

## Board Highlights

Governing Board Meeting – January 24, 2012



### ***School Closure/Realignment Committee Update***

Mr. Bass thanked the School Closure/Realignment Committee for their time and guidance provided in this upcoming report. Mr. Heath, who is the committee's facilitator, stated that the committee found it difficult to make this recommendation because the District has such fine schools. He thanked the members of the committee, who spent time and energy on this recommendation. Committee members included parents Crystal Muraira, David Dubiel, George Herman, Cary Demaree, Rita Poumele, Theresa Garcia, Jennifer Plasencia, and Victoria Vega; students Armando Garcia and Breanna Bailey; and association representatives Denise Crano, Chris Granstedt, and Pierre Finney. Mr. Demaree, Ms. Garcia, and Ms. Muraira presented the committee's recommendations to the Board on potential school closure options for the 2012-2013 school year in an effort to address an anticipated budget reduction between \$2.4 million to \$4.25 million.

Mr. Demaree thanked the Board and the committee. He stated that the group searched through much information. The committee is an advisory group heavily weighted to parents which is presenting recommendations; the Board makes the final decision. This topic has been on six Board agendas and the Board has held three community forums. The committee met four times in addition to hearing sometimes passionate remarks from the community forums. The group brainstormed ideas, trying to stay with the facts presented.

Ms. Garcia stated that parents from each school were represented on the committee. Though each committee member had passion for an individual school, they all know the importance of each of the other schools. The committee gathered more information than was presented at the community forums and included facility capacity, District budget information, capacity versus enrollment, grade configuration, enrollment projections, residents within school boundaries, non-residents from within and outside of the District, solar panels and associated savings, percentage of students who walk to school, staffing needs, ability to repurpose school, current condition of school, future ADA requirements and associated costs, number of students impacted by closure, the unique programs currently offered at the school, safety associated with traffic flow and parking, annual utility expenses, and expansion potential.

Ms. Muraira stated that all District schools, staffs, and families are great. She and Ms. Garcia presented the following options for Board consideration:

- **Option 1A – Close Palm Middle School in 2012** - Rationale: Smallest number of students are impacted by the closure; no need to change school boundaries; students will be attending a modernized STEM middle school; and District has successfully operated with one middle school for two years.
- **Option 1B – Repurpose Palm Middle School** – Potential uses: Relocate Nutrition Services central kitchen, online learning academy, regional special education hub, charter school, expanding to ninth grade and eventually to twelfth grade, adult education classes, move District Office and staff to Palm and lease the District Office building, community health center, social and educational classes, and career technical education classes.

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- **Option 1C – Close Palm Middle School in 2012**
    - ✓ Merge Golden Avenue and Lemon Grove Middle Schools, open Lemon Grove Middle School as a 6-8 configuration with PK-5 on Golden Avenue campus and move Golden Avenue sixth graders to Lemon Grove Middle School.
    - ✓ In 2013, based on availability at Lemon Grove Middle School, other sixth graders throughout the District could apply to attend Lemon Grove Middle School.
  - **Option 1D – Mount Vernon to become an all dual immersion school in 2012**
    - ✓ Continue to add one dual immersion grade level each year for four years. Rationale: Desire of many parents to expand the dual immersion program to eighth grade; economy of scale savings.
  - **Option 2 – Close Palm Middle School and Monterey Heights School in fall of 2012** – Rationale: At Monterey Heights School, there are large costs associated with ADA compliance, located on a busy street, limited drop off/pick up area, low percentage of students from outside of school boundaries, and parent parking is limited.
  - **Option 3 – Close Palm Middle School and San Altos School in fall 2012** – Rationale: San Altos School is the smallest in the District, fewest number of students impacted by a boundary change, and highest utility costs.

Mr. Heath stated that the committee tried to look at all aspects of school closure. Closing one school continues the status quo. If the District needs to cut as much as we might, the committee thought they would provide the Board with additional options—this was not an easy task.

The Board asked questions about the high utility costs at San Altos School; Mr. Felix explained that the irrigation system runs two days a week and the higher electrical costs may be associated with the summer special education program that operates at San Altos School. The Board asked about the cost of relocating the central kitchen; Dr. Potter stated that costs can be calculated by one of the architectural firms the Board recently approved. The Board asked about Option 1C and the number of sixth grade classes; Mr. Anastos stated that there are currently two sixth-grade classes at each site and 392 sixth grade students. Mr. Anastos stated that we like to have a pair of teachers for each grade level at all sites. The Board asked if we can utilize the solar credits if Palm Middle School is closed; Dr. Potter stated that the solar would shift to cover 95% of the cost of a single school. Mr. Anastos stated that the projected capacity at Lemon Grove Middle School is 90%. Mr. Heath stated that there is not enough room for all sixth, seventh, and eighth graders at Lemon Grove Middle School. The District needs to give parents choices; sixth grade at elementary schools is a popular choice for parents. Golden Avenue School would accommodate kindergarten through fifth grade; sixth through eighth grade students would attend Lemon Grove Middle School. There are 571 seventh and eighth graders at Palm Middle School. Mr. Heath stated that the savings to close any elementary school would be \$350,000. Closing Palm Middle School only would not provide an additional savings; only by closing a second school would there be savings. ADA compliance at Monterey Heights School can cost \$200,000 to \$1 million. If Monterey Heights School was closed and was repurposed with children on campus, the District would need to complete ADA compliance work, but not if it was repurposed for offices. Creating ADA access to the lower playground would be a major cost at Monterey Height School. It is a much bigger challenge to repurpose two schools. Closing an elementary school would require changes to the boundaries. The Board asked about converting Mount Vernon School strictly for dual immersion program students. Mr. Heath stated that there probably would not be sufficient students to

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convert the school next school year. Parents are interested in having the program through eighth grade.

The following speakers addressed the Board:

- Silveria Alcantara, Palm Middle School parent – She presented the Board with signatures of people who are not in agreement with closing Palm Middle School. The school is very important and needs to stay open. The parents she has talked to are in agreement. Many children walk to school. She asked that the Board take these signatures into consideration when making the decision. It is not possible to put all of these students in one school. Mrs. Alcantara’s two daughters also asked that Palm Middle School not be closed.
- Michelle Fernandez, Monterey Heights School parent – She understands the situation the District is in with the state budget crisis. Closing a school will not cover the budget deficit of \$2.4 to \$4.25 million; where will that money come from? What was the ending balance for the last three years? She is concerned about closing Monterey Heights School and the major intersections and trolley tracks that students would need to cross.
- Denise Crano, CSEA President – She stated that she has been asked by others if the Board has already made a decision to close a school. Since three Board members are from San Altos School, she feels that will color their decision. Mrs. Crano asked the Board to please consider all options presented without favoritism to one site.
- Roberta Cronquist, San Altos School parent – Closing any school impacts students, not just the smallest school. Currently, there are six elementary schools; the Board is now discussing going to five schools. There are 60-65 first graders at San Altos School. Where do the displaced students go? Will those teachers be cut and class sizes become larger? Mr. Anastos stated that this is not about fewer teachers; they would be reassigned. If the decision is to close an elementary school, then we would need to create new boundaries. Mr. Anastos stated that a few years ago, the District hired a company which provided boundary maps based on the number of students residing in an area. It is very difficult to redraw boundaries. Each school has classes not used as classrooms. There is a formula to get there. There is no desire to increase class sizes.

Mr. Bass stated that he appreciated the committee’s approach to look at this and to take emotion out of the decision.

***School Closure/Realignment  
Decision***

This item was presented as an opportunity for the Board to continue the discussion of school closure and was presented for action based on the recommendations of the School Closure/Realignment Committee.

- Mr. Shaw discussed the efforts to increase the District’s enrollment and shared information with the Board on the Career Technical Education Program, which is a program for middle school students. He suggested looking at a fine arts program. He liked Option 1B to repurpose Palm Middle School and the continuation of the dual immersion program at Mount Vernon School.
- Mrs. Dexter would like people in the community to know that she does not show favoritism to one site. She is interested in the education of all students in the District. She does not take this decision lightly. No one likes change. Whatever decision is made, the community will respond in the appropriate manner. Parents will adjust. She does not want to make this decision, but it needs to be made. It is a long, hard process to cut the budget. Mrs. Dexter has looked at all data and listened to the community. It was moved by Mrs. Dexter to close two schools (Option 2 - Palm Middle School and Monterey Heights School) and make repurposing decisions later. Mr. Shaw stated that he received projected

attendance information that show the decrease has leveled off; we need to look at increasing enrollment. The motion died for lack of a second.

- It was moved by Mr. Shaw to repurpose Palm Middle School (Option 1B); closing for one year 2012-2013 with ideas suggested by the committee to reopen as a repurposed site. Mrs. Dexter stated that by closing only one site, no money is saved. Mr. Shaw believes that the economy and enrollment will turn around. The motion died for lack of a second.
- Mr. Bass stated that we do not want to be in this spot to close another school next year. It was moved by Mr. Bass and seconded by Mrs. Dexter to close two schools (Option 2 – Palm Middle School and Monterey Heights School). The motion was called for with the following results: Ayes – Bass, Dexter; Noes – Brown, Loschen, Shaw. The motion failed.
- It was moved by Mr. Loschen to close Palm Middle School in 2012 (Option 1A). Ms. Brown suggested that options within the recommendations be separated. Mr. Loschen amended his motion as follows: Close Palm Middle School with plans to repurpose for other uses starting in 2012-2013. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shaw. Ms. Brown asked if the purpose is to move sixth and seventh grade. Mr. Anastos stated that if Palm Middle School is closed and repurposed, this year's seventh graders would attend Lemon Grove Middle School. There are currently almost 267 seventh grade students at Palm Middle School who would go to Lemon Grove Middle School. Ms. Brown stated that she is looking at Option 1B and the uses for Palm Middle School. She would like to see the total expenses for each department. What is the FMOT facility costing? What would it cost to move the Technology Department, Nutrition Services, and the District Office? Is there a place for the dental and health clinics? We would need all of those numbers to see if it makes fiscal sense. Mrs. Dexter stated that the Board has a duty to the community to make a decision tonight. What we do with the site is not the decision we make tonight. We need to decide to close one or two schools. The motion was called for with the following results: Ayes – Loschen, Shaw; Noes – Bass, Brown, Dexter. The motion failed.
- It was moved by Mrs. Dexter to close two schools (Option 2 - Palm Middle School and Monterey Heights School). Closing one school will not solve the problem. Leaving all elementary schools open means teacher layoffs and increased class sizes. Ms. Brown needed more information. Mrs. Dexter stated the District has a \$2.4 million gap to fill; any other decision will help close the gap. Mr. Bass asked if there were any numbers tonight that would help make the decision. Dr. Potter stated that the vast majority of the cost of running a department is staff costs. The only way to save enough money is to cut staff. Ms. Brown asked if there would be a cost to closing and moving a department and combining under one roof at Palm Middle School; would there be a savings in doing that? Mr. Anastos stated that the building itself is set up to serve the work of that department. Perhaps this could be looked at as a long-term plan. Initially, it will cost rather than save. Nutrition Services needs a larger facility. The move will come with considerable tenant improvement costs. There is an appeal to consolidating departments. A big piece of the District Office property is leased to the city. Mr. Anastos was not sure of the ability to lease those locations. It would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to move the Technology Department. The District Office work could happen anywhere. It would be nice to have special education in one place. We are trying to look at projects that appeal. Starting a new program comes with a cost instead of a savings. The volatility of the economy has put the District in a position to make a decision. Mr. Anastos expressed confidence that we will fill the new school within a year of opening it. Mrs. Dexter does not want to put this community and staff through this decision

again. We won't be out of this budget crisis until 2015. Consolidation is something we can do, but not now. We would have the whole warehouse to move. She strongly believes that we need to bite the bullet and keep the District operating for one more year. Mr. Shaw stated that he continues to think of those elementary schools and expressed concern for the safety of students crossing busy streets. He cannot support closing an elementary school. We have to have faith that enrollment will increase. Mrs. Dexter asked if we can work with the city to provide sidewalks; Mr. Anastos stated that there is a process for addressing those issues; and Mr. Bass noted Safe Routes to Schools. Dr. Potter stated that from a Business Department perspective, there are three variables that are unknown: 1) The tax proposals on the November 2012 ballot. Dr. Potter understands that it is prudent to close two schools. If the tax proposals fail, we will be back again. A couple of agencies are trying to put other initiatives on the ballot that may work for education. 2) EDP has been so robust that each of those programs is taking up four classes at each campus. Closing an elementary school would require a solution to what would happen to the remaining schools open to accommodate the EDP students. 3) If we close an elementary school, we would need a demographer to change the school boundaries. It would mean children in other schools would be impacted. It is prudent to make a decision on one school this evening. The flexibility plan options will be presented to the Board at a future meeting. Mr. Bass asked if we close one school, will we make payroll. Dr. Potter stated that we need to do multiple things: close one school, make decisions on the flexibility plan, and negotiations. We will make every effort to make payroll. Mrs. Dexter stated that if the tax measures do not pass, the District is looking at a \$4.25 million deficit. The motion died for lack of a second. It was moved by Mr. Shaw, seconded by Mr. Loschen, and carried unanimously that Palm Middle School be closed for 2012-2013 while working on repurposing the campus.

***Proposition W Project Progress***

Mr. Ken Fine, owner's representative, provided an update on work in progress on the Lemon Grove Middle School campus. The project includes construction of a 13,000 square foot joint-use library, the construction of a new school administration office, expansion of the science rooms with outdoor learning space and demonstration room, renovation of locker rooms, new outdoor multipurpose lunch court and stage, updated wireless technology service, and general site beautification. He shared exterior and interior renditions and floor plans of the library. Work began in December, the school will open September 2012, and the library will open March 2013. Mr. Fine shared pictures of the demolition and the progress made on the locker room, science rooms, and courtyard. He stated that everything is going well, and the project is on schedule.

***Title III Year 4 Addendum to Local Education Agency Plan (LEAP)***

Title III regulations from the California Department of Education require the District to submit an addendum to our LEAP to formalize our action plan for accelerating the progress of our English learners. The plan will be posted on the District and CDE websites. The Board took action to approve the Title III Year 4 Addendum to the LEAP as submitted.

***LGTA Contract Openers 2012-2013***

LGTA has provided a written notification of articles of the collective bargaining agreement they wish to open for negotiations in the 2012-2013 school year. The written notification was presented for review by the Board and public.

***Travel***

The Board took action to approve travel for five parents to attend the Latino Education Summit on January 28, 2012, at the SDCOE. The cost is \$10 per person.

**First Reading: Revised Board Policies and Administrative Regulations**

As part of the California School Boards Association policy update service, the District has received notice of new and revised policies, administrative regulations, and exhibits resulting from changes to law. The following were presented for Board review: AR 6112, School Day; BP/AR 6115, Ceremonies and Observances; BP 6141, Curriculum Development and Evaluation; AR 6141.2, Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs; and BP/AR 6142.1, Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Instruction. The Board asked for changes to two of the documents. The Board policies will be placed on the February 14, 2012, agenda for approval.

**Consent Agenda**

The Board took action to approve the following: gifts to the District (60 tickets to the student night presentation of *Moby Dick* donated by the San Diego Opera to Monterey Heights School and 22 books donated by Susan Drury to Golden Avenue School); contract summaries for Mad Science (2) and Coach America; Board Policies 4136/4236/4336, Nonschool Employment; 4144/4244/4344, Complaints; 4151/4251/4351, Employee Compensation; 4154/4254/4354, Health and Wellness Benefits; 4156.2/4256.2/4356.2, Awards and Recognition; and 4231, Staff Development; Acceptance of Work and Notice of Completion with Zasueta Contracting, Inc. for the playground structures and installation project (Bid 11-12-001W) at Mt. Vernon School (2), San Altos School (1), and Monterey Heights School (1); Acceptance of Work and Notice of Completion with Zasueta Contracting, Inc. for the public playground project at San Altos School (1); and orders and financial statements.

**Next Board Meeting**

The next regular meeting of the Governing Board will be held on Tuesday, February 14, 2011, at 5:30 p.m. at the Lemon Grove Community Center, 3146 School Lane, Lemon Grove.

Lemon Grove School District – 8025 Lincoln Street, Lemon Grove, CA 91945  
Board of Education: Jay Bass - Blanca Lopez Brown - Katie Dexter - Larry Loschen - Timothy Shaw  
Superintendent: Ernie Anastos

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