

IV. Failing Grade for APS

While APS is New Mexico’s largest school district, it is not New Mexico’s best district. RRPS, nearly 15% of the size of APS, has been used as a model of excellence in education for the state of New Mexico. Compared to RRPS, APS falls behind the learning curve with respect to student achievement and performance. RRPS has better reading proficiency, math proficiency, and AYP scores than APS, showing that elementary level students in Rio Rancho are successfully acquiring fundamental competencies. At the high school level, RRPS has superior ACT scores, truancy rates, dropout rates, and graduation rates compared to APS, indicating that Rio Rancho students are better prepared for higher education and the workplace. In addition to student achievement, RRPS has proven to have greater community involvement in education than APS as indicated by Rio Rancho’s higher voter turnout in school bond elections. Overall, as a smaller district, RRPS outperforms APS where it matters most – student achievement – while keeping the community engaged throughout the process.

Table 1

STATE TEST SCORES

SchoolMatters.com

	APS	RRPS
Reading Proficiency	51.8%	67.0%
Math Proficiency	36.1%	56.8%

Table 2

CLASSROOM PROFILE

SchoolMatters.com

	APS	RRPS
Students per Teacher	15.2	15.4
Enrollment	94,811	14,729

Table 3

STUDENT, TEACHER, AND ADMINISTRATOR RATIOS

NM Public Education
Department

	APS	RRPS
Students to Teacher	14.71	15.39
Students to Administrator	2113.25	2796.10
Teachers to Administrators	143.63	181.64

Table 4

DISTRICT HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

SchoolMatters.com

	APS	RRPS
Number of Households	263,536	26,914
Single-Parent Households	11.7%	12.6%

Table 5

Albuquerque Journal,
Bernalillo County
Canvas Records

SCHOOL BOND ELECTIONS AND VOTER TURNOUT

APS	RRPS
Less than 10% turnout, with 2 failures since 1988	Average 20% turnout, with 2:1 or 3:1 approval

Table 6

NM Public Education
Department

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS 2006-2007 SCHOOL YEAR

	APS	RRPS
AYP Rating	AYP met in 38% of schools	AYP met in 47% of schools
Improvement Status	SI-2	Progressing
Schools Rated in District	129 (100%)	15 (100%)
Schools in School Improvement	39 (30%)	1 (7%)
Schools in Corrective Action	20 (16%)	3 (20%)
Schools in Restructuring	14 (11%)	0 (0%)

Table 7

Albuquerque Public
Schools, Rio Rancho
Public Schools, NM
Public Education
Department

STUDENT PERFORMANCE SCORES

	APS	RRPS
2007-2008 ACT Scores	Composite Score 21.3	15.39
2006-2007 Habitually Truant	27.6%	2.0%
Elementary School	10.8%	0.9%
Middle School	27.9%	2.2%
High School	57.1%	3.5%
Dropout Rate	4.8%	3.2%
Cohort Graduation Rate	47%	72%

“RRPS has better reading proficiency, math proficiency, and AYP scores than APS, showing that elementary level students in Rio Rancho are successfully acquiring fundamental competencies.”

Table 8

“Quality of Education Surveys” Albuquerque Public Schools, Rio Rancho Public Schools

PARENT SATISFACTION

	APS	RRPS
	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
My child’s school holds high expectations for academic achievement.	35%	95.4%
School personnel encourage me to participate in my child’s education.	35%	92.3%
The school staff employs various instructional methods and strategies to meet my child’s needs.	29%	91.2%
APS provides enough opportunities for meaningful parent engagement in schools.	20%	N/A



APS AND RIO RANCHO LEADERSHIP STABILITY

APS’s troubled waters start with its lack of leadership stability. In his July 11, 2007 column “Voters: You Get Your Chance,” Jim Belshaw critiques APS’s 22-year superintendent history.

“As I read through 22 years of APS superintendents, I began to wonder if it was mathematically possible for a school district to hire one fatally flawed person after another or if perhaps some other factors weren’t operating. ... So is the problem the people we hire or the expectations of too many demanding constituencies? Or is it the people who hire the superintendents? Or the people (voters) who hire the people doing the superintendent hiring (the school board)? This theory loses some traction when considering that the great majority of voters in Albuquerque may hold strong opinions about education, but strength of opinion doesn’t translate into walking the walk (to the election polls) when it comes time to do something about education. In the last APS election, 6% of the voters turned out.”

RRPS on the other hand has had only two superintendents and a steady leadership team. APS leadership team tends to change in two- to three-year cycles due to retirements. These associate superintendents retire before programs that they are in charge of can be implemented district wide, making reform in APS very difficult.

FINANCIAL CRISIS – MILLION DOLLAR MISTAKES, OR THE COMPUTER DID IT

The recent “finding” of \$16 million dollars is an example of APS lack of continuity and ineptitude in finance. APS has had four chief financial officers in the last four years. APS’s combined operating and capital budget is \$1 billion.

Michael Vigil (1992-2005)

Bill Moffat (2006-2007)

Gina Hickman (2008-2009)

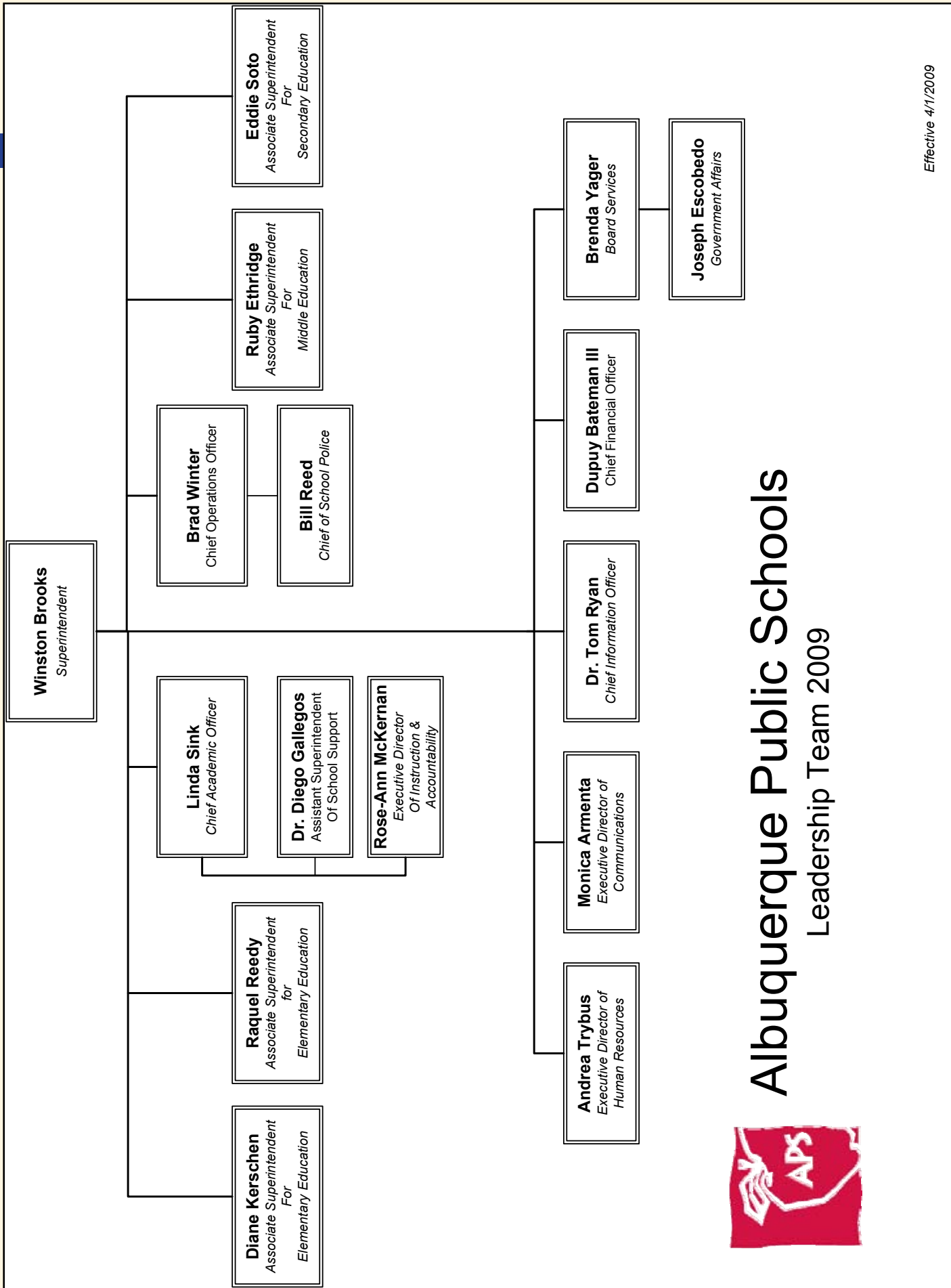
Dupuy Bateman (2009-Present)

“In addition, tax increases will not be necessary to support the new district.”

An Inspector General report shows APS has continued to have reporting problems as far back as 1991. The state caught the mistake for the second time, and it will cost APS \$20 million in state revenue. APS has blamed almost all of its finance problems on computer systems, no matter what system is in place, or how long it was in place. APS has spent \$23 million and is counting on a financial management system that cannot generate necessary reports or integrate with the district’s \$600 million capital program. Despite blaming the system for almost all of its financial problems, APS stands by its Lawson computer software system that has tripled in original costs since its purchase in 2003.

2008 MEYNER + CO. INTERNAL AUDIT

APS’s own audit found more than 60 problems in the Finance Department, including the lack of policies and procedures, weak internal controls, lack of qualified staff and inadequate training. The report also found APS’s financial reporting system to be “completely inadequate” and was shocked by the district’s antiquated payroll system. The PED has stated that it is monitoring the “financial crisis” and is “cautiously optimistic” about the district being brought back to financial health in a few years.



Albuquerque Public Schools

Leadership Team 2009

LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE MEMO

STAFF BRIEF: NM TOWN HALL: APS ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE FOR SUCCESS/ MATH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION TOWN HALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the possibility was discussed, the participants in the APS Town Hall did not conclude that the district should be deconsolidated but did reach consensus on the following 15 recommendations:

FAIL

1. APS remains a single school district and emphasizes its role as the unifying force by improving its core relationships with government, businesses, families and community, using research-based practices.

FAIL

2. APS leads a comprehensive communitywide system of education from pre-K to postsecondary that involves business, community, family, and all education partners in preparing students for life and career.

FAIL

3. Each school develops an effective program that increases parent involvement in all school and district-level decision making, including the development of the strategic plan and work with the legislature on incentives, such as tax breaks, that would facilitate parent involvement.

FAIL

4. APS identifies opportunities for more collaboration on efficient, innovative, and effective operations.

INCOMPLETE

5. APS leads a communitywide partnership that places a high value on, and generates passion about, education by collaborating with city and county agencies and the private sector to advance the community school concept.

FAIL

6. Policy makers recognize that the needs of Albuquerque are different than the needs of other districts. Flexibility should be allowed at the state level for meeting the needs of large urban districts, as well as for meeting the needs of other districts.

FAIL

7. APS strengthens communication practices and relationships within the district.

PASS

8. APS provides flexibility (within state mandates) through site-based management.

FAIL

9. A system is implemented whereby APS policies, organizational structures and directives are periodically reviewed; data are collected and analyzed to determine if the implemented policies, organizational structures and directives have impeded or enhanced student performance.

FAIL

10. APS moves toward a pure feeder cluster structure to increase the ability of the clusters to innovate in order to meet community needs, including: 1) flexible use of all funds (including special education), 2) alternative structures within clusters, such as K-8, year-round and vocational schools, and 3) more opportunities for students to move across clusters to meet their needs.

FAIL

11. APS implements a responsive, efficient and effective research-based process for the recruitment and retention of high-quality personnel.

FAIL

12. APS is provided with options (e.g. magnet career prep high schools) similar to those that Charter Schools have without loss of negotiated agreements for school employees.

PASS

13. The APS Board is responsible for:

- Setting policy;
- Entrusting the superintendent to make administrative and instructional decisions and maintain the stability of the district;
- Recognizing and rewarding outstanding educators and administrators.

INCOMPLETE

14. A significantly lower pupil-teacher ratio is funded and national standards for pupil-to support staff ratios are met.

FAIL

15. APS closes achievement gaps by adopting high academic standards and attending to socio-economic needs and emotional and physical wellness in a safe learning environment to ensure students have the maximum opportunity to increase learning and be successful.