS staff felt many and diverse programs and reforms were crucial to achieving the kinds of success as defined by the “Blueprint” above. Some of the changes included the reduction of class sizes for the ninth and tenth grade cores. The teachers of these courses received extra planning time. The Columbia Boys and Girls Club offered tutoring and gang prevention workshops to Mission students. A Peer Resources program was established and English and social studies courses were detracked. The administrative team at Mission High School believed that the variety of programs that simultaneously addressed both social and academic needs was responsible for a 93 percent decrease in dropouts and a 37 percent decrease in suspensions from September 1993 through November 1995, as well as the growth in CTBS scores¹³ (*Mission High School Progress Report*, reprinted in Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 54).

Such confidence was echoed by a report generated by Social Policy Research Associates. Local funders of Mission High School’s programs had hired this nonprofit research organization to spend three months at Mission High School to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs. In a letter to Lupe Arabolos,¹⁴ an SPRA evaluator summarized the findings by noting that “school and community individuals” believed that MHS had been doing an “outstanding” job in promoting the three goals for which the school was receiving funding (most notably from the Haas Family Fund and the San Francisco Foundation):

1. Using “multiculturalism” to enhance “civic competence and intergroup relations”;
2. Developing school programs “that are meaningful to students”;
3. Revealing “how the academic and social experiences of students reinforce each other in promoting civically competent knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.

Through 1996, Lupe Arabolos had led an administrative team, a critical mass of dedicated faculty, foundation representatives, community nonprofit organizers, parents, and students in an

effort to satisfy district and state mandated goals as well as promote the students' "emotional, physical, mental, and social health." They believed that they were making fundamental progress in achieving their and other's goals. Carlos Cornejo¹⁵ argues "the turnaround was made in 1996 with excellent management from Principal Lupe Arabolos" (personal statement in Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 427). Tracy Brown was a graduate of MHS in 1985 and, as a community worker, worked with Mission High School female students during the 1990s. She had helped a group of MHS students organize a citywide walkout in the spring of 1994. Brown believed that Arabolos had made fundamental changes at Mission High School since becoming principal. Students felt welcome at the school regardless of any gang affiliation or other "problem" that they may have represented or caused. It was of great significance to Brown that Arabolos had created an environment in which "the students were allowed to be who they were." There was little gang tension inside the school because the gang leaders had a relationship with Arabolos. She took into consideration the "environmental factors" when dealing with the students. If a student was out of control, the student wasn't expelled or suspended but brought to Arabolos' office for a talk. For example, if the student was a girl, Arabolos would call Brown at Mission Girls (a nonprofit community-based organization) and arrange a meeting with the girl's parents to try to find out what the problem was. The student "would continue to be talked with if the problem continued". Brown was particularly impressed with the health clinic. She saw its particular usefulness in terms of providing a mechanism by which a social worker could be called in, thus triggering a home visit.¹⁶

The End of Community-Based Reform

So it came as a dreadful shock to students, teachers, and community members of the Mission when Superintendent Bill Rojas informed Lupe Arabolos and two of her vice principals, Jan Hudson and Peter Long, on February 28, 1996, that their contracts would not be renewed. Rojas cited three reasons for his lack of confidence in Mission High School's administrative leadership. They

1. had become too close to the culture of the school;
2. had not brought changes quickly enough;
3. were not making computers available to all students; (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 38).

In a letter (4/8/96) responding to a community organizer's protest of his decision, Rojas wrote:

There have been improvements at Mission, to a degree through the efforts of the administrative team but also because of the instruction partnerships and extra resources that have been poured into the school these past two years . . . [But] the improvements at Mission have not yet seen [sic] sufficient, and I want to give the school the opportunity to improve next year with a new, outside administrative team (reprinted in Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 74).

Rojas told the *Chronicle* on May 29, in response to student protests of his decision, "It is virtually impossible for me to recommend (to the board) the same administrative team for next year. I'm not comfortable with this team. They've taken the school forward part of the way, but it needs to make

the next leap” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 5/29/96; p. A11).

In the month following Rojas’ official notification of the removal of Arabolos, Long, and Hudson, there was an outpouring of protest from those with whom Arabolos had developed working relationships. The degree with which the MHS community protested the removal of their leadership reflects the nature of the relationships defining such a community. The wide variety of sources of support and their relationship to MHS indicated that Arabolos had created a horizontally structured community.¹⁷ This became evident in the continued outpouring of support for Arabolos. On March 1, Arabolos received a letter, copied to Rojas, from San Francisco State University La Raza student organization noting that “graduates from MHS [at SFSU] . . . have spoken highly of your contributions. . . .” On March 5, one hundred and one MHS staff members signed a letter to Rojas protesting the removal of Mission’s administrative staff citing all the programs at the school that they had worked hard to implement. On March 8, Linda Mornell of the summer Search Foundation wrote a letter to Rojas accusing him of “punishing excellence.” On March 19, Jacqueline Nazel, community liaison with the Homeless Education Project, wrote to Rojas telling him that she knew of “no other programs . . . that address so positively the issues that face our district’s most needy children” as those established under the administration of Arabolos. On March 27, Sergeant John Fewer of the San Francisco Police Department wrote to School Board President Steve Phillips requesting that the removal be reconsidered. Fewer was part of the High School Law Enforcement Program and had been assigned to MHS since 1993. He argued in the letter that the administration, headed by Arabolos, “not only concerned themselves with public safety for the school but also for the immediate neighborhood. They have taken a proactive approach toward deterring violence in the school” (letters reprinted in Aschenbrener, forthcoming).

On April 23, over 300 people attended the school board meeting to urge the board to reconsider their support of Rojas’ decision to fire Arabolos, Hudson, and Long from Mission High School (Asimov, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4/24/96; A15). The School Board had “quietly endorsed . . . Rojas’ recommendation not to renew 11 out of 80 administrators’ contracts that expired at the end of the semester. Arambolo [sic], used to high praise for her work, was the only on-duty principal fired this year. Hudson and Long were the only high school vice-principals let go” (Asimov, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4/23/96). Asimov quoted the student body president as being “really angry about this. . . . They’re really close to the students – and that’s why everyone loves them.” School Board President Steve Phillips, in responding to the many passionate appeals to keep the three MHS administrators, succinctly summed up the difference between an organization based on responding to the needs of its constituents and one that imposes its will on the community: “There’s always a sense of fondness for individuals. These decisions have to be guided by educational outcomes” (Venise Wagner, *Examiner*, 4/24/96).

At the school board meeting, speaker after speaker testified in support of Arabolos and her team. Luis Cruz, a Mission HS graduate and UC Berkeley student, explained to the board, “This administration has instituted major reform in the last two years. It wasn’t until I came to Mission

that my life changed. I'm still a poor Mexican kid . . . but today I have a sense of hope I gained from Mission High School." Eileen Gold, a MHS neighbor for ten years, remarked that in the last two years, the students "are much quieter and much friendlier when you meet them on the streets. It wasn't always like that. The building is almost graffiti free and the grounds are better kept. There's been such a big turnaround. It's unbelievable." (quoted by Barbara Nanney, *The Independent*, 4/26/96). The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that students at the meeting "described Arabolos, Hudson, and Long as approachable administrators who have made key improvements at Mission. They said removing the three would adversely affect the quality of education at the school." Board members refused to explain their support for Rojas' decision citing the issue as a "personnel matter".

On April 29, the district ordered the administrative team to eliminate 15.7 teachers and trim \$600,000 from its budget. The Mission Planning Committee concluded that to adhere to such a directive would mean the dismantling of the following programs at the school: Peer Resources (tutoring, gang prevention, conflict management, STD awareness, and prevention); Mental Health Supervisor (intern placement, service outreach, drama therapy for ninth and tenth grade cores); Attendance Incentive Program and Coordinator (attendance lotteries, family scholarship, letters home, referrals to health clinic); Columbia Park Girls and Boys Club after school tutoring/activities; smaller class size for Cores; elimination of six courses (including AP Spanish, advanced math in Spanish, Literature of La Raza, Automotive Technology, training for History of Identity) (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 93). On April 30, at a ceremony celebrating the expansion of the Mission HS Health Clinic, most of the faculty and students in attendance were wearing a button with "15.7" crossed out on it (Crews, 1996).

Teachers and students at Mission High School continued to protest. In preparation for the next school board meeting on May 14, the Mission High School

social studies department developed a two-day lesson plan [taught on May 13 and 14] for the students on reconstitution to inform all students how Mission has been affected. Students received a package which contained a vocabulary list defining each important term, such as CSIP¹⁸ and recent articles on Mission's situation. . . . "We learned a lot from the lessons. Before the lessons, no one had a clear understanding of the topics. Especially we didn't understand some of the vocabulary, such as CSIP and reconstitution" (Judy Lau, *MHS West Wing*, 5/28/96; reprinted in Aschenbrener.)

At 11:30, on May 14, the administration, teachers and students organized a "hug in." Local news media were informed that the entire high school would be surrounded by its members who would be holding hands. Arabolos told the Mission HS student reporter: "the 'hug in' is a nice, impressive idea that raises people's awareness of Mission's unity." At 7pm that evening, over 200 Mission supporters attended the school board meeting. Twenty-five had signed up to speak. Once again, Board President Phillips told them that the decision could not be discussed because it was a "personnel issue based on quality education" (Lau, *MHS West Wing*, reprinted in Aschenbrener). The board did decide to meet the next week on May 21 to discuss the issue and then vote on May 28.

On the morning of May 28, at least 400 students walked out of Mission High School and

walked two miles to City Hall and demanded to see Mayor Willie Brown. Brown met with the students and promised to address the school board meeting that evening. Then he marched with them to the Board of Education building two blocks away. Brown was able to negotiate a meeting among himself, Rojas, Phillips, and five student representatives. One of the students was disappointed with Rojas' explanation that "a school is like a business." The student responded by arguing that, "Mission is more than a business. We're a community" (Spero, *New Mission News*, 6/96). At the school board meeting that evening, Brown addressed the board, arguing that the students needed to be involved in the decision making process. The board then agreed to set up a meeting the following week with 20 students and then make a final decision on June 11.

Perhaps in the hope of influencing the June 11 decision, letters continued to be sent to Rojas and the board requesting reconsideration of the decision to remove Arabolos and her two vice principals. Those protesting Arabolos' removal argued that she "is clearly cherished and respected by her faculty and student body" and "her love of students is unsurpassed" (Dennis McCarthy); she developed a "wonderful working relationship" with the alumni association (John McGir); that she should not be judged on test scores alone since Arabolos "shows [the students] that an intelligent, academic person can also be warm and compassionate, and deeply concerned about their problems academic or personal" (James Hannon); furthermore, Arabolos is "not at odds with [the school board's] desire for student success" (Aschenbrener; letters reprinted in Aschenbrener, forthcoming). That these arguments failed to move the school board suggests that the nonhierarchical model of reform Arabolos was pursuing that relied on the development of personal relationships was at odds with Rojas' top-down, carrot-and-stick approach that the board had committed itself to supporting, apparently at any cost.

No Turning Back

On June 11, the school board met and finalized its decision (on a 4 to 2 vote) to remove Arabolos from Mission High School and confirm Rojas' appointment of Ted Alfaro as the new principal at the school. (The school board would vote to replace Hudson and Long in a 6 to 1 vote on June 29.) Rojas's spokesperson, Gail Kaufman, without any apparent hint of irony, told reporters that Alfaro was hired for his "programmatically, academic, and community strengths" (*Independent*, 6/12/96). But indicating that it was not completely deaf to the expressed interests of the community, the school board voted to retain 14 out of the 15.7 teachers the district had previously asked Arabolos to "consolidate." Not realizing that the battle had already been lost, five Mission HS students demanded that the district release "matched scores" from that spring's MHS CTBS scores, arguing that such scores would confirm the improvements made during the last year. In response Gail Kaufman pointed out, "test scores are not the only indicator of how a school is doing or what the district might want for the school."

Asked what the district wanted for Mission, Kaufman said Rojas would have to answer the

question. Rojas could not be reached for comment. Hudson and Long said they had emphasized the progress the school had made in a meeting with Rojas Friday, but he didn't seem to be swayed. "I told him I felt that he made a mistake," Hudson said. "I felt our test scores and the progress we made bore that out. But he didn't in any way seem to be ready to alter that decision." Rojas declined to comment on the decision, saying through Kaufman that it was a private personnel issue. Students, teachers, and parents speculate the action means Mission is headed for a broader shake-up [reconstitution] (Venise Wagner, *Examiner*, 6/12/96).

The MHS community continued to be stunned and confused. They had created "career pathways," introduced technology into the classroom, offered courses focused on building "foundational skills," and imposed a college-prep curriculum on all of its students. They also had focused a great deal of their energies on raising test scores. They tried very hard to adopt what they perceived to be the district's focus on data-driven decision-making (using test scores as a means to select course method and content). They pointed to higher attendance rates, fewer dropouts, and increased college attendance. When all this seemed to be beside the point, they were at a loss to understand where and why they had failed.

In trying to understand their banishment, the principals recalled that Rojas asked them for a progress report last November. But he postponed their meeting five times and did not meet with them until February 15. "The superintendent asked us for more statistics, which we gave him on February 24," Hudson said. "By then, it's our understanding that decisions had been made already." Neither Rojas nor board members visited Mission before deciding to fire the team, she said. Teachers say they are mystified. They suggest that the principals may be pawns in a union dispute over Rojas' wish to reduce administrative contracts from three years to one. They wonder if Rojas is irked because the principals followed federal rules to the letter instead of letting all students use computers intended for low-achievers alone (N. Asimov, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4/23/96).

Randy Shaw, the executive director of the Tenderloin Housing Clinic and an experienced, grassroots community organizer suspected that disputes over test scores, computers, or length of contracts masked a more fundamental issue — one connected to the national movement for systemic reform.

Rojas has sent a message to parents throughout the city that their input is not truly desired and that they have no role in shaping their children's education. Rojas' act is consistent with a nationwide trend of superintendents and school boards that urge parental involvement while sabotaging all meaningful efforts toward that end. . . . There has been a subtle, implicit effort to blame parents — rather than depressed family incomes and local economic conditions — for the school's poor test scores. . . . A 1993 study by the Parents' Coalition for Education in New York City found that "parents play a minor role, at best" in the management of public schools. The study concluded that even school-based management councils did not provide sufficient input. Mission High School is precisely the type of institution that politicians and school boards have argued needs more parental involvement. Deposed principal Arabolos has fostered such activism and helped create a sense of community that educators stress is essential for scholastic success. . . . Arabolos succeeded too well. . . . *Rojas . . . certainly did not appreciate Arabolos' creation of a constituency base that he did not control. Nor was Rojas comfortable with Arabolos' nurturing style. . . . Rojas and his school board allies have stated in no uncertain terms that parental involvement means handing out books and helping with copying, not influencing policy (Independent, 6/18/96) [my italics].*

Shaw believed that Rojas saw a threat from Arabolos' method or "style" that had allowed her to create a network of residents and community-based organizations that were effectively improving

the educational opportunities for the students at MHS. The majority on the school board went along with Rojas because they believed that their role was to support the superintendent no matter what. Board President Steve Phillips exhibited the classic “trustee” mentality in defending Rojas. Phillips explained why he dismissed the evidence of community opposition. Since “there is a rally every time a principal is fired, one cannot be swayed by community opposition.” Phillips insisted that in order to make public policy, one has to establish principles and stick to them, not succumb to popular pressure. The “principle” in question was, apparently, that test scores indicated “change was not happening fast enough at Mission High School . . . these are kid’s lives, we can’t wait around for long-term changes to go into effect.” When I asked Phillips why the “85 percent of graduates going on to college” figure did not impress him, Phillips replied that such a statistic was invalid since so few ninth graders even made it to twelfth grade (interview with Phillips, 8/7/01).¹⁹ From his experiences as a teacher at MHS from 1991 to 1992 and by looking at the attrition rate, Phillips concluded that the teachers at Mission High School were not creating an interesting enough curriculum to keep the students in school and thus he was not willing to challenge Rojas’ decision to remove Arabolos. Yet if McNeil’s (2000) research is any indication, it was the use of tests that prevented the development of a more interesting and authentic curriculum at MHS.

Ted Alfaro and the Corporate Agenda

In spite of an unprecedented expression of community support for their principal, the Mission community could not persuade Rojas or a majority of the school board to reverse their “personnel” decision. Rojas did not have to publicly explain his decision. All he needed was the support of 4 out of 7 school board members, members who were elected at large so were not accountable to a particular neighborhood or constituency. The only recourse the Mission community had was to organize a citywide movement against the “principles” guiding Rojas’ policy and wait until the next election cycle.

In the meantime, the new MHS principal, Ted Alfaro, went to work dismantling most of the programs that the community had invested time, energy, and passion in building. Rojas had found in Alfaro a subordinate who had little interest or ability in cultivating a strong and emotional connection to all the members of the Mission District community. The programs Rojas and Alfaro chose to eliminate were those that had contributed to the horizontal network of various organizations — Step-to-College, the Health Clinic, gang prevention, attendance, and tutoring services by a variety of community-based organizations. The programs and relationships that Alfaro did pursue were completely consistent with the principles of systemic reform as well as promoting the interests of local corporate capitalists, in particular, real estate developers.

Jose Luis Pavlon²⁰ believes that Mission High school was being made “ready for white middle-class families to move into the area.” Pavlon argues that Alfaro collaborated with school security and police to displace gangs from neighboring Dolores Park to where they now are, at 16th

and Bryant Streets (interview with Pavlon, 11/2/01). By creating a closed campus²¹, expelling “poor test takers”²², imposing a rigidly college preparatory curriculum emphasizing computer literacy,²³ closing down the health clinic,²⁴ and replacing the Step-to-College program with School-to-Career, one might be led to believe that Alfaro’s job description was to transform Mission High School into a middle class, college preparatory school. Any students hanging out on the street corners around the neighborhood who might be considered gang-related could be seen as undermining local real estate values. In September 1999, the administration told the faculty that “there no longer was a gang problem at Mission High School” (Aschenbrener; forthcoming; p. 416). Certainly, the housing and rental prices of the late 90s indicated that gentrification was engulfing the neighborhoods around Mission High School.

Formed [in March of 2000], the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition has led 1,000 supporters on a spirited march through the Mission District, demonstrated outside the Mission’s Armory building, shut down the Planning Commission after a speaker was forcibly removed, and invaded the offices of Bigstep.com to protest its takeover of Bay View Bank. MAC’s mission statement is ambitious: “To eliminate the displacement of low-income and working-class people from the Mission District, who are primarily Latinos and other people of color, tenants, artists, and community serving businesses and nonprofits.” (Cassi Feldman, “Defending the barrio: Will working-class activists save the Mission?” *Bay Guardian*, October 18, 2000).

Rogelio Estrada entered MHS as a ninth grader during Alfaro’s first year as principal (1996–97). Estrada lived in the Mission and began to participate in the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition 2001 when his family was given an eviction notice. When Alfaro was removed as principal of MHS in the spring of 2001, Estrada, who had liked Alfaro, immediately began to think about organizing a student protest demanding the reinstatement of Alfaro as principal of MHS. But when Estrada began to talk to people about the situation, his assessment of Alfaro began to change. In an attempt to sort out increasingly contradictory information, Estrada went to Alfaro directly. He asked Alfaro why the health clinic had been closed. Estrada thought Alfaro’s answer was “confusing.” Estrada began to talk to some of the board members of Mission Housing (474 Valencia), a nonprofit organization on which Alfaro sat as a board member. Estrada was told by several members of the Mission Housing Board that Alfaro was a vigorous proponent of removing the tenants around Bryant Square (20th and Bryant) to make room for the building of new, live/work lofts. When Estrada asked Alfaro about this, Alfaro denied that he had lobbied for this. When Estrada heard that Gene Royale was having a meeting to organize a protest against Alfaro’s “promotion,” Estrada went to listen to what Royale had to say. When Royale argued that the new school board was “kicking out all the Latinos,” Estrada decided not to join the “community protest” because he believed that most of the Latinos that Rojas had appointed to district positions were choosing to follow Rojas to Dallas (interview with Rogelio Estrada, 12/6/01).

The possibility of an alignment of school policy with real estate development suggests that one cannot look at educational policy independently of city politics. The schools can be a small part

of the larger design pursued through city government by corporate developers. Schools can help raise real estate values through higher test scores. But school district resources can also be used as a source for patronage to build political support for political campaigns. In pursuing such a connection, I asked Steve Phillips why Mayor Brown's initial support of the Mission High School students disappeared. Phillips argued, "Brown needed to be at peace with Rojas because the superintendent is the second most powerful position in San Francisco — a half million dollar budget, 4,000 employees, buildings, and all you need to control that is four votes on the school board" (Interview, 8/7/01). In other words, Rojas was at the head of a powerful patronage system. Brown could ill afford to have such a system be mobilized against him or his surrogates. One manifestation of Brown's peace making was through political appointments and mutual fundraising. For example, Felipe Floresca, Rojas' brother-in-law, was appointed to head the city's Housing Authority, and Mayor Brown and Representative Nancy Pelosi hosted one of Phillips' fundraisers.

In the context of city politics and city patronage, Mission High school can be seen as a mere pawn, a possible source of patronage or part of a potential base of political power. Mission High School is located on 18th street between Church and Dolores streets, technically not in the Mission, yet being that area's "neighborhood" school. Dolores Street is the western boundary of the Mission district, home to anywhere from nine to twentyfour gangs, depending on whom you ask. Fourteenth and Cesar Chavez Streets are the North and South boundaries and Portrero Street is the eastern boundary; "Within that area, there are at least 30 nonprofit organizations serving youth" (Mauroff, *New Mission News*, 1999). Seventy-three point four percent of San Franciscan Latinos live in the Mission district (Biegel, 2000; p. 39). In seven out of the nine census tracts in the Mission, 20 percent or more of the population are below the federal poverty line (DeLeon, 1995; p. 22).

Much of the money that flows into the Mission is public money and is therefore determined by public officials. In the mid 1990s, Latinos, as 13.9 percent of the city's population but in only 9 percent of official/administrator and professional positions, exhibited "the lowest level of political incorporation of the four major groups" (DeLeon, 1997; p. 146). It is not unlikely that the coming of Rojas to the political scene excited some hopes of changing the "level of political incorporation" on the part of Latinos. Mitch Salazar seemed to indicate that such hopes were to some degree fulfilled when he summed up Rojas' nine year tenure in San Francisco by saying how much he liked Rojas for taking on the unions and bureaucracies and for the "fiscal love he gave to communities that had never gotten it before" (interview, 10/2/01).²⁵ And as long as the distribution of "fiscal love" was a zero sum proposition, i.e., as long as some got it while others didn't, such patronage worked to successfully divide communities against each other. The lack of internal controls noted in the state's 2001 (see previous chapter) audit allowed Rojas to spend money on those he categorized as "doers" without having to justify the expenditures. This might explain why very little of the millions of dollars raised by a 1994 bond measure for repairs and construction were actually spent on the district's infrastructure needs. It could also explain why the court monitoring team noted in its July 2000 report that it was unclear how the Consent Decree funds were being spent.

Once the Department of Integration approves a school’s budget, the Department appears to have no further monitoring function to ensure that the school in fact spends its funds as it promised or to ensure that the programs funded lead to improvements in the academic performance of the school or toward other Consent Decree goals (e.g., improved attendance) (Biegel, 2000; p. 57).

The monitoring team, in looking at the district’s 1999–2000 Consent Decree budget records, was curious why “almost \$400,000 was budgeted for CSIP if in fact the CSIP program was discontinued in 1997” (p. 55, fn. 91).

Several sources I interviewed suggested that Rojas, who became superintendent in 1992, wanted to use Mission High School as a source of Latino patronage — to use the positions and funds of the schools to reward Latino followers. One source argued that since Arabolos was presiding over the successful transformation of Mission HS into a multicultural school, she needed to be removed. (See Figures 8.1 and 8.2, below, which illustrate the ethnic shift occurring at MHS. The first figure shows that during the school year 1988 to 89, Hispanics made up approximately 35 percent of the Mission High School student population. Ten years later, Hispanics grew to be nearly 45 percent of the total student body while the proportion of Asian Americans dramatically shrank. The second figure shows that from 1988 to 1999, the percentage of Asian American students in SFUSD schools increased. But at Mission High School, during the same period, the percentage of Asian American precipitously dropped. While there was an increase in the percentage of Hispanic students overall, the percentage increase at Mission High School from 1988 to 99 grew disproportionately larger.)

Figure 8.1
CHANGE IN THE ETHNIC MAKE-UP OF MISSION HIGH SCHOOL FROM 1988
to 1999

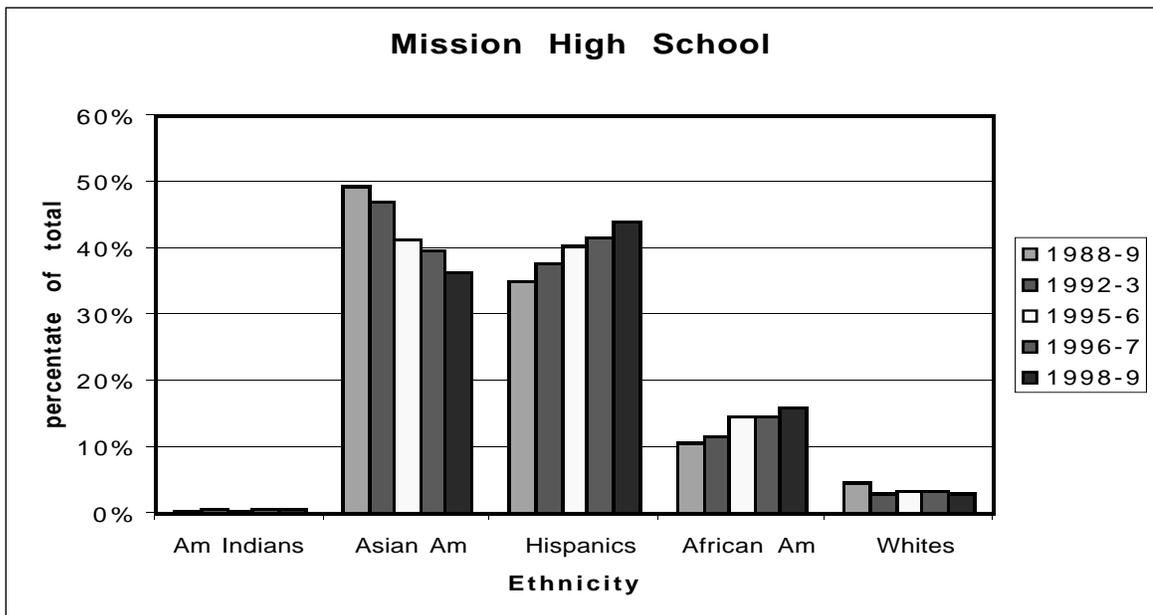
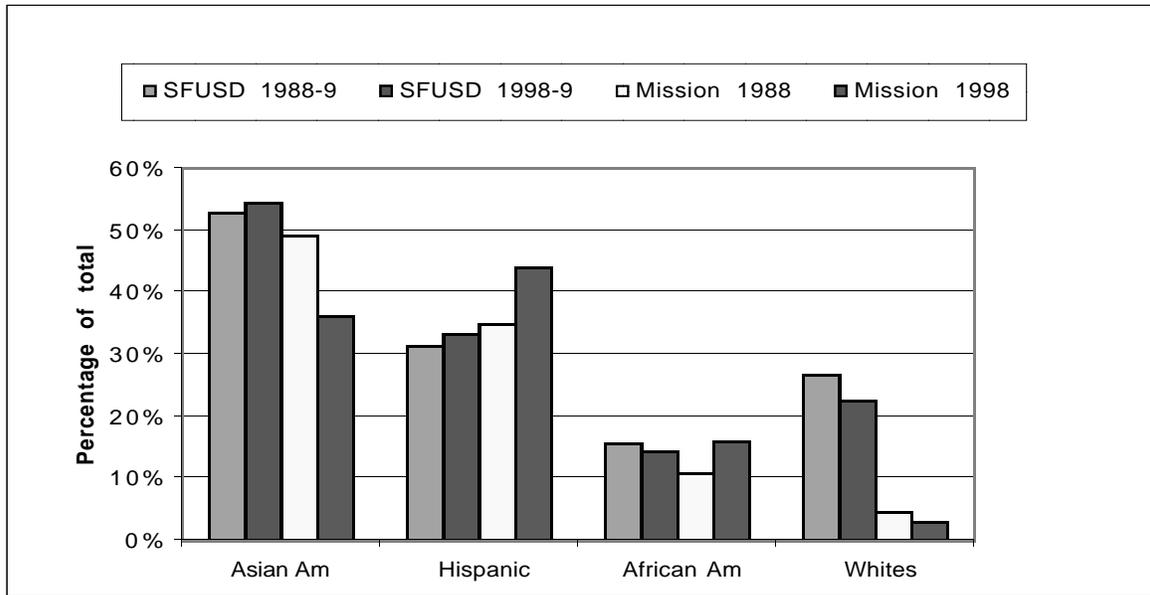


Figure 8.2
COMPARISON OF THE CHANGING ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION IN MISSION HIGH SCHOOL WITH THAT OF THE SFUSD IN GENERAL



Data in the above two graphs are taken directly from the Common Core of Data, NCES.

Cornejo was told that, beginning in 1996–97, Rojas was committed to “a new type of governance” which “was to consist of a partnership between activists in the community and the professional appointees in the next school year” (Cornejo quoted in Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 428). These “community activists,” however, seemed to consist only of those organized by the Real Alternatives Program.²⁶

When Alfaro became principal, he cut the high school’s contacts with every other community-based organization except the Real Alternatives Program run by Mitch Salazar, executive director of RAP from 1986 to 1999. According to David Mauroff of the SF Girls and Boys Club, “RAP co-opted the funding for the neighborhood [and] . . . refused to work with all the youth.” Mauroff conceded that RAP was very successful with some individuals but overall was divisive. Since the demise of RAP as a power in the area, “there is much more cooperation among organizations” serving all the youth of the Mission area (interview with Mauroff, (9/19/01). According to Salazar, RAP first approached SFUSD in 1988 with the idea of an alternative school for gang-related, at-risk students. Superintendent Ramon Cortines “embraced” the group at that time because “he believed in what [RAP] was doing. . . . We had aligned ourselves with the right people — Rosa Perez [community college vice-chancellor] and Gene Royale [Urban Institute at SFSU].” Salazar explained that having aligned themselves with “Latinos who knew the Mission and were affiliated with institutions . . . [RAP] could go to Cortines and get support. . . . I could give Cortines

a bigger impression than what we had . . . one of academic success and not soft social support services. . . . We weren't going to pass kids to pass kids, we were going to raise the academic bar . . . not be another continuation school that was just a dumping ground" for high school pushouts and dropouts (interview with Salazar, 10/2/01)

Salazar said that running RAP HS was a learning experience. They learned how "to deal" with the school system, for example, learning "how to relate to Pupil Services" and other departments. Salazar wanted to be able to choose the teachers at RAP HS and not have the district's personnel office "send" them the teachers. Cortines enabled RAP HS to break the union rules.

We learned to deal directly with the superintendent. If not for the superintendent, the bureaucrats would have killed the HS. We were competing with other high schools and other community day schools for resources. You cannot do that through a Board and have the same effect as dealing directly with the superintendent,. The superintendent has such broad authority — a pen stroke, a phone call — it's done (interview, 10/2/01).

When Rojas replaced Cortines, Salazar wanted direct access to the new superintendent. Cortines had promised Salazar that RAP HS could occupy the entire west wing of the district's building at 1950 Bryant Street. Rojas, upon his arrival in San Francisco, refused to return Salazar's phone calls, so he went ahead without building permits or district approval and extended RAP high school into the west wing of the building. Then Salazar pursued Rojas by ambushing him outside of meetings and dinners he was attending, "walking and talking" with him as he left the functions and eventually becoming one of Rojas' "drinking buddies." Salazar convinced Rojas to visit the newly rehabilitated and expanded RAP high school. Rojas was extremely impressed with the fresh and brightly painted walls and the computers in the classrooms. Rojas observed to his aides, in front of Salazar, that "these people are doers!" Salazar received, ex post facto, district approval for the expansion of the school which could now enroll ninth through twelfth grade students (originally only ninth and tenth grade students attended). Salazar maintained his direct access to Rojas by providing vote canvassing for a multimillion dollar school bond. In the spring of 1996, Rojas brought Alfaro to RAP high school's first senior class graduation, telling Alfaro, again, in front of Salazar, "you can trust these guys" (interview, 10/2/01). In October 1996, Alfaro, as the new principal of Mission HS, informed the faculty that RAP HS students would be attending classes as MHS. Later in the year,

at a faculty meeting attended by Rojas, [a teacher] asked if Mission High's school site planning committee would have the authority to determine which community-based organizations were invited into Mission, and what the role of these community-based organizations would be. Rojas responded, "Mitch [Salazar], Gene [Royale], and I have no unspoken agenda about Mission High." (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 219)

Many faculty were confused by the apparent non sequitur. They became suspicious that Rojas did have an unspoken "agenda." Alfaro had already severed MHS's relationships to every community-based organization except RAP. Many began to fear that MHS was being set up for reconstitution, a move they thought would displace existing faculty and programs to make room for positions and funding for Rojas' favorites. One RAP staff member told Margaret Brodtkin, executive director of Coleman Advocates for Youth, "Have you heard? RAP is taking over Mission High

School!” (Brodkin, phone conversation, 12/13/01). Such suspicions had been initially inflamed by the publicly reported hearsay in the neighborhood newspaper just prior to Alfaro’s appointment.

Not everyone is a total fan of the embattled principals [Arabolos, Long, and Hudson]; some feel they have not been strong enough in challenging faculty to do better by Latino students. One former student teacher and current employee of the Real Alternatives Program testified that Arabolos refused to let Latino students call their group “La Raza Students.” He accused some teachers of closing their doors, locking students out. One student teacher said teachers have told Latino students that they are not qualified to take Algebra. Rojas may feel that reconstituting MHS will help him get rid of the dead wood. He may also believe Arabolos is more concerned with meeting kids’ emotional and social needs than their academic ones. . . . The top-down approach to reform by wholesale removal is the exact opposite of the family-building style of Arabolos. . . . Rojas disdains Arabolos’ lovey-dovey family approach to education. He told the MHS students that he runs the schools like a business, with quantifiable results to show investors, whether taxpayers or corporate donors . . . the district points to overall CTBS numbers in 1995 as proof that the progress is too slow. They will not wait for the 1996 results. . . (Michael Spero, *The New Mission News*, June 1996).

Rojas’ style of leadership did not allay growing suspicions that the district was being run on the principles of secrecy and patronage. The democratic and transparent decision-making process set up by Arabolos’ team involved a wide range of parent, teacher, student, and community concerns. This was in sharp contrast to the new Alfaro regime in which RAP had a monopoly of access to Alfaro and to MHS. Rojas’ offer to Royale (“How would you like to run the Health Clinic”) predated the district’s decision to take over the administration of the MHS Health Clinic from San Francisco State University. When Perea asked Alfaro why the Health Clinic was finally shut down, Alfaro said it was because it was “run by a bunch of white, middle-class lesbians” (Perea 7/19/01). This suggests that Rojas, while publicly claiming that he was running the district according to TQM, corporate “data-driven” techniques, was more interested in transferring successful programs to those he personally trusted as loyal supporters, regardless of their abilities or qualifications.²⁷

Rojas was able to create the illusion of “data-driven” reform by being very careful to limit access to himself. Very few penetrated his inner circle (Salazar was one of the few who remained on the inside track). Those on the outside were left either frustrated by lack of information and, unable to challenge Rojas’ decisions²⁸ or terrorized by a seemingly arbitrary decision-making process as many of the teachers were at Mission High School. Rojas seemed to incline towards “doers,” not consensus builders, suggesting to his staff, upon his arrival in 1992, that they read *The Art of War*, a brief compendium of Chinese military strategy written during the period of 400 to 320 b.c. (MacNamara, *San Francisco*, September 2001; p. 58). Alfaro, not surprisingly, did not set up a democratic decision-making process at Mission High School.

Students describe Alfaro’s style as dictatorial, while teachers say he and other administrators have demoralized the staff by stubbornly insisting they know best how to reach Mission students. . . . Several teachers and students said program and schedule changes were often made with little planning and announced at the last minute, resulting in chaos and confusion. . . . Any changes [Alfaro said] have been designed to increase academic achievement and prevent the school from being reconstituted. . . . School district officials say they are unaware of the discontent at the high school and are satisfied with the work of the new administration (Nanney, *The Independent*, 10/29/96; p. 1).

The teachers perceived “little planning” done by the administration at Mission, perhaps because they

were not allowed to participate in it. Possibly “chaos and confusion” occurred because the Mission administrative team failed to consult parents, teachers, and students as to the likely effects of their decisions. District officials accepted reports about Mission High School only from Alfaro, so it is not surprising that they would believe that everything at the school was going according to plan, whatever that plan might have been.

During Alfaro’s first year (1996–97), the frustration on the part of many teachers at Mission with the “chaos and confusion” grew unabated. The Union Building Committee (UBC), representing the unionized teachers of the school, decided to poll the faculty in November 1996. The survey was summarized and presented to the district administration since the assistant superintendent in charge of secondary education, John Quinn, had told a reporter that “we are very, very pleased with all the things that are happening at Mission” (Nanney, *The Independent*, 10/29/96; p. 9). The UBC received 56 responses (total of 103 certificated staff). The survey was divided into four response categories. Faculty and staff were asked to cite (1) positive changes that had happened in their classes or departments since the beginning of the school year, (2) positive changes that had happened schoolwide, (3) setbacks, and (4) concerns. Eleven cited positive changes (2) that could be attributed to Alfaro (e.g., five wrote “closed campus” and one wrote “[new] paint job”). Thirty-one did not respond to the second category while three wrote “none.” Only three respondents failed to cite a “setback” since the beginning of the year. Typical of the citations of “setbacks” by those who did respond were “low morale,” “no planning time,” poor attendance by students, and “lack of support for affective problems”. The “concerns” that were most cited were lack of administrative leadership (fourteen), lack of input or notification (fifteen), fear of impending reconstitution (thirteen), lack of cooperation among teachers (nine), and the destruction of the program/community involvement (five).

The survey fell on deaf ears. Undaunted, the UBC requested a faculty meeting run by ten district-appointed facilitators to allow them to express their concerns with the new administration. The meeting was held on December 19, 1996. The UBC then organized follow-up meetings with Alfaro to discuss the concerns raised at the December 19 meeting. Seeing no progress in these follow-up meetings, the UBC then requested a meeting with Rojas. In a presentation to Rojas on February 4, 1997, UBC representatives expressed their concerns. Tony Mana told Rojas that

the biggest question on the minds of the faculty was “What is the big picture for MHS?” More specifically: Who is deciding which programs stay and which are cut? What is the basis for these decisions? Why is there no professional dialogue or articulation about changes that are being made? . . . Connie Flannery spoke of the programs that had been cut and the lack of thought, process or communication regarding those cuts.²⁹ . . . She mentioned that despite the efforts of the faculty to establish a School Site Council, there was still none, an omission which could well cause a loss of funds for the school

[Rojas] concluded by identifying the three areas where he could take immediate action: support in assuring fiscal management at the school and the establishment of a school site council; facilitation at all future UBC and staff meetings; and clarification of his academic objectives for MHS. He stated his support for the cores and directed that any further concerns be directed to either Maria Santos or John Quinn (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 299).

Rojas failed to respond to the fundamental questions being asked by the teachers. Promising to establish a school site council would not address the problems inherent in Alfaro's management style ("no professional dialogue or articulation about changes"). Did Rojas believe that the "clarification of his academic objectives" would explain why Alfaro cut the Step-to-College program and eliminated the mental health supervisor position? Based on the teachers' previous experience, being referred to John Quinn was akin to referring the teachers to a brick wall. Not surprisingly, Rojas' disingenuous response did not end the convening of future UBC meetings as many of the teachers at Mission High School attempted to convince someone in the district of the legitimacy of their concerns during the rest of the school year.³⁰ Those who had learned the value of participating in the decision-making process under the previous administrative team felt its absence sorely.

The students also were kept informed and expressed their concerns through the student newspaper, the *West Wing*. The pursuit of information by the students led to consistent attempts by Alfaro to censor the paper. The student reporters, however, like the teachers, had already experienced what "free speech" meant under the previous administration and were not cowed. One student reporter for the *West Wing* wrote in the January 1997 issue:

The *West Wing* has been accused of being too negative by a number of people, including some administrators, the most vocal being principal Ted Alfaro. . . . However, the last issue of the *West Wing* contained 31 positive stories. Only five were negative. What causes such a misunderstanding? I suspect the perception of negativity in the paper is just a reflection of negativity going on in the school. [For example], Alfaro feels after lunch a lot of students do not return to school for their afternoon classes. Guess what? Locking the doors doesn't help the situation any. The students who don't want to attend afternoon classes still leave. . . . No one has tried to find out what makes them want to leave. . . . Now those who don't want to stay are called "problem students," which makes it easier to ship them off to god knows where after the weak attempt to make them stay doesn't work. . . . I believe the solution will come only when administrators start talking to the people at this school, students and teachers alike. . . . Alfaro says he is planning to do a lot more to improve things at Mission, but most of those ideas are vague and in the future. And planning isn't really doing. I mean, I plan to clean my room. I plan to be an astronaut. Will either one happen? I don't know; I am still planning (Joey Guerrero, *West Wing*, January 28, 1997; reprinted in Aschenbrener, forthcoming).³¹

Community Power as a Threat to the Political and Corporate Machines

The dramatic shift in the decision making process from one of arduous consensus- and relationship-building under Arabolos to one of decision-by-decree under Alfaro reflects a corporate/bureaucratic influence on the formation of school policy. When Rojas argued that he was "uncomfortable" with Arabolos because she was "too close to the culture of the school," Rojas was expressing a lack of confidence in Arabolos' reliability as a cog in the district's bureaucratic machine. Rojas could no longer be assured that Arabolos would be responsive to his authority because she was also responding to the concerns and issues presented to her by those "below" her. She had divided loyalties. Ironically, in attempting to accomplish the goals of the BRT as they trickled down the bureaucratic hierarchy, Arabolos challenged the very nature of that hierarchy; she threatened to

become or was, in fact, an unreliable part of the machine. She took “site-based decision-making” beyond the limits as defined by the BRT and unwittingly created a base of power from which she could have challenged Rojas’ authority. That she was truly interested in the fate of her students and not interested in power for its own sake probably never occurred to Rojas whose understanding of his job was that of head of a political or bureaucratic machine.

Bureaucracies and political organizations are often referred to as machines. The metaphor reflects the desire of those in charge to maintain the illusion or impose the reality that they are actually in control, whether they wish to be in control of a school district, city, society, nature, or history. A machine is composed of inert parts. One pushes a button or pulls a lever and the cogs and wheels turn on command. When they don’t, they are replaced with new or used parts that will function within the larger machine. Carolyn Merchant argues in *The Death of Nature* (1990) that our institutions are dominated by a culture in which the machine is “the unifying model for science and society” (p. 192).

The machine has permeated and reconstructed human consciousness so totally that today we scarcely question its validity. Nature, society, and the human body are composed of interchangeable atomized parts that can be repaired or replaced from outside. The “technological fix” mends an ecological malfunction, new human beings replace the old to maintain the smooth functioning of industry and bureaucracy, and interventionist medicine exchanges a fresh heart for a worn-out, diseased one. . . . Moreover, as conceptual framework, the mechanical order has associated with it a framework of values based on power, fully compatible with the directions taken by commercial capitalism (Merchant, 1990; p. 193).

Merchant traces the origin of this cosmology back to the Scientific and Commercial Revolutions of sixteenth century Europe. Such a world view has been elaborated upon throughout the succeeding centuries. It would seem that the computer age has served to entrench further the paradigm of the machine as the reigning cosmology of the business world. Arabolos, however, had pursued the model of the organism, or to put it in more modern terms, holism or ecology and not the machine. Arabolos had become guilty of no longer being an interchangeable part of a machine. She was no longer controllable. However much she wanted to please her superiors, create career pathways to the health professions, increase the test scores based on a “dead” curriculum, Arabolos also knew she had participated in the creation of an ecosystem, a living system in which every part is essential and if removed weakens the system by threatening its stability. She was not only “close to the culture of the school” but an essential part, as essential as any of the other parts of the organism. Every time a teacher or student complained that Rojas was acting to destroy “our family,” “our community,” that was further evidence to the superintendent that he needed to remove Arabolos and her team.

Alfaro not only behaved as an interchangeable part but also attempted to transform the school into a machine through the destruction of the school’s living, breathing connections to its culture, history, and community. Tracy Brown, a community activist, tells the following symbolic story. Rojas asked Salazar to help Alfaro develop relationships with the surrounding community, the same

community that had so strenuously objected to the removal of Arabolos. Rojas set up a community advisory board and appointed its members. The advisory board, however, was in constant battle with Alfaro. Members of the committee objected to Alfaro's decisions to begin to dismantle the health clinic and to issue large numbers of "safety transfers." Brown didn't become involved in the battle between Alfaro and the community until she heard that Alfaro had ordered the removal of the school's graduation pictures from the walls of the schools. "That was the most disrespectful thing that he could ever have done to the community. That's when I said, 'okay, it's on. I'm calling in my favors.'" Brown explained that there were several reasons why the graduation pictures meant so much to the community. For many families, the person in those pictures was the first person in their family to have graduated from high school – a feat of which they were extremely proud. Another dimension was that one could walk down the hall and point out the musician, Carlos Santana in one picture, San Francisco Supervisor Leland Yee in another. These people are the community's role models, powerful symbols of the ability not only to succeed, but also succeed "at being true to yourself, being who you are." Brown explained, "I could walk down the hall and say, 'here's my aunts, here's Santana and here's me.'" By taking down the pictures, Alfaro was expressing no regard for the community and no regard for the history of the school (interview with Tracy Brown (10/15/01)).

In the world of the machine, there is no need for history and no need for community.³² Rojas had recruited his team of "doers," like-minded people who owed their loyalty to him. Those parts that didn't function within the machine that Alfaro was fashioning at Mission would be replaced or simply removed. The first year Alfaro was principal (1996–97), Rojas placed Mission High School in the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. The next year, Mission High School was reconstituted. Rojas wrote in his dissertation (1996):

[Reconstitution] is a dramatic and radical tactic for dysfunctional institutions which poses an organizational culture and system of organic deterioration . . . [it] *commits the persons in the school system to the rules and principles of excellence and equity* for all children. . . . [Reconstitution] places students and parents as institutional stakeholders of an educational facility and the *reculturing* of the institution through a new hiring process of all adult employees. . . . [It] provides an expeditious path for school change and the development of an educational structure that espouses the goals articulated by the district through the superintendent and the school board (pp. 4-6) [my emphasis].

Perhaps what Rojas meant by "reculture" was retool. For the development of a new culture involves the development of relationships over time, not merely hiring a new set of faculty who all "articulate a set of beliefs in success and high expectations for minority students" (Rojas, 1996; p. 25). It is also not clear how hiring a new set of faculty necessarily "re-cultures the entire school community" (p. 26).

Such assertions begin to make some sense if one assumes that people and the programs they develop and work within resemble inert machine parts (or reprogrammed computer parts) rather than complex organisms with histories and connections to other people and programs. Ironically, Rojas

claimed to be in alignment with a “new ecology” model.³³ Yet, he operated within the BRT model of top-down, “data-driven” and reward/punishment reform.³⁴ Rojas claims that reconstitution was a successful reform initiative during his tenure as superintendent because test scores went up (p. 92). It was successful because it was able to “ensure that all schools in the district are accountable for the academic growth of the student population they serve.” Rojas refers to the *New Ecology* in arguing that reconstitution begins the reculturing of a school which is “arrived at through painstakingly constructivist developments and the learning of collaborative systems within the school climate and organization” over the “long term” (p. 26). Yet Rojas gave Arabolos only two years to show “measurable gains” and Alfaro had one year to do so (Mission was reconstituted after Alfaro’s first year). After five years as principal, Alfaro was removed by Rojas’ successor, Arlene Ackerman, and the state government is presently considering taking over the school on the basis of its SAT-9 scores during the past two years.

Another way to understand why Rojas may have objected to Arabolos’ proximity to the school’s culture is provided by Polly Greenberg (1969). Greenberg was one of the founders of the first Head Start program in 1965, called the Child Development Group of Mississippi, which was run out of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). The parents were organized to run the schools so that

instead of beginning with classroom quality and attempting to work toward “involving” parents and the community, we were going to try beginning with parents and the community — and then work toward quality in the classroom. . . . Stage one of solving the problem is to direct experimental work at the process through which, and the people through whom, the classroom and the system even come into existence. . . . We wanted to see if poor people and minority groups could develop their own educational systems and classrooms. We guessed they needed their own elected school boards, which would hire their brands of specialists and supervisors who would specialize and supervise according to their goals, exactly as middle-class people and the majority group now do. Until this had happened, we felt it mattered relatively little what kinds of ultra-subtle and super-accurate, sophisticated things went on in the classroom. These come later, these come in stage two. (pp. 101–102).

According to the participants in the program, both stage one and stage two were remarkably successful. Yet the OEO eventually decided to remove the very people who had engineered such success. Greenberg believed this happened because the staff had

acquir[ed] too much knowledge of a project. Too much knowledge leads to identification, and therefore to a conflict of loyalties. . . . [If one had “too much knowledge” then one] was generally considered to be “prejudiced,” thus contaminated [and] artfully kept [away from the project] (p. 307).

The staff had also become “overinvolved in and overemotional about [the] project” (p. 307).

From this point of view, one could argue that Rojas saw Arabolos as a threat to the compartmentalized structure of district administration. Arabolos was “too close to the culture of the school.” She was “overinvolved,” “overemotional,” had “too much knowledge” of what the community’s goals were and what programs might effectively achieve those goals. By responding to the interests and needs of the community, Arabolos was no longer completely obedient to Rojas’

agenda. By promoting a community or family style “operation,” Arabolos put her team in direct competition with the machine-like, hierarchal, military, or business model that Rojas championed. Arabolos’ identification with her projects threatened to “interfere with [Rojas’] operation.” The “dominant tone” affecting Rojas’ decisions was set by the Business Roundtable’s pervasive campaign of using a single, state-mandated test to identify those schools requiring “intervention.” In 1996, Mission High School’s test scores were among the lowest of all comprehensive high schools. Other factors, especially ones visible to those who had intimate knowledge of the school, did not matter. Information about Mission High School programs that was not quantifiable was ignored. It did not fit into the blueprint established by Rojas from the beginning of his superintendency, a blueprint that was to be implemented with machine-like inevitability.

Those involved in creating reform at Mission High School were completely surprised and perplexed by Rojas’ decision to remove Arabolos, Hudson, and Long. Their inability to both anticipate the removal and fathom the reasons for such a decision arises out of their inability to see how many layers one needs to penetrate before a pattern emerges. Rojas was selected by a school board whose leadership was simultaneously frustrated by the lack of academic success by Latino students, frustrated with the teachers union’s opposition to reform (as defined by the BRT),³⁵ and possibly hopeful that a strong and ambitious Latino superintendent could lead to some “fiscal love” directed towards the Latino community. Rojas arrived in San Francisco during the same year that the NAACP lawyers were beginning to increase the pressure on the district to improve the educational opportunities of students attending the poorest schools. At the head of a large bureaucracy that he was determined to control³⁶ and breathing the air produced by the Business Roundtable’s high-stakes testing campaign, Rojas fashioned the process of reconstitution so that it was in alignment with those who could further his personal ambitions.

That Rojas ended up used-and-discarded in the same manner he used and discarded others may have come as a surprise to him. Yet given the larger context in which he was a player, it does not seem surprising as much as predictable. The backlash that the BRT is experiencing today because of its tactic of “turning up the heat” is the same backlash that Rojas experienced. The teacher’s union that the NAACP lawyers found lacking in initiative was provoked into action by the expansion and ruthless implementation of reconstitution. The recommendation by the Institute for Responsive Education that when community activists find the superintendent impervious to influence, one should then campaign for his removal, was intuitively adopted by the teachers’ union and community activists such as those from Coleman Advocates for Youth.³⁷ Rojas’ refusal to test all children in San Francisco, perhaps to bolster his claim of raising test scores, did alienate important support among state legislators in Sacramento where the BRT principle of testing every child in English was written into the STAR program. Rojas overstepped his place in the hierarchy when he began publicly criticizing the state representatives from San Francisco. This resulted in the promise of a state audit of the SFUSD. It was perhaps this threat of exposure that prompted Rojas to suddenly resign from his position in San Francisco and accept an offer to run the Dallas, Texas,

school district in 1999.

During his first year as principal of Mission High School, Alfaro proceeded to oversee the dismantling of the health clinic, health “career pathways,” the Step-to-College program, and the network of community-based organizations that supported the educational reforms pursued at MHS from 1985 to 1996. The school then developed a partnership with the computer company, Cisco Systems, developed Law Academy courses, and allowed RAP to monopolize community access to the school. This, apparently, was part of the CSIP process. MHS was then reconstituted in 1997. Alfaro remained but many teachers did not. CSIP and Reconstitution were the means by which “equity and excellence” was to be brought to the 60,000 students of the SFUSD. Yet Rojas’ intervention at Mission High School revealed just how narrow and distorted the definition of “equity and excellence” was. Furthermore, the nature of the intervention suggests that “equity and excellence” had little to do with the purpose of the reforms.

Instead Rojas and his loyal staff had managed to transform the original intent of the Consent Decree into a shape that would meet the approval of those directing educational policy at the state and national level. What students, teachers, parents, and community leaders believed and worked toward did not matter. What did matter was a top-down, test-score driven, reward and sanction reform model. This is what both the San Francisco NAACP and the school board members who hired Rojas supported. Teachers and community leaders worked hard to replace Rojas supporters on the school board, succeeding in 1998 and again in 2000. A new superintendent was hired and Alfaro was removed from Mission High School. But the damage had been done — the health center was gone, the community had been dispersed, the school population had shrunk, and the state was threatening the school with the II/UPS program. The newly constituted school board and the SF NAACP now supported a new superintendent, Arlene Ackerman, who is even more invested in top-down, test-score driven, reward and sanction reform than Bill Rojas was.

¹ The most recent expression of the CBR’s education goals is in the 1994 Berman and Weiler Associates, report, *Mobilizing for Competitiveness: Linking Education and Training to Jobs*. The report identified three “goals” to guide restructuring efforts. The first goal was to transform the state’s K–16 school system into “a coherent education and training system” which would provide “clear pathways and transitions to high skill careers for all Californians.” This goal found its way into the state board of education’s policy statement regarding high school restructuring, “Second to None.” Mission High School academic planning team took the recommendations for “pathways” and career training very seriously as will be seen later in this chapter.

² Comparisons based on SFUSD 1996-97 profiles of Balboa , Galileo, Lincoln, MacAteer, Mission, and Washington High Schools. These profiles can be found on the SFUSD district’s web site. Test scores are reported as Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE) from two sub-tests of the CTBS fourth edition.

³ Barbara Nanney wrote, “Lupe Arabolos, upon her arrival at Mission High School, got to know all the gang members by their real names and street names. She visited them where they hung out and sent the leaders of each of the ten gangs to leadership conferences and got them involved with the school. As a result, mutual respect developed” (*The Independent*, 6/11/96).

- ⁴ Mary Aschenbrener has been a social studies teacher at Mission High School for 30 years. After MHS was reconstituted in 1997, Aschenbrener collected 400 pages of documents into a manuscript and submitted it to Teachers College Press for publication. All references to Aschenbrener in this chapter are from the original manuscript she submitted to TC Press in 2001.
- ⁵ I interviewed Phillips on August 7, 2001. Phillips was elected to the school board in 1992 and voted to support Superintendent Rojas' firing of the 1997 administrative team at Mission High School.
- ⁶ Interview with Jose Luis Pavlon, November 2, 2001.
- ⁷ By 1996, the administration of MHS would eventually establish working relationships with 19 community-based organizations in the area (including the police department), all providing support services for the students at Mission High School (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 198).
- ⁸ The consortium included SFSU Department of Counseling, SFSU School of Social Work, the SFSU Center for Advanced Medical Technology, the SFSU College of Education, UCSF, SF Public Health Department, and the SF Unified School District.
- ⁹ An example of the kinds of generalities found in the state's 1992 *Second to None* report include statements like "every student participates in the academic foundation" and "students make choices." In the context of the CBR's 1988 report, such vague statements begin to take on meaning, but it remains unclear how many high school principals were required to read the CBR document in tandem with the *Second to None* report.
- ¹⁰ That a high school summer prep program would be called "College Prep" seems to indicate the success of the BRT agenda in promoting the high school experience as one of preparation for college for every student (*Nine Essentials*: all students will be expected to achieve high standards. Education Trust: one exam to function both as a high school exit exam and an entrance exam to the state university and community college system).
- ¹¹ Funding for the development of MAC came from the Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, Blue Cross Fund, State Farm Community Investment Corporation, Pew Charitable Trust, McKesson Corporation, National Services Corporation and the Division of Nursing of the U.S. Department of Education.
- ¹² This is from p. 92 in a textbook used to teach administrators, mentor and master teachers in the methods of *supervision* of teachers. I was asked to use this text in a professional development course designed as a collaboration between a local high school and UC Davis. (*Supervision of Instruction: A Development Approach* by Carl Glickman, Stephen Gordon, and Jovita M. Ross-Gordon; Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1998, fourth edition.) For a review of the literature on the correlation of instructional techniques with test scores, Glickman, et al. cite J. Brophy (1979), "Teacher Behavior and Its Effects" in *Journal of Teacher Education* (71, 733–750).
- ¹³ According to the Mission HS Parent and Community Action Group "Information Sheet" (5/30/96; reprinted in Aschenbrener; p. 125), CTBS NCE gains from 1995-1996 were as follows: Reading; ninth grade +4.9, tenth grade +7.5, eleventh grade +7; Math, ninth grade +5.5, tenth grade +7.7, eleventh grade +1.7. According to a *San Francisco Chronicle* article on August release of 1996 CTBS NCE scores, "Although Mission High ranked third from the bottom in reading (42.4) and second-to-last in math (41.6), its gains were strong in both areas. In math and reading, Mission students achieved more than twice the gains that would be expected in a single year [and] made greater gains in reading than students at any other city high school . . . greater math gains than all but one high school, Thurgood Marshall" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 8/14/96; A15).
- ¹⁴ The letter was from Hanh Cao Yu of SPRA, Menlo Park, 5/13/96, to Lupe Arabolos, thanking the teachers who participated in the focus groups of 5/7/96. Copies of the letter were also sent to Superintendent Rojas, the School Board, and the teachers of the focus group (reprinted in Aschenbrener, forthcoming).

- ¹⁵ Carlos Cornejo was a former SFUSD teacher, counselor, principal, and administrator (39 years in the district). In 1995, he had retired from the district and began to work with Mission High School staff as a consultant from the Urban Institute at San Francisco State University. He worked on reducing class and school absenteeism. He was part of the 25-person planning team of parents, students, teachers, and administrators who had mapped out a strategy for the high school. He also helped prepare a presentation to Rojas to persuade him not to remove Arabolos.
- ¹⁶ Interview with Tracy Brown, October 15, 2001.
- ¹⁷ Thompson (1967) identifies three kinds of bureaucratic structures that function in very different ways. One is “coordination by standardization”; a second is “coordination by plan,” and the third is “coordination by mutual adjustment” (p. 57–58). Arabolos seems to have created the third one in direct contrast to the district administration’s pursuit of “coordination by standardization.”
- ¹⁸ CSIP (Comprehensive School Improvement Plan) was part of the district’s rewards and punishment system set up by Rojas. This was described in detail in the previous chapter.
- ¹⁹ In chapter two, I cited some of the literature on school board behavior. Ziegler and Jennings (1974) argued that their survey of 490 board members and 82 superintendents in 83 school districts (supplemented by local sources, government publications, and interviews with the public) “suggests in unequivocal terms the existence of an educational elite which is consciously self-perpetuating” (p. 51). Incumbents generally select their successors; most candidates don’t campaign on issues that would distinguish themselves from others nor do they court endorsements from community interest groups (Zerchykov, 1984). Even when “delegate” minded board candidates are elected, they soon take on a “trustee” mentality — they know what is best for the community and they do not want to be seen as being responsive. This culture is reinforced by national board meetings, superintendent sessions, as well as a plethora of handbooks (Lutz, 1975). BRT proponents continue to argue that school boards need to focus on the so-called big picture and not act like the elected representative that they are. As the facilitator between state standards and assessment practices and the pedagogical practices within schools, school boards need to “take a comprehensive look at the objectives of the local school community and examine progress toward meeting state and central district objectives” (Kirst, 1994; p. 380). School boards must link policies and reform initiatives to student outcome objectives, curriculum frameworks, and assessments; establish staff development consistent with district goals and objectives; and convene community forums to discuss educational policy (Danzburger, 1994; p. 372). Don McAdams’ career as a Houston school board member (they are interestingly called “trustees”) from 1990 to 2000 manifests the quintessential “trustee mentality” when he complains that Houston trustees are no longer elected at large but by district: “Board members only felt accountable to the group that had elected them. The result was a board plagued by racial, economic, and geographical divisions. Several trustees appeared more interested in their trustee districts than in the district as a whole. . . . Once in office, zealous individuals concentrated on those issues which got them elected, making compromise for the good of the whole take a backseat to the rhetoric of extremism” (McAdams, 2000; p. 221).
- ²⁰ Pavlon was a student at MHS in 1993 and has maintained his ties to the MHS community through his work for Coleman Advocates, a child advocacy nonprofit in San Francisco. Pavlon is a youth organizer for YMAC, Youth Making a Change, one of the organizations within Coleman Advocates (interview with Pavlon, 11/2/01).
- ²¹ “Closed” in the both the sense of not letting students out but also not letting local community-based groups in. David Mauroff, who has worked for Columbia Boys and Girls Club, and worked with Mission High school students before Alfaro took over, conceded that there were serious problems at Mission in 1995–96. Some of the problems were poor teachers, kids roaming the halls, and serious tensions between students in the school and those on the outside. Mauroff was initially optimistic when Alfaro was appointed but soon was disappointed when Alfaro wouldn’t let Columbia Park mentors inside the school. Alfaro “wouldn’t do anything for the kids” he kept in the school nor did he offer any help for those who were shut out (interview, 9/19/01).
- ²² Tracy Brown recalls that “Alfaro started kicking students out. He did it legitimately — filling out “safety transfers” for those who showed the slightest sign of gang affiliation. . . . He had started profiling kids, saying parents and students didn’t feel safe. But no school had to take a student who had been tagged as gang affiliated. Where were these kids to go? RAP High School was already full. . . . Many community-based organizations were

upset with Alfaro because he was expelling, transferring, pushing out the very students that the CBOs were involved with. . . . Alfaro was trying to create a school for smart kids, another OER school (open enrollment). It was all about scores; get rid of the poor test-takers” (interview, 10/15/01).

- ²³ Defenders of Alfaro have argued recently that “in 1996-97 when Mr. Alfaro came to Mission High there was: 1 AP math course, 1 honors class, only 8 students took the Advanced Placement Test, only 30 percent passed the Integrated Writing Assessment Test, and none passed the Entry Level Math Exam (ELM) required by the California State University System. Before Mr. Alfaro came to the school, there were less than 15 computers available for student use at the school. Today, Mission High has 7 AP math courses, 7 honors classes, 92 students took the Advanced Placement Test this year, Mission High School took second place in the State Mock Trial Court competition, and sixth place in the State Academic Decathlon. Mission High’s highly applauded Law Academy program gives students the opportunity to participate in a rich integrated curriculum, (a curriculum that uniquely combines relevant work-based experience in major law firms with a rich integrated curriculum of college prep classes, in the context of a legal career). Mission High School has a state of the art computer science curriculum beginning in ninth grade, . . . the Pathway program. That’s educational opportunity!” (bullet points from a “Briefing Paper” prepared this year by a group of “community activists” protesting the removal of Alfaro as principal of Mission High School. Gene Royale gave me a copy of this during an interview, 7/31/01).
- ²⁴ The health clinic closed the summer of 1998 (services had begun to be reduced the previous April). In November 1997, Rojas refused to sign a letter to the San Francisco Foundation which was needed to authorize the clinic to accept funding from outside the district. Charlotte Ferreti said “she could no longer afford to operate the clinic because of the lack of support from the district and the school administration.” She didn’t have enough money to last until the U.S. Department of Education’s grant was renewed in October. Associate Superintendent Laura Alvarenga was quoted as saying that it is was “now time” for the district “to assume responsibility for the clinic” (Angela Rowen, *Bay Guardian*, May 13, 1998; p. 10). By the end of 1999 “Health services the following school year consisted of a nurse who had a cubicle in the counseling office. . . in fall 1999, the nurse was no longer in her cubicle, health services at the school consisted of an envelope of band-aids distributed to each teacher. Protective latex gloves were also provided” (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 416).
- ²⁵ It was the Consent Decree that provided over \$30 million a year to “targeted schools.” Rojas could, in large part, determine which schools were and were not targeted. Rojas admits that he was criticized for unequal allotments of district money but defends such spending as legally justified under the Consent Decree and morally justified because the groups he gave to had been discriminated against in the past (interview with Mark McNamara).
- ²⁶ RAP emerged as an organization out of the student strikes at San Francisco State University after 1969. It was the leading group in demanding policy and personnel decision-making influence for the Mission community during the community control fights of the early 1970s. From 1972 onwards, RAP developed as a formal nonprofit organization. At the height of its power, RAP had a \$1.9 million budget to run an alternative high school, an HIV/AIDS prevention and education program, a teen center, a “violence prevention initiative,” and a teen health clinic. Mitch Salazar was the executive director of RAP from 1985 to 1998. In 1998, RAP began to run into severe financial troubles and had to abandon most of its programs, many of which were taken on by other community-based nonprofits. RAP continues to operate an alternative high school.
- ²⁷ Rojas’ success at creating the illusion of educational reform suggests that the use of “data” at the district level can be easily manipulated.
- ²⁸ Jill Wynns wrote in 1999 about her experiences as a school board member with Rojas and MHS: the school board “believed anything the superintendent told them. Bill Rojas was the creator of reality at the governance level of the SFUSD. The same superintendent who said that things were going well at Mission one spring, told us the next spring that the ‘pace of change’ was not fast enough” (Aschenbrener; p. 435). “Those close to Rojas defend his methods, . . . defending his commitment to high standards for all students and saying that is what reconstitution is all about” (Asimov, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10/28/96).
- ²⁹ In October, Alfaro had decided to close the Step-to-College program to seniors who had not yet passed competency tests in reading, writing, and math (requirements for graduation). Alfaro explained, “You can’t put kids into a program who aren’t ready to graduate” (Nanney, *The Independent*, 10/29/96; p. 9). Other changes that the teachers objected to were: elimination of attendance program and mental health intern program; elimination of

mental health supervisor position; removal of graduation pictures from the walls of the school; Step-to-College courses cut from ten to two; elimination of career center coordinator; ESL students pulled out of the CORE programs; and 19 community based support groups (and their programs) denied access to the school (Aschenbrener, forthcoming; p. 192).

- ³⁰ The following incident suggests that attempts were being made to discredit the MHS teachers' position. At some point during this process, Gene Royale, a district liaison to MHS appointed by Rojas, phoned Jose Luis Pavlon, former student expelled in 1994, and asked him, "How would you like to fuck over those white teachers at MHS? There is a union hearing meeting coming up and we need you to come and get others to come to talk shit about the school. We are trying to get it reconstituted." Jose at first expressed interest but then realized that alienating the teachers would then make access to Mission High School virtually impossible. It was only the teachers that were letting him inside the school to organize student demonstrations and walk-outs (interview with Pavlon, 11/2/01).
- ³¹ Vice Principal Eddings told Guerrero on February 6, 1997, that he would be transferred to a dropout prevention center at Pupil Services Academy in two weeks (Jeff Stark, *SF Weekly*, 2/12–18/97). Guerrero went before the Student Attendance Review Board and was returned to Mission High School. He continued to write for the *West Wing* until the end of the year.
- ³² The events surrounding the replacement of Arabolos with Alfaro seem to suggest that the existence of community, horizontal networks of families, organizations, and individuals, is the greatest threat to those hoping to control others through a centralized, hierarchal bureaucracy.
- ³³ Rojas cites this source in the two-page bibliography of his dissertation as: Hughes, J. T., & Richards, C. E. (n. d.) *The New Ecology of School Management: Theory, Tools and Cases*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- ³⁴ See Chapter 2: The heart of BRT's agenda for the last ten years has been to move state governments to establish "rigorous standards" for *all* (their emphasis) students in core academic subjects (math, science, English, and social studies) that are measurable, and then adopt state-wide testing to determine whether the standards are being met. If the standards are not met, then students should not be allowed to graduate and the individual school in which those students are found should be "sanctioned." That standards are measurable is crucial to knowing whether the standards are being met. Furthermore, measurable standards are the only way one can "have data that allows one to guide efforts to achieve higher standards" (BRT, 1996; p. 6). BRT decided to place the focus on standards because "standards drive curriculum, teacher training, and assessment" (BRT, 1996; p. 8). Or, in other words, "when standards are high and assessments are geared to such standards, teaching improves and student achievement rises" (BRT, 1998; p. 4).
- ³⁵ Interview with Carlotta del Portillo by Mark McNamara (June 2001).
- ³⁶ "Rojas wants new leadership . . . announces that 17 administrators will be laid off" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 5/16/95).
- ³⁷ Coleman Advocates was able to organize 70 community-based organizations and the Parent Advocates for Change (PAC) also campaigned actively for school board members who would oppose Rojas' policies during the November 1998 school board elections. As a result, a new, anti-Rojas school board majority was elected (Therese Moore, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11/4/98; p. A20).