

School System, Autonomy Plan Given Low Marks by Teachers

The Los Angeles City school system generally gets low marks from Hamilton High teachers when they are asked whether the system helps them do a better job.

And decentralization, the system's much-heralded reorganization to give local schools more autonomy, fares even worse when teachers are asked how it has affected them.

A questionnaire completed for The Times by 83 of the school's 99 teachers contained two questions on these issues.

Here are the questions and the way teachers responded:

1—*The policies, practices and organization of the Los Angeles school system generally help teachers to do a better job.*

Agree	20%
Disagree	48%
Unsure	21%
Other	2%

Less than a third of the faculty would agree. The rest disagree or have doubts. The negative responses generally reflect a feeling that teachers and their needs are ignored by the system. "The system exploits teachers and treats them as huddle-headed flunkies. The system listens to everyone but teachers — who

know best about real conditions," one said. "The administration seems to work at making things more difficult for teachers," another said. "What takes place in the classroom generally has the lowest priority. Administrative convenience comes first," a third remarked.

2—*The Los Angeles school district adopted a new decentralization program in 1971. How has it affected you as a teacher? (Answers were categorized, then the categories were ranked according to the number of responses.)*

Has had no effect	42%
Has had a negative effect	29%
Has had very little effect	13%
Has had a positive effect	9%
No answer	6%
Has had very much effect	1%

Almost three-fourths of the faculty report either no effect or an adverse effect as the result of decentralization. Only 9% were willing to say it had a positive effect. "Made things more confusing. Too many offices, people, etc.," one said. Comments another: "I am not as pleased with it as I thought I might be at first." "It is a waste of money," a third said. "It only means more administrators and red tape," another asserted.