

Le Conte P.T.A. Newsletter



January 1993

Measure A Process Threatens to Shuffle Entire Berkeley School System

Le Conte Site Committee Seeks Your Input

Introduction

Berkeley Voters passed bond Measure A in the spring of 1992 to remedy seismic weaknesses in school buildings and to repair and improve school sites-work that has been neglected for many years.

Specific amounts of money were allotted to individual sites—some for mandatory repairs, and some for discretionary physical improvements. To determine how to use these discretionary funds, committees were formed at each site. These committees operate pretty much independently of one another, and report to a central, somewhat cumbersome, Task Force.

Since some schools in the district have to be re-built completely, members of those communities took the opportunity to reconsider school structure, grade configuration, methods of integration, and a return to the concept of the neighborhood school. Quite suddenly, these discussions mushroomed into a district-wide re-evaluation of grade configuration and educational philosophy, introducing concepts like school choice, magnet schools, etc.

In late November, the Superintendent of Berkeley Public Schools asked each school site to determine its stand on some of the following issues: 1) School size, 2) Grade configuration, and 3) Integration. There is a tremendous amount at stake. Several schools want to change the present scheme from a K-3 to a K-5 configuration.

Unfortunately, these "decisions" are

being made by each site without consideration for the system as a whole. Individual schools are requesting to be a K-5 school, for instance, without regard to what that does to the populations of other schools and without regard for how that will disrupt the district-wide system of school integration.

The Le Conte Measure A Site Committee was not formed until early December. The district has expected us somehow to form a committee, evaluate the many and complex issues, plan and hold a community forum to explain and discuss these issues, and create, distribute and evaluate a community survey on the subject. All this was to be completed by January 5th (recently postponed until January 24th).

Needless to say, this has been an impossible task. We feel that the entire process, district-wide, has been haphazard, rushed, and severely limited in outreach and range of participation. The Le Conte "Measure A" Site Committee has prepared a preliminary position. We must now find out whether or not other Le Conte parents agree with this position. Please let us hear from you, so that we can better represent Le Conte.

Background of Current System

Le Conte enjoys its high degree of integration by drawing students from one geographically connected area of Berkeley. Unlike some other K-3 schools in Berkeley,

*Dreams
by Langston
Hughes*

*Hold fast to
dreams
For if dreams
die
Life is a
broken-
winged bird
That cannot
fly.*

*Hold fast to
dreams
For when
dreams go
Life is a
barren field
Frozen with
snow.*

*-as told by
the first
graders in
Mara Pfund's
class*

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THE NEWLETTER EDITOR DID THE FINAL EDIT ON THIS. IT COULD HAVE USED AN EDIT AFTER HER EDIT. BUT IT'S PRETTY MUCH AS WE SAID. — BRUCE