



Community Information on School Closure | December 18, 2008
Written questions submitted by attendees

- 1. According to Section 11 of Resolution No. 45-0809, approved at the Board's Dec. 10 meeting, the project to construct and renovate Castro Elementary to replace Portola Middle School is not "Pending" but in process. Therefore, how can Scenario 2 be under consideration? Portola should not be considered for closure if the Board has approved rebuilding it at the Castro site.**

Answer: Throughout the process of identifying Castro as the site for the middle school in El Cerrito, community members who oppose this site have threatened legal action. If that legal action were successful, the district could not put a middle school at Castro and thus, could consider closing Portola and re-distributing those students to other middle schools as well as to K-8 schools that could be authorized.

- 2. Under the consolidation Criteria #1, Facility Condition, does the sentence "This would include the facilities in the various planning stages of Measure J" mean such school facilities would be considered for closure, or would not be considered for closure?**

Answer: The criterion as written was unclear. It should read: **Facility Condition.** Conditions include all items of the physical plant, playgrounds, accessibility and grounds. Only school facilities not previously modernized or recently constructed will be considered for closure. Excluded facilities include the schools in the various planning stages of Measure J.

- 3. Regarding the School Closure Committee, please clarify how the committee members are chosen, and the whole process for these committee meetings.**

Answer: The School Closure Committee process is described in detail at: [Closure - Criteria & Process](#)

Response: This comment brings up an essential element in projecting enrollment: should the district project by the number of residence or by the enrollment for the last five years. While Olinda currently has 361 students, only 224 live within the Olinda attendance area. Similarly, only 166 of the 408 students who attend Valley View live in that attendance area. The dilemma for the closure committee and ultimately the Board is to decide which of two values is more important in closing schools – neighborhood schools or choice for parents.

6. Declining enrollment could potentially be reduced by improving quality of education in middle schools or offering a K-8 solution. What is the number of students who transfer from the district?

Answer: 879 including renewal and new out-of-district permits for 2008-09.

7. Are the criteria listed in order of importance or as a list?

Answer: No, the criteria are not listed in the order of importance. The Board did not discuss or give direction that one criteria was more important than another.

8. Does your criteria attempt to measure the number of families you may lose due to school closures (e.g. family sending kids to private school or moving out of district)?

Answer: No. That would be a difficult projection porria a Td(e witt li)TJ9

11. What is the “Kennedy Education Center”? Where will Kennedy students go? Why would you consider “two scenarios” that contain 3 of the same schools - that’s not 2 scenarios?

Answer: Kennedy High is included in both scenarios for closure. In one scenario Kennedy students would be re-districted to El Cerrito and Richmond (and Richmond students to DeAnza). Rather than sell the Kennedy building and property, this scenario would bring Leadership Public Charter School and other district programs such as adult

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safe places for our students. We have and will expel students who can't behave appropriately at our schools.

15. What other creative financial remedies can be implemented other than the sale, consolidation and closures of school properties?

Answer: The district's approach to the current financial crisis is to take a balanced approach to maintaining financial solvency including school closure, sale of property to pay down the debt from the early 1990's, capping benefits for employees and retirees, and making cuts to staffing, programs and services. No one of those actions would be sufficient by itself (see the Superintendent's Message for January 2009 for details).

16. Currently students transfer from Stege to Castro. Some, or all, of these transfers are under No Child Left Behind, which gives parents of students at Stege the Federal right to transfer out (Stege is a 5-year Performance Improvement School). Closing Castro and sending some Castro students to

Answer: School districts that have moved into a K-8 model with middle school programs offered in the K-8 schools, have found that K-8 schools are more costly to operate. The premise of creating K-8 schools

Answer: Both scenarios are proposals that will be improved as the community provides better ideas and strategies. The state fiscal crisis will drive the district toward closing the maximum number of schools rather than the minimum.

31. How is school capacity determined?

Answer: The State determines school enrollment capacity by the total space in square feet for each building. This tends to provide a larger number than can actually fit into a school. For the purposes of school closures, the district is using the number of students who attended that school over the last fifteen years as the total capacity number. One of the assumptions of this process is that in order to close schools, portable classrooms may need to be added at some sites.

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