

The Governance Structure Study Committee, composed of seventeen volunteer community members, studied school board governance in Florida and around the country for over four months. Our charge was to make findings of fact and suggest possible improvements to school board structure that we believe would benefit Orange County.

No limitations were placed on the scope of our study; all meetings were publicly noticed; all members of the public were welcome to participate and question our presenters; representatives favoring the proposed referendum were invited to present their concerns; and all presentations and meetings were recorded and placed on the district Web site.

Among our findings:

- There is no demonstrated correlation between student achievement and any particular type of school board governance model.
- Any structure change must not jeopardize Orange County Public Schools' ability to comply with the federal court order to achieve unitary status.
- There was no evidence established to support a county-wide elected school board chairman empowered with an additional vote to break ties. While school boards vary in size and composition there is not one in the country composed of an even number of members; or any single board member with the power to break ties.

The addition of a county-wide elected chairman, an eighth member, with the ability to break a tie vote could lead to disputable results. On an odd number member board, 4-3 votes are clear cut; and ties result in the vote failing for lack of a majority (Roberts Rules of Order). On the proposed even number member board, ties would result in the favor of the chairman's vote. The balance of voting power would always require at least five board members, a super majority, to prevail over the chairman.

Does this voting power unfairly disadvantage voters represented by their single member district board member? Does it rupture the constitutionally defined "collegial" structure of the board? Does this proposal give the countywide elected chairman untenably greater power than a board of "equals"? We believe it does.

This model is not the same as the Orange County Mayor and Commission. Orange County has six single member district commissioners and one countywide elected Mayor, an uneven number. In no case does the Mayor have an extra or second vote to use in the case of a tie.

We also concluded the constitutionality of this proposal must be resolved prior to inclusion on the ballot in order to educate voters and resolve inevitable legal concerns.

Nevertheless, our committee did unanimously conclude that our community would benefit by expanding school board membership from seven to nine single-member

districts. A larger school board would provide representation opportunities to underrepresented groups, increase access for citizens to their board members representing smaller districts (greater accountability), and lower the cost for individuals running for election.

Our complete final report with an executive summary is available at <https://www.ocps.net/es/cr/videos/Pages/SchoolBoardMeetings.aspx>

Link to audio files of the meetings  
<https://www.ocps.net/es/cr/videos/Pages/SchoolBoardMeetings.aspx>

Link to Governance Committee research and documents  
<https://www.ocps.net/sb/Pages/default.aspx>