

SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMUNITY MEETING REGARDING POTENTIAL SCHOOL CLOSURES



Date: April 15, 2009, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Location: Alice Birney Elementary School
Panel Facilitator: Philip Moore, Associate Superintendent
Additional Attendees: SCUSD Board Members: Roy Grimes, Diana Rodriguez,
Donald Terry, Patrick Kennedy, Gustavo Arroyo
SCTA: Linda Tuttle

Questions:

- **Do you know how many predators in the area there are, and how long it will take the children to get to Cabrillo?**
We know safety and transportation are priorities if the school is closed. We take these issues very seriously.
- **What are you going to do with Birney if it is closed?**
We will involve the community in any re-use of the building. We have and will continue to make this a hub of services which will serve the families in this community. If the recommendation is approved, we are working with Sacramento Parks and Recreation Department and other community agencies to provide services. There is a possibility of a health clinic and other types of community services. The school will not be “shuttered.” We will work with the community to decide what would best fit here.
- **What will happen when enrollment increases at Birney, which it is?**
Enrollment has fluctuated over the last few years at Birney, but the District is still facing a declining enrollment trend.
- **Where is the stimulus money going?**
We have not received any money yet and it will be designated for Title I, Special Education and facilities. We think this may come in late May, but hope it is earlier. Much of this money may be used to balance the State budget.
- **Has anyone examined the attendance at all of these schools? It seems there is not enough room. Over-enrolled schools and classrooms do not educate students well.**
We have had “spikes” in enrollment in some schools and do have to bus students when this happens. We do know there is space in our schools. We have class size limits in SCUSD of 20:1 and may rise to 25:1 in grades K-3; for grade 4-6, the maximum number of students is 33 students. We will not load classes at 35 or 40 students. Every district in the country is facing this crisis. We do know the value of small schools. We will continue to have some of the smallest schools of any district in CA and the smallest in the Sacramento area.
- **Are you going to guarantee my child’s safety going back and forth to school? There have been many accidents near Cabrillo.**
Transportation is something we are working on, but cannot promise yet.
- **How are Birney kids going to benefit from this closure? Are you here to help us or talk about saving money?**
Safety, class size, school climate, transportation are issues which are resonating tonight. Class-size is at 20:1 and 33:1. We train our teachers at all of our schools to do the best job at English Language Development. We will have to propose a solution for the transportation concern if the Board votes to close Birney.



- **I am concerned about the level of academic achievement of students graduating, and believe larger schools will make this worse. Small schools are more successful and are more important than money. What creative ways has the SCUSD done to find more money? There has to be a different solution than school closure. You cannot articulate our passion to the Board.**
We have reduced central office by \$1.9 million, and \$1.4 million in outside services. We have frozen overtime and hiring. We will continue to look for ways to save money.
- **Why do you want to close our school? (student)**
It will be a difficult decision to make.
- **Why did you choose Cabrillo? (student)**
It is the closest school and has space for more students.
- **Have you looked into more creative fundraising?**
We are working to establish a foundation which will raise not thousands but millions. We working with United Way and other organizations. SCUSD has received over \$10 million in grants and are looking to go after money in the stimulus package. We are leasing space at the Serna Center and are examining everything we can to fundraise. We are trying to project these savings in the budget for next year.
- **This is a very good school and we would not like to see the Special Education students broken up. Do you need to or want to close this school? (student)**
We do not want to close any schools, but must make difficult financial decisions. If we could avoid school closure we would. This is the last thing we want to do. We have made \$100 million in cuts and still need to make more.
- **Have you done an “impact” report on our children?**
We are aware of the social and emotional factors these kids will deal with. If the decision is made, we will work to make the transition as smooth as possible. We will work with the community to see that the kids are well taken care of.
- **Will tomorrow’s vote be a public vote?**
Yes, it will be a roll call vote.
- **As a parent with a child of special needs, there is nothing to prepare you for this. My son is thriving in the communicatively-handicapped class. This school has changed my life. Why not put more Special Education classes at Birney?**
We are not closing down Special Education classes and will provide the same opportunities, and hopefully with the same teachers you have here.

Comments:

- My kids are very good students thanks to this school. Thank you for the attendance of everyone here. I do not want this school to close. I am appreciative of the principal and the teachers here and hope you can express to the Board our opinions, sentiments and our hearts.
- I am a teacher here and thank the Board members for coming.
- I have a child in the kindergarten special needs class, and it has been an awesome experience for my son. Please do not take this away from him.
- All of the parents are in agreement. If you look to us to help you maybe we can get the government to give us more money. Please do not close this school.
- Allow my kids to have a chance to stay with their friends.



- Our students have the gift of being with all people, all of the time, Special Education and regular students.
- I don't think you should close us, but send Cabrillo kids here. We have more room and a better kitchen to serve nutritious food.
- Focus on positive solutions to the budget problem, not school closure. There is too much at risk.
- I have 2 students here, and speak for my children. I have the opportunity to be at this school and see the success of the kids here. Please take the time to see how our students interact with one another.
- I am alumni and the staff still has the same passion. Many of my fellow alumni have been very successful.
- It would be sad for us if you close the school. (student)
- I love our teachers. (student)
- Bring it to the Board this school has increased in API and this has more space (than Cabrillo). Your consultant suggested consolidating Cabrillo at Birney. You do not have to bring all 5 schools to the Board for closure. This school has increased in attendance. You will have 685 students at Cabrillo if Birney is closed. Your enrollment trends reflect we are at the bottom of the attendance down turn. It needs to be clear that we are saving only \$300K by closing a school. Oakland and SF have a commitment to small schools.
- It is very difficult for students to transition to another school.
- I have a 4 year old son who is autistic and it is amazing to see what has happened this year with him. All he talks about is Alice Birney. The Special Education students will have an even more difficult transition.
- I am with the South Land Park Neighborhood Association and feel closure will be a horrible decision. You must have a thorough transition plan for what will happen to this location and the students. Include the Neighborhood Association in future meetings.
- Please do not close this school. (student)
- Please do not close this school. I have had amazing and wonderful teachers, and have music, PE, science, a garden. I have learned to be caring for others here. (student)
- My child has a better education than I do because of the teachers at Birney. I have stayed in this neighborhood because of this school.
- My son is in the Special Education program here and has flourished with the integration of programs. Please do not separate these kids. My child will not have the opportunity to go to Cabrillo with the other students. Keep this family together.
- My daughter started here in the communicatively-handicapped class and now has a 4.0 at West Campus. This school has a great record of mainstreaming kids and returning them to regular ed classrooms. I hope you consider all of their needs.
- Alice Birney "rocks," don't close it. (student)
- We are too good of a school to be closed and we are a family and will not go down without a fight. (student)



- How can you say this school is not doing well? This school has helped my children, one of whom is in college and another graduating from high school. I want my two kids I have to have the same opportunity.
- Birney is a good school; I was moved here from Bear Flag. Think of us too (student).
- My teacher and principal give us everything we need to succeed in life. Please do not close us. (student)
- I am concerned for the younger students at this school having to walk to Cabrillo. (student)
- My daughter was in a private school and has been here for 3 years and exceeded the academic level of the private school. I am concerned about the education we are providing minorities in South Sacramento, and feel closing schools will negatively impact the academic achievement of minorities. We are a school with no majority (ethnic).
- My kids were at Bear Flag and now at Birney and would be attending their third elementary school. We have a great climate and great teachers here, it is a great school. Cabrillo has been full the last few years.
- I am very worried this school will be closed. My child does not speak English well and he gets extra help here and is now advanced. I think many students are like him at Birney. I think more money will be lost if you close schools because of attendance.
- Alice Birney's START has 85 students and 49 on the waiting list. It is free and growing. Safety is our main concern and Birney is worth saving. [There is a START program at Cabrillo as well.]
- We are also improving academically. Cabrillo is too far to walk and this will affect attendance.
- My concern is the distance to Cabrillo, which I cannot walk to. This neighborhood is safe and Cabrillo is a high traffic area. We are also concerned for our Special Education students.
- We have great teachers, staff and principal.
- My kids did not get a good education in a neighboring district due to the large size of the school. My children are doing well here.
- Special needs kids are mixed with other students at Cabrillo and it is not a good situation. Cabrillo is on a very unsafe street which is very busy. This school is a "Jewel" and needs to stay open.
- Birney is increasing enrollment and includes Special Education. We will not all fit at Cabrillo.