

West Contra Costa Unified School District

School Closure Comments

Received from Public

Public Comments

Explanations for Adding & Removing Schools to Scenario I & II

- Incorporate safety as a priority. Seismic unsafe buildings need to be included. This would include Portola from Scenario 2. Reduction in schools equal reduction in management (Management reduction needs to occur before any impact on children). Geographically be aware of closer location within the communities. Making sure multiple closers don't impact the community by making sure they are not geographically close. Middle school 6th graders are put back into elementary (capacity being an issue). Make Castro and Crespi K-8 with proper staffing. Sale all non-school sites prior to school closers (besides seismically unsafe schools- these need to be closed immediately).
- Assuming we stick to the criteria, exclude Hercules from any closure jeopardy because of their specially funded new campuses, and close a maximum of 5 old primary campuses across the rest of the district, "geographic equity" should mean closing 1 elementary school in each of the 5 remaining families of schools. Why then does Scenario 2 call for 3 elementary closures in the De Anza family and zero in the Richmond family? All of the other high school attendance areas are expected to lose a maximum of 1 elementary school each (in some cases none at all), while the El Sobrante area is supposed to close 2 or 3. This is blatantly unfair, without even touching on the topic of academic excellence.
- Close El Sobrante (en 217/cap 323) and redistrict students to Murphy (en 295/cap 441 - rebuilt) and Sheldon (en 356/cap 460 - rebuilt) – El Sobrante has an extremely small enrollment and there is available capacity at nearby schools.
Close Fairmont (en 329/cap 384) and redistrict students to Castro (en 234/cap 395), Stege (en 320/cap 510) and Harding (en 328/cap 413 - rebuilt) – Fairmont is the better candidate for closure because it has a small site and is adjacent to BART, while Castro has a larger site, adjacent park, adjacent Cameron School and larger full inclusion program. Adjacent schools have adequate excess capacity.
Close Coronado (en 390/cap 473) and redistrict students to newly rebuilt Nystrom (en 349/cap 680 - rebuilt) and King (en 348/cap 538 - rebuilt) – Coronado has a small population and adjacent schools have available capacity
Close Portola/Portola replacement (en 553/replacement cap 600) and redistrict approximately half of students to a mini-MS (7th and 8th grades only) at El Cerrito HS (en 1208/cap 1758 - rebuilt) and the remaining half to newly created K-8 schools at Washington (en 472/cap 482 – redistrict some to Nystrom to make available capacity), Stege (en 320/cap 510) and Kensington (en 54/cap 649 - rebuilt). Also, refine the catchment area for Madera to accommodate 6th grade. Additionally, redistrict Stege K-8 students to nearby Kennedy HS (en 923/cap 1551) instead of El Cerrito HS. Addresses Portola seismic problem and allows for redirection of funds to fix Adams' seismic problems.

Close Crespi (en 552/cap 1118) and redistrict approximately 2/3 of students to a mini-MS (7th and 8th grades only) at De Anza (en 952/cap 1833 - rebuilt) and the remaining 1/3 to newly created K-8 schools at Bayview (en 563/cap 649 - rebuilt) and Olinda (en 361/cap 422).

Kennedy (en 923/cap 1551) to remain open via additional students from Stege K-8 (formerly an El Cerrito HS feeder) as a feeder and limited redistricting with Richmond (en 1727/cap 1853). Kennedy should have a target enrollment of 1,200-1,300.

- The basic premise of this proposal is to ensure geographic equity for all. This proposal was created in a few days by a group of parents who are school leaders in the El Cerrito High School Attendance Area. We welcome suggestions/revisions to strengthen its fairness, especially to further ensure geographic equity. We would like community members from all regions of WCCUSD to join us in supporting it and requesting that the Board vote to adopt it as an amendment at a properly noticed public hearing.

Main Proposal: Each HSAA Family must save at least \$600,000 in operating funds by choosing either two elementary schools (2 x \$300,000) or one secondary school (\$800,000) to close within its own HSAA. This ensures that local people make the tough decisions that affect their local communities.

Exception: The only exception to exclusive local HSAA decision-making is that there are two middle schools that are slide-zone or seismically unsafe. Children's lives are at risk unless these schools relocate or close. Portola MS in the El Cerrito HSAA is several years into a relocation project to take over an elementary school site in El Cerrito called Castro. Adams MS is located in Richmond in the Kennedy HSAA. There are no current plans to rebuild or relocate Adams. If the Kennedy HSAA Family would support this proposal, it would protect all remaining Kennedy HSAA Family schools, including Coronado, Wilson, and Kennedy High, on the WCCUSD short list of 19 potential schools for closure.

Other Comments on School Closures

- This is a suggestion that the District investigate the feasibility of consolidating the 6 alternative/continuation high schools and 3 other mixed grade alternative/continuation schools onto the 6 traditional high school campuses (plus a few elementary and middle schools where applicable.) Also study the feasibility of selling the land housing the current alternative/continuation schools.
- Potentially save over \$900,000 in operating budget funds by eliminating administrative overhead at alternative/continuation schools.
- If, in the end, Castro closes, ALL Castro students need to have intradistrict transfer priority and be moved to the top of any transfer list for Madera, Harding, and Kensington (priority includes being placed at these schools before sibling-transfers and NCLB transfers).
- Why not move the Castro school community intact to another site, say Harding, Madera or Kensington, and divide the students from that school to the under enrolled elementary schools?

- I had an idea about re-staffing the schools after closure decisions are made in such a way that some programs can be preserved...like the full inclusion program at Castro.
- As El Cerrito homeowners and parents of Madera Elementary School 3rd graders, I urge you to not close Portola Middle School. Keep the City of El Cerrito strong and allow the El Cerrito public school system to thrive by relocating Portola Middle School to the Castro Elementary School site!
- I would like to voice my concern over the possibility of closing the only middle school zoned within El Cerrito. As an El Cerrito homeowner who is NOT currently zoned within the boundaries for my children to attend Portola Middle School, I think it could still have a frightening impact on El Cerrito home values for prospective buyers to know there is not an El Cerrito middle school option other than Richmond schools.
- Kensington Elementary School PTA officers support a middle school in El Cerrito, and therefore support rebuilding Portola Middle School, for the following reasons:
 - Portola is the most diverse school in our district, especially economically, and Kensington students who attend it benefit enormously from their experience there, in ways beyond academics.
 - Even if our school should be selected for a K-8 conversion, which many Hilltop parents support, many also believe that the middle school option prepares their children better for high school and life beyond, and want that option for Kensington and El Cerrito children.
 - The presence of good public schools, kindergarten through high school, is essential to the quality of life and economic health of our community. Many Hilltop parents can't afford to send their children to private middle schools, and are likely to opt for schools outside the WCCUSD if these schools are not present, further eroding the District's attendance figures and support for school funding measures.
 - WCCUSD has always had a middle school in this area. If Portola closes, there will be no middle school serving the children in the southern end of our district.
- Thank you for approving the EIR to rebuild Portola on the Castro site. We want to encourage you to move forward with this plan. We strongly urge you to keep a Middle School in El Cerrito. It's vital to the residents of this community.
- As a concern parent of an elementary school student I fully support Mark Woo's alternative proposal for CC School District.
- I wanted to first of all thank you for approving the EIR to rebuild Portola on the Castro site. Please move forward with this plan. I strongly urge you to keep a Middle School in El Cerrito. It's important to many lives and futures of residents in this community.
- I am a parent of a student that is attending Highland Elementary here in Richmond. It was only a few weeks ago that we received the news that the school was on a list to be closed. We are a Title 1 schools which means no child is left behind, yet they want our kids to leave Highland Elementary behind. Please, Please help!!
- Thank you for approving the EIR to rebuild Portola on the Castro site. I want to encourage you to move forward with this plan. I wanted to strongly urge you to keep a Middle School in El Cerrito.

- I moved to El Cerrito 10 years ago to raise my family in a safe community. I have grown to love El Cerrito, and don't want to leave this community. But if there is no school in El Cerrito to go to when my 2 sons reach the age of middle school, we will be forced to move.
- I'm a small business owner that runs my company in this community, and I understand that sometimes you have to make tough financial decisions. I don't blame you for having to close schools. I know it's not popular, and you are forced to do so. I just really want you to know that there are major ramifications if you close Portola and do not decide to rebuild.
- Without a Middle School, El Cerrito property values will decline. There will be no draw for new families to move to El Cerrito when they will have to send their kids to private school or Richmond.
- I feel strongly that El Cerrito citizens should go to El Cerrito Elementary, Middle and High schools. And although I pay WCCC property taxes and we're all in the same pool, we paid an El Cerrito price tag for our house. We **SHOULD** be going to an El Cerrito school. When you close and redraw the boundaries please keep this in mind.
- I believe Mark Woo's proposal for the school closure has great merit. Clearly he has done his research and deeply cares about the whole district and its effect in our communities.
- I wrote yesterday with suggestions to solve the financial problems in the WCCUSD. My suggestions are coming from a place of no school closures; especially not any elementary schools. I believe there is a special place for elementary schools and high schools in our memories. My proposal would instead move middle schools intact to a new/different facility.
- I am writing this e-mail even though it will probably never be read. After attending the meeting tonight at Juan Crespi Middle School it became very concerning to me that this school district is going in the wrong direction. Instead of rewarding high performing schools. We are tagging them for closure. While we leave open schools like Juan Crespi. Which are driving off students from the district. The school is a complete mess. The school is riddled with violence and severely under performs. Even though the feeder schools do not have these problems. I have a daughter attending Valley View Elementary and another starting Kindergartner this year. I am very concerned about middle school.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Close and sell properties that are not being used in the direct instruction of children...
 2. Move Portola to the Castro site and create a K-8.
 3. Consolidate DeAnza and Crespi into a middle-high (similar to Hercules).
 4. I believe that API score should be a major factor.
 5. If school closures are necessary (I don't consider creating middle-high schools as closures.), then, I agree with Gigi Guizado de Nathan and Todd Wolf that each high school "family" should make the decisions.
- I oppose Mark Woo's proposal for closing schools in the West County school district. because the school district does not take into account city limits when drawing school boundaries.

- I am in favor of closing Shannon and Coronado because they do not have MP rooms and their population is small. I do not think sending Shannon's kids to Montalvin is such a good idea, the Shannon School community would not want that. Tara Hills is just a few blocks away and some could be sent to Collins.
- If you are going to make K-8 schools you must remember that the office staff has to be increased in size. 1 2.0 hour clerk will not work. Currently they have a full time secretary and one full time clerk at Stewart, which is not really enough as it is. There needs to be counselors there and the principal needs a lot more support.
- Millions of dollars were spent recently replacing the roof at Collins. The project was finally completed June 2008. This money would be wasted if Collins was closed.
- Collins is used heavily by the Pinole community.
- Collins houses a childcare facility which provides before- and after-school care to students and non-students. This is a great benefit for working parents who are unable to personally drop-off or pick-up their children.
- Collins has more students than the data has indicated. Current attendance records show 452 students. Our 2 Preschool special education classes are counted on Cameron's rosters, although the students are on our campus and our office registers and maintains their records throughout the year.
- Collins is located near many sites and services that are available to students to visit on walking study trips. Collins is within walking distance to the Pinole Library, Fire Department, Police Department, the bay, walking trails, the Pinole Creek wetlands, Fernandez Park, the bowling alley, markets, bakeries, medical facilities, community centers and much more. All students, including our Special Ed classes, are able to visit these sites safely and on short trips that students can easily walk to. This is particularly important for our Special Ed students since it is important they are provided sufficient interactions with the community to enable them to be more independent.
- The city of Pinole currently works in conjunction with the district to maintain the landscaping at Collins, thus saving the school district the money it would otherwise spend on school site landscaping costs.
- Collins play yard and field are frequently used by medical helicopters in emergency situations.
- Collins School is included in Pinole Historical Society's walking tour, since it is the original school site of the Pinole Hercules School District School Number 2.
- When Seaview was closed 4 years ago, approximately 100 of its students were redistricted to Collins. If Collins were to close, these students would be unfairly impacted a second time.
- Collins has 5 Special Ed classes onsite: 3 Severely Handicapped (SH) and 2 Preschool classes. This includes specialized classes such as an Assistive Technology Class and a Preschool class for the hearing impaired.
- Collins is equipped with several required items needed to serve all Special Education students.
- Several of the SH Special Ed students within the district have IEP's which say they must attend Collins School. An IEP is a legal, binding document.

- Many of our students are “medically fragile”. Because we are so close to the Pinole Fire Department and an AMR ambulance station, everyone benefits from keeping these students at Collins and near these services. EMS personnel are called upon often and because our staff and parents work with EMS personnel closely, the students’ health and safety is improved and everyone is better served.
- What alternate plans have been made to relocate the Special Ed students into a correctly equipped facility? If there are not sufficient plans and facilities available, it would be unfair and unwise to close Collins.
- Collins hosts summer school for Special Ed students throughout the District because of its ability to accommodate their special needs. Not all communities have elementary schools able to do this.
- I am an Olinda parent who is extremely concerned by the proposed closure of schools. I urge you to consider how the school consolidation criteria unfairly penalizes Olinda school.
- The city of Richmond has brought a ray of hope (even if only for a few years) in these dark times. I could only wish it had happened earlier so other cities could have more time to take Ms. Viramontes’ information and look for additional funding in their budgets. However, I remain hopeful that other cities will take Richmond’s lead and re-prioritize their budgets.
- I propose that the district look at its facilities that are currently being used for offices and staffing. These facilities could be closed and moved to space which is available in under used, newly renovated schools.
- I understand that if schools are rebuilt they are not considered for closure. However, with Coronado’s location between two under-performing and under-enrolled rebuilt schools, it is no surprise that common sense would say to close that school. One thing I’ve observed from temporary relocations, is that you can put a school community in tact in portable structures, and the community can still thrive. Similarly, I would think that moving a high performing school in tact to a building that was renovated for an underperforming school community would seem reasonable.
- A small school, where there is only one class of a grade (i.e. only 1 second grade class), does not provide for grade-level collaboration. Selling District property may not be at a good time since the market is down; however, the realtor in the committee observed that the properties probably will not go on sale immediately and the market may rebound by that time.
- Parents of Portola (where my daughter attends) feel that Portola was wrongly included on the school closure list against the school districts own established criteria that any Measure J would not be included.
- Perhaps the district could consider leasing some of our currently underutilized schools instead of selling them off. This would allow the district to avoid selling for lower prices than they might get at a later time in light of the current market, and also allow for the possibility of reutilizing the property/school at a later date, rather than face having to repurchase properties at much higher costs.
- I was disappointed with the way the committee members were able to discuss and make their decisions. I am disappointed because I was hoping to see all of members

together to discuss, share and exchange not in separate groups where one group may possibly be excluded from vital information being shared at a table across the room. Is there any way that all of us, for next week, can be at one big grouping of tables so that more sharing can take place?

- I would encourage discussions to consider the research regarding consolidation. As an academic, I offer lessons I have learned regarding the context of consolidation by considering the related pressures and factors, consolidations effect in addressing social and fiscal pressures, and the role of community in education. I would very much like to be part of these on-going conversations, as I have resources at my disposal that can help facilitate these revenue-generating partnerships.
- There are dedicated teachers at Coronado who are committed to their students both as to their academic and personal needs. There is an administration that is not limited by its physical facility or limited funding – they are working constantly to improve with so little. Coronado is a community supported by parents and outside tutors.
- My main question is whether it is actually possible to create K-8 schools at any of the proposed locations without adding operating costs, even with fewer programs and electives. I understand that K-8 would not be implemented if it would increase costs - so is there any reasonable expectation that it could be implemented? My hunch is no, it could not, but I think some people will evaluate the proposals expecting that K-8 can be achieved, and would come to different conclusions if K-8 cannot be expected.
- I'd also like some clarification about the staffing, as I am still learning about the different certification requirements. A multi-subject certificate is what elementary teachers usually use, correct? Do we have multi-subject certified teachers who are familiar with the middle school curriculum? (Esp. in science.)
- Another area I would like more information on is the amounts of QEIA funding for the various schools. As the closure criteria for Special Schools/Programs states that "Funding for QEIA and the transferability of those funds will also be a consideration" and the Q&A doc explains that "QEIA (Quality Educational Investment Act) funds are attached to the school," I need to know this to evaluate that criteria properly.
- My kids deserve a fine education in a safe environment. My kids are no different from any kids in Kensington, El Cerrito, Hercules, Richmond or anywhere else. All children have amazing potential when placed in a challenging, innovative environment. Both Olinda school and Valley View provide these things. Sheldon and Marie Murphy are located on large busy streets and not really in a neighborhood setting. We all want what is best for our kids and we don't care if our building is old or new but we do care about a quality education. Whatever Olinda school and Valley View school are doing, they are doing it right. To close either would lose the THING that these schools do. You can't move it to another school because you can't move everything and everybody that makes up the THING that both of these schools have.
- For financial reasons, the West Contra Costa Unified School District has announced multiple school closures and consolidations. In order to avoid this, WCCUSD must immediately eliminate debt incurred in the late 80's, early 90's. Until the budget problems are resolved, the students are being robbed of their education dollars and many neighborhood schools will be closed.

- Closing Valley View is not the answer to the districts financial and fiscal short falls. Neighborhood schools are essential to this community, families and its residents. It is the heartbeat of our community. As a 40 year Richmond / El Sobrante resident, former Valley View, Juan Crespi and DeAnza High school Alumni, I have chosen to stay in this community and send my children to our neighborhood public schools!
- When making the decision to close schools, please look more closely at those schools that are declining in enrollment and test scores, such as El Sobrante and Highland. Please do not close schools that are part of the success of the West Contra Costa school board that brings and keeps students from all neighborhoods, such as Olinda.
- Since I am most familiar with El Sobrante Valley, here is a scenario for renting a newly renovated school in our area. If this model gains support, it could be replicated in other areas. If this configuration is successful, redirect future remodeling funds to upgrade these facilities, and/or relocate to Murphy campus when lease expires.
- One important aspect for your consideration should be the learning environment at the various schools slated for closure. Schools like Olinda, Valley View and Coronado have a culture of learning that takes a decade to build. In the longer run, closing Olinda, Valley View or Coronado will only exacerbate your financial problems. You will be losing more students.
- Throughout the process thus far, you have contended that the maximum number of elementary school closures was set at five. Yet tonight, you put forth two scenarios, both of which target six elementary schools for consolidation. And those lists include no less than three of our district's top performing schools. I have never been to Coronado Elementary School, but from the little I've come to learn about it in recent weeks, you'd have to be out of your minds to close it. That school educates disadvantaged and underprivileged kids exclusively, and still manages to have one of the highest APIs around. If it ain't broke, don't fix it!
- Please don't close Highland.
- I hope WCCUSD won't close Highland.
- Please don't close down Highland Elementary. Highland Elementary is having such a positive impact on my daughter's growth and development, education and future.
- On behalf of City of Richmond Councilmember, James Rogers, I'd like to ask the community to lobby the governmental bodies in the WCCUSD area to provide two year bridge financing, amounting to \$6 million over a two year period.
- Coronado Elementary is one of WCCUSD's top performing schools. Does it make sense to close a high performing school?
- Nobody wants to close the schools, but we have to optimize resources in good times and even more so in bad times.
- We are concerned about the possible closing of the El Sobrante Elementary School and the effect on students going to and from school. If El Sobrante Elementary School is closed, the students from this closed school will have to either take the Highway 80 overpass, a very heavily traveled Hilltop Drive Road, to Highland Elementary School, or go miles to cross another heavily traveled road, Appian Way, miles from their homes, along streets with no sidewalks, and up and down steep hills.

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- I am a student at Adams Middle School. I am mad that Adams is closing. I don't want to be a drop out.
- Save Olinda!
- Do Not Close Shannon.