

# No Measure A plan expected this year

## Public needs to be more informed first, says Steele

By Margaret Brentano

When Berkeley voters authorized \$158 million in bond money in June 1992, to modernize and rebuild the quake-threatened schools, they offered the school board and superintendent a chance to renew the whole school system. After the contributions of paid consultants, citizen task forces, and many meetings and workshops, the superintendent and board have not as yet come up with a plan for that renewal.

On March 17 LaVoneia Steele, BUSD's superintendent, promised to have a plan in place by June 15 — the close of this school year — for the future of Berkeley's schools. But, at the board's May 5 meeting, the superintendent announced that due to a lack of public knowledge and input, she was delaying the plan for grade configuration beyond the end of the school year.

Grade configuration, currently

based on the 1968 integration plan, which divides pupil's elementary years between two schools to balance busing between two neighborhoods, is one of the key aspects of various proposals for school reform, and is intricately intertwined with the other main variables: desegregation, parental choice, and possible school closings.

"We've been listening and talking to community and staff members, and we've been hearing a lot of frustration and dissatisfaction," Steele said. The frustration, she said, comes from both those who have been working on school reorganization plans for the last six years and want to see change soon, and from others who "say 'why are you rushing this?'"

She described the issue of school reconfiguration as "very complicated," and says her own visits to churches and community groups confirm what the hired community relations group has found — that there still are "people who really don't know what we're talking about."

At the board's next meeting, May 19, the superintendent is planning to

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present "a process to provide an opportunity for more discussion." On June 2 she said she will offer "substantial suggestions to the board, but not (a plan for) grade reconfiguration."

Afterwards, she expects "the board will begin working on a timeline" for decision and implementation of future plans.

The board generally agreed with Superintendent Steele's decision to delay a final plan for Measure A implementation until more of the community had a chance to express an opinion on the future of Berkeley's schools.

However, Boardmember Eliza-

beth Shaughnessy, after saying "I don't think we are moving too fast," warned that if the process is delayed beyond six more months, "we will lose the good will of the community."

She did agree to the six-month delay.

Board President Pedro Noguera supported the Superintendent's statement that more time was needed for this important decision, stressing that it is still "difficult to estimate how much the various changes will cost."

He went on to say, "For those who are impatient, all I can say is 'sorry.'"

On hearing of the further delay, Washington school parent and task force member Stephanie Allen was very angry.

"This demonstrates a complete lack of leadership," she said, adding that "the community is not informed because the superintendent has not produced anything to inform them about."

Allen said if any changes are going to be made in the schools they are "going to have to come from parents and teachers," and called the district and board's delays "a complete abdication of responsibility."

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