

New Panel to Study Schools

The commission of 30 appointees will discuss whether to change how L.A. Unified is run, including the way trustees are chosen.

By STEVE HYMON
Times Staff Writer

A 30-member commission will be sworn in at City Hall today to study the Los Angeles Unified School District and consider whether to recommend changes in the way it is run.

The commission is the brainchild of City Council President Alex Padilla and L.A. Unified board President Jose Huizar.

Each member of the council and school board appointed one member to the new panel, with the school board also getting two group appointments. Mayor James K. Hahn got to fill two seats, and the remainder were filled by clusters of cities outside Los Angeles that are part of the school district. Councilman and Mayor-elect Antonio Villaraigosa, who said recently that the mayor of Los Angeles should appoint the school board, named teacher Mary Rose Ortega to the commission. His new chief of

staff, Robin Kramer, was also appointed, by Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski.

The commission will be headed by Maria A. Casillas, president of Families in Schools, and David S. Cunningham III, president of the Police Commission.

"The bottom line is that people can make a difference in terms of the outcome of enhancing our school system for children," said Cunningham, who was appointed by Padilla.

"There have not been changes to the structure of the LAUSD for many, many years, and I think we really want an open mind on how we want to do it better," he added.

He said that among the primary questions the commission will examine is how other cities structure their school boards, how the board is compensated and who picks the board — voters or elected officials.

The commission will begin meeting regularly next month, considering ideas from the public as well as conducting its own research.

The complete list of appointees:

■ Robert R. Barner, assistant superintendent-education programs, Los Angeles County Office of Education

■ Ed Burke, chief of staff, school board member John Lauritzen

■ Maria A. Casillas, president, Families in Schools

■ Yvonne Chan, principal, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center charter school

■ Bill Clay, retired general manager, AT&T

■ Carl Cohn, independent monitor, L.A. Unified

■ Jose Cornejo, chief of staff, Councilman Tony Cardenas

■ David Cunningham, president, Los Angeles Police Commission

■ Maria Davila, vice mayor, South Gate

■ Donald L. Dear, former mayor, Gardena

■ Marquee Harris-Dawson, executive director, Community Coalition

■ Ofelia Hernandez, mayor, Huntington Park

■ Jerry Horowitz, principal, Byrd Middle School

■ Robin Kramer, chief of staff, Mayor-elect Antonio Villaraigosa

■ Cecilia Moreno, community relations, Shell Oil Co.

■ Ramon Muniz, program coordinator, Cal State Northridge

■ Mary Rose Ortega, teacher

■ Erin Pak, chief executive, Korean Health, Education, Information and Research

■ Scott Plotkin, executive director, California School Boards Assn.

■ Ron Prescott, retired deputy superintendent, L.A. Unified

■ Mary Rodriguez, parent and community activist

■ Julie Ruelas, mayor, San Fernando

■ Carla Sanger, president and chief executive, L.A.'s BEST after-school program

■ Colleen Schwab, teacher, Parkman Middle School

■ Camilla Townsend, Los Angeles Harbor Commission member

■ Howard Welinsky, member, California Postsecondary Education Commission

■ Andrew Westall, adjunct professor, Pasadena City College

■ Paul White, teacher, West Valley Leadership Academy

■ Tyree Wieder, president, Los Angeles Valley College

■ Johnathan Williams, founder, Accelerated School