

**RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS POSED AT :  
HOUSE MEETINGS,  
OCTOBER 9TH COMMUNITY WORKSHOP,  
AND OCTOBER 16TH SCHOOL BOARD ROUNDTABLE**

**Introduction:**

**What are we trying to accomplish through school reorganization as we rehabilitate and rebuild our schools?**

At the first Roundtable Discussion, held on October 16, Board President Pedro Noguero stated that "any change should be for the better, and shouldn't disrupt schools and programs that are working well." Other members stressed that plans should (1) improve the District's delivery of educational services, (2) maintain and improve integration, (3) be cost-effective and "do-able", and (4) provide stability. To guide us closer to those goals we are providing information to help the Board and District make appropriate decisions regarding school organization. Two teachers, two principals, an instructional manager, and an associate superintendent helped prepare answers to these questions.

The following review of educational research provides some help in making decisions about reaching our goals.

Effective Schools Research

Research in the late 1970's and early 1980's found the following fourteen attributes of successful schools:

1. Clear academic goals exist and are widely publicized.
2. Teachers and parents hold high expectations for students and make those expectations known to students
3. There is order and discipline in the school.
4. There are rewards and incentives for students over and above grades that recognize outstanding student accomplishments in course work as well as other school activities.
5. In addition to report cards, there is regular and frequent monitoring of student progress.
6. There are opportunities for meaningful student responsibility and participation in school governance, school-related community activities, and co-curricular activities (clubs, intramural sports, etc.).
7. There are opportunities for teacher input in decisions about instruction, curriculum,

discipline policy, teacher evaluation, staff development, and other activities.

8. There are special rewards and incentives for excellent teachers.
9. There are policies and procedures in place to ensure effective use of time available for teaching and learning in the academic core areas, including a plan to extend learning time through homework.
10. There is a positive school climate.
11. There is strong administrative leadership, with regular opportunities and procedures, formal or informal, for communication between the principal and staff.
12. There is a well-articulated curriculum with procedures to ensure proper sequencing and to reduce overlap in content areas or grade levels, including regular opportunities for planning and coordination with teachers from the previous and subsequent grade levels or courses.
13. There are regular procedures for evaluating the success of instructional programs and the effectiveness of the organizational structure.
14. There is community support and involvement in the school, with opportunities for parent participation in school activities and opportunities for participation in the school by other groups in the community (e.g. civic and business associations.)

Since publication of the Effective Schools Research, there has been additional research on how learning takes place. Attention to various learning styles has led teachers to emphasize a variety of instructional strategies. There has been particular emphasis on making the curriculum meaningful for students and on relating it to the student's own sense of the world.

Issues of grade level and grade configuration have not received much attention with the possible exception that many communities across the country have moved sixth grade from its traditional place in a K-6 school to the former junior high configuration of 7-8, thus creating a middle school and eliminating two-year schools. Benefits of the Middle School model include an easier transition to a departmentalized school allowing seventh and eighth grade students to have one teacher much of the day. Extended time with one teacher suits students of this age, since, as is often said, students of Middle School age do not "care how much their teachers know; they want to know how much their teachers care."

Some researchers have stated that students in grades seven and eight should never be in large schools. It has been found to be beneficial to leave pre- and beginning adolescents in schools that are small enough so that everyone knows everyone and there is a sense of belonging. It has been recommended that Districts even return to the old K-8 model if that is the only way to reduce the number of seventh and eighth graders in a building.

Thus, except for the recommendations to create Middle Schools and to keep them small, BUSD does not have much research to fall back on in deciding its grade configuration. There is, however, research that shows that parent involvement increases student achievement. That research bolsters the idea of keeping students at one school for a period of time so that parents can become more comfortable in participating in school activities.

There has also been research that supports the concept of thematic instruction, or relating units of mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts to a particular theme or time period to illustrate the connectedness of learning. Thus, the idea of a particular emphasis at a school, such as art or technology, does not mean that young children focus on only one area, but rather, that area becomes the unifying theme for the various parts of the core curriculum. Schools with a special emphasis may enhance learning by linking each subject matter to an area in which a student has a particular interest.

Research has shown that a student does better in school if he/she is "bonded" to that school. Special themes help link students to their school as well as to their classmates, much as serving on an athletic team does. The importance of school bonding also supports the goal of fewer school transitions, as expressed by the Measure A Task Force.

Such bonding and support for a school appears to be enhanced if the student and parents have had the opportunity to choose a particular school. An example of this exists at the Arts Magnet School, which has been recognized as a Distinguished School twice by the State of California.

Parents' preference for schools close to home with a greater grade span supports the concept of neighborhood schools. However, given the demographics of Berkeley and the expressed community value for integration, neighborhood schools cannot be the BUSD solution. It is this conflict between giving parents greater choice in their children's education and the impossibility of providing neighborhood schools that leaves BUSD in such a dilemma at this time.

Many have supported the idea of controlled choice in the belief that it could integrate the schools at the same time that it gives parents choice. The crucial key to making such a system work would be to create choices that are worth going across town to attend. Since we do not yet have such clear choices, many find it hard to imagine that such choices could develop and some think it means that elementary schools would specialize in one subject and omit the others.

A group of BUSD teachers and principals recently stressed the need for BUSD to shift from teaching isolated skills to stressing the "big ideas." BUSD should be unified through the identification of the key concepts and ideas taught at each grade level if we shift to teaching the "big ideas." Teachers should be involved in developing a vision for the schools. Choice could work for teachers, too, if they had the opportunity to pick a school that matched their own learning philosophy.

## Questions and Answers

### **1. How does reorganization meet the needs of all students?**

We do not have to reorganize to meet the needs of all students; however, reorganization can be a catalyst for change within the classroom, at each school site, and at each grade level. To make this happen teachers will need to take some ownership in the process of reorganization. If teachers don't "buy in," nothing will change inside the classroom even if the rooms are new or the grade configuration is different. It will be crucial to build in sufficient time for teachers and administrators to plan effectively and to receive the necessary training.

Reorganization could help to meet the needs of all students if schools developed particular styles or themes that matched the interests and abilities of groups of children.

If reorganization (combined with a longer tenure at each school site) created a situation where parents and students were more "bonded" to their schools there could be a positive effect on student achievement. Some families are not comfortable in a school until they know staff members well and trust those people. With additional years at a site, parents may feel they have an advocate at their child's school.

### **2. Can we see possible school organization "packages" that integrate the issues and concerns -- grade configuration, educational programs, etc. along with physical realities and costs?**

The overall goal of this process is to integrate improved educational programs with physical realities and costs. This process is intended to enable the narrowing of options and the combining of concerns with architectural needs to create a "package" appropriate to this city.

### **3. Is it prudent to plan for increased enrollment?**

We are not currently planning for any significant increase in enrollment since we have no current indications that the school age population will grow in Berkeley or that the trend to private schools will be reversed. However, our policy of not selling school property provides for the possibility of expansion.

### **4. Will school construction cause a drop in enrollment? If so, will that be taken into account?**

We have no way of projecting the impact of the building program on enrollment at this time. As work gets underway with one building, we'll have a sense of whether or not families are leaving the school and we can plan accordingly.

**5. What laws dictate the integration plan for Berkeley. How is it being interpreted?**

Berkeley is not under court order to integrate. We have been given legal opinion that says as long as we do not create a system that has less racial balance than our current system, we would not be vulnerable to lawsuits. Plus or minus 5% percent, or plus or minus 10% would meet our current ethnic balance and satisfy legal interpretation.

**6. Can we review a model that shows the District with a plus or minus 5%, and a plus or minus 10% integration goal? What are the implications of these models?**

Plus or minus 5% requires very tightly maintained integration. It is virtually impossible to achieve such tight integration with a zoned system because people move in and out of neighborhoods rather frequently. In addition, allowing students to transfer to schools with bilingual or bi-cultural programs forces some divergence from the district-wide racial balances.

**7. How will the District figure out how many schools we need?**

The number of schools we need depends on several factors: class size, the size of existing buildings not scheduled for major renovation, and decisions by the Board regarding how big the District *wants* each school to be (i.e. the number of grades and the number of classes per grade). If BSEP is not renewed by voters, we will not need as many classrooms as we currently use because class size at the K-6 level will jump from 25 to 32, the state maximum. (Most surrounding districts have 30-32 children in elementary classes.)

**8. Would any of the organizational plans being discussed prompt the need for another junior high school?**

Whether we need additional junior highs or middle schools depends on what we determine to be the optimum size of those schools. There is research to support the idea that these schools should not be too large. The District proposes a goal of an upper limit of 750 students for a junior high or middle school, and an upper limit of 450 for an elementary school. One important criterion for elementary schools should be limiting the size of schools so that they would be small enough for the principal to know every student.

If the District opted for a K-5, 6-8 plan or a K-4/5-8 plan, staff believes it would be advisable to add another junior high/middle school. Otherwise, both King and Willard would become too large. Under a K-5 plan, it would be advisable to add an additional middle school. The K-4, 5-8 plan would require two additional middle schools.

It has not been determined where additional middle schools would be located, but the larger 4-6 sites or West Campus are possible locations. Columbus, Longfellow, Malcolm X, and Franklin are large enough to house a 5-8 program, but do not have athletic facilities that are comparable to those at King and Willard. Special arrangements would have to be made for the use of fields elsewhere, or an alternate specialization could be developed, such as a

performing arts program, at schools with fewer or smaller athletic facilities.

**9. Under what conditions would the Board consider closing a school? Can objective criteria for closure be developed?**

The Board would determine the criteria. Conditions that might necessitate closure include a severe decline in enrollment, a severe decline in state funds, or the non-renewal of BSEP funds by voters. A decision to spend funds in ways other than maintaining small elementary schools could also trigger a school closure.

**10. Why not close down the schools in the Thousand Oaks and Cragmont areas because residents in those neighborhoods don't send their kids there anyway?**

It is hoped that residents of those neighborhoods will return to the public schools when new schools are built.

**11. What is the budgetary impact of closing schools? What is the potential impact on enrollment of flight to private schools because of school closure? What have been the budgetary implications of prior closures in the District? What are the initial costs involved in school closures?**

There are costs associated with the actual physical closing of a school, as well as moving; there are potential financial gains in renting or developing the school site. Often, however, less is saved than anticipated because most school costs--such as salaries of teachers, aides, clerical and custodial staff and funds for materials and supplies-- follow kids to another, larger school. Depending on actual school size, the cost of a principal may be saved, but the cost of a vice-principal at a larger school might be added. A secretary may or may not be saved because clerical tasks vary according to the number of students.

However, there are some savings when running a school of 450 students , for example, rather than the 275 that we now have in some schools or the 350 that is the maximum capacity of some of our schools given a class size of 25:1. At a ratio of 32:1 our schools could hold 384 students and still have one principal, one secretary, 12 teachers and the same custodial staff as a school of 275.

**12. Will Franklin be used as a transitional school while other school buildings are under construction?**

No definite decision will be made until an overall transition plan is developed. Part of that plan would include a cost analysis comparing the use of a transitional site to the installation of portables at the school under construction.

**13. How can we afford to maintain any new schools we might build if Measure A funds can't be used for maintenance?**

We will continue to have great difficulty in maintaining the buildings until the economy of California turns around and increased tax revenues allow for increased funding for schools. Since we do not plan to add more space to what we already have, and since our schools will be in good repair as a result of the renovation work, we will try to cope with our current maintenance budget. However, if BSEP is not renewed or if maintenance is not given a larger share of the general fund, we will continue to have inadequate resources for maintenance.

### **Incorporating "Choice"**

**14. How will California's new school choice law, which goes into effect July 1, 1994, affect (a) our current zoned busing system, (b) a choice system, (c) a site preference system?**

(a) We anticipate little impact on our current system from the school choice law because we currently have a liberal intradistrict transfer policy that is essentially the same as the requirement stated in the new law. Our intradistrict transfer policy allows students to attend schools other than the school they are zoned for if principals at both schools agree to release and accept them. Principals must base their decisions on available space and maintaining racial balance. We anticipate subsequent legislation will detail the guidelines and regulations regarding cut-off days for transfer application.

(b) The law would support the concept of controlled choice.

(c) The site preference system would probably include the same rules for intradistrict transfers that we now have.

Any changes we might make in our enrollment system would have to adhere to state law. Students would be admitted to a school other than the one to which they have been assigned on a space available basis with the caveat that their enrollment not negatively affect the racial balance of the school.

**15. How do we allow choice within our current zoned system? Are kids in the zone given priority to go to that school regardless of when they register?**

We allow choice within our zoned system in several ways. First, we have two magnet schools open to students throughout the city. Second, we have two Spanish bilingual and one Chinese bicultural program open to students throughout the city. Third, we have an intradistrict transfer policy that allows students to attend schools other than the school they are zoned for if principals at both schools agree to release and accept them.

Our policy allows students to go to their zoned school no matter when they register. However, this year, we had to deny late entries at some schools because they were already

filled. Some students who registered late were sent to other schools.

Additional policies regarding choice could be developed *within* a zone system.

**16. Are there any outside funds available to help provide information to parents about the options available already in the District?**

There are no special funds at this time, but there is a chance that costs will be reimbursable under the state's Mandated Costs Program.

**17. If the District established a choice system, would a parent information center be necessary to inform families about their choices? How much would a central admission center, a central registration center, or a parent information center cost?**

A central registration center would help facilitate parent requests and is needed regardless of which option is selected.

A controlled choice system might require a slightly larger staff for doing outreach than an information center for our current system, especially during February and March when families are choosing schools. Current funding for the Attendance Office could be redirected to the development of a Parent Information Center. However, additional staff would be needed as would materials and resources for brochures, videos, and other outreach activities. Also, staff to assist parents in understanding "choices" should have special talents and training.

The new Communications Manager, as well as a skilled computer operator, could be part of this office. Appropriate software and hardware would have to be purchased. Extra staff would be needed for the months of August and September to process late applications.

In Cambridge, Mass., which is very similar to Berkeley in terms of the number of schools (14 K-8 schools and one high school) and population (55.5 percent of elementary students are minorities), the annual cost of operating a central parent information office in 1993-94 is budgeted at \$353,000. A \$137,000 grant off-sets some of the cost. Staff for the information office includes a full-time student assignment officer, a full-time registration assistant, a full-time clerk, a full-time citywide parent coordinator, four full-time school parent coordinators, and 15 part-time school parent liaisons.

**18. Would parents be interested in "choosing" under a choice system?**

Experience in Cambridge indicates that parents like choosing their children's schools. With a parent information center and a good outreach program, parents can learn enough about the schools to make an informed choice. If parents fail to choose, staff from the Parent Information Center could step in and choose for the family. However, there must be some



significant differences among the schools to create real choices.

We would need to have community liaisons and translators available to make choosing a reality for all parents. Under a controlled choice system, space would have to be designated at all schools for late arrivals or there would be racial imbalance. There is the possibility of having a little more control over this than we have now, where those students are sent wherever there happens to be room.

**19. How much would transportation cost with a choice system? Is it more or less than with zoned busing?**

According to mapping and data that the District has analyzed, if students living within a quarter mile of a school receive preference to attend that school there will be a savings in busing costs under choice. If every student in the district were to choose the school farthest from his or her home, there would be an increase in costs. (Note: The Superintendent's Task Force on School Organization did not endorse residential preference.)

**20. Would there be a sibling preference for choice? Can you change schools (choose again) the next year? How often can you choose?**

Rules have yet to be established. In most other districts with choice, sibling preference is allowed. The District would hope that, with choice, parents would make a commitment to a particular school and stick with it. Some changes would probably be allowed, however, but not more than one per year.

**21. How could choice be phased in? How long would it take to be implemented?**

This is being researched. Some have thought it could be phased in by grade level. Much will depend on how drastically a particular school's grade configuration would change, as well as the school's reconstruction schedule.

**22. Do teachers and staff want to choose schools? How do they feel about "shifting around"?**

Teachers say many are frightened about moving away from friends and colleagues. They are comfortable where they are. We have not had much interest expressed by teachers or other staff in "shifting around" or choosing schools.

**23. How do teachers and principals feel about the current grade configuration versus alternatives?**

It appears that most prefer the K-5 idea from an educational standpoint, but do not see how we can do it and maintain integration. They fear it will be difficult to attract some parents to integrated flatland schools for six years. Others remain committed to the idea of four or five

sections of one grade level at a school (as we have in the 4-6 schools) so that they have a number of colleagues who are working with the same curriculum and age group.

**24. What do teachers think about changing the current grade configuration?**

Although teachers have not been very active on district committees, they have expressed their views on some site committees. Staff seemed most active at Malcolm X, where teachers want to maintain the status quo. At Jefferson it appears that parents like K-5, while staff wants K-3. At Thousand Oaks, Washington, and Oxford, staff would like K-5. During the month of November, extensive outreach to teachers should provide additional information.

**25. Does K-5 mean larger schools?**

Not necessarily. It could mean fewer classes at each grade level. For example, Oxford has 12 classrooms. At this time they have three sections of each grade. As a K-5, they would have two classrooms of each grade.

**26. Is it possible to have a zoned system with a liberal transfer policy that takes into account racial balance?**

That is close to what we have now. We could do better with additional staff, a good computer system and clear deadlines for transfers. The Board could adopt closing dates for transfers, and staff could provide better information to parents about their options.

**27. What is the impact of adding another magnet, or "theme" school? What kind of theme school might it be? How can we get teachers to "build" that school?**

It is thought that the parents who take the time to investigate the magnet schools and who get their children into them are typically "more involved" parents. Magnet schools also tend to get more resources (grants and start-up resources to attract families to the school) and, thus, there may be a drain of resources from the zoned schools.

The concept that magnet schools are somehow "favored" is the motivation for what Evans Clinchy of the Institute for Responsive Education in Boston, Mass., called the need to move on to a choice plan with control for racial balance. According to Clinchy, controlled choice is a logical next step after magnets and a vast improvement because no school is "favored with extra resources."

A new theme school could be anything from a language immersion school to a Montessori school or a year-round school.

In order to build theme schools, principals and teachers must be committed and direct as many resources as possible to developing such a school.

**28. Where would a new magnet school be located? Does location of a magnet school affect who chooses to go there?**

Magnet schools can be located wherever a suitable facility exists. Yes, the location of a school has an impact on who chooses it since many parents want their children to attend a school as close to home as possible, and thus select the magnet school in their neighborhood, not because of the "theme" but because of location.

**29. What costs are involved in developing a new program at a school site?**

All of our schools have special enrichment programs funded by BSEP. These funds could help a school further develop already existing themes and special programs. Some schools have special grants and others have partnerships with UC Berkeley to assist with special programs. Costs of developing a new program at a school site can range from nothing to thousands of dollars. A principal and a group of teachers can develop a new program simply by deciding to do so and by directing all existing resources to that end. For example, if a staff decided to become a Montessori school, it could spend BSEP money for materials and SIP money for staff development. On the other hand, a big grant of money can facilitate the change process and add additional staff time and training. Thousand Oaks School, for example, has obtained several grants that have helped it become an Accelerated School.

**30. How could the District set up more programs like the Gilbert & Sullivan program at Malcolm X School?**

The first step toward creating programs like Gilbert & Sullivan would be a commitment from a principal. The next step would be to advertise within the district for teachers. Assuming no BUSD teachers wanted to participate, we would have to create vacancies for outside hire at the chosen school by transferring teachers into vacancies at other sites. The current G & S program pairs two teachers and two classes. The development of the program would depend on how many teachers the District could hire to participate.

Some key elements of the success of the G & S program include the tight bonding of the students over a period of two years, the fact that teachers work with the same students for two years, and that performing on stage builds self esteem. Some of these elements could be woven into other theme programs by willing pairs of teachers.

**31. What is the impact of "juggling" the budget to give extra funds to certain schools to help build programs to attract more students?**

The money is a fixed amount and it comes from one source. Spending more in one school means spending less in another.

## **Financial Considerations**

### **32. What are the cost implications for smaller classes? Can Measure A pay for this?**

Smaller classes require more teachers and more classrooms. Measure A can build classrooms, but it cannot be used for instructional costs, including teachers' salaries.

### **33. How would maintenance costs be different at large versus small schools?**

If we had larger and fewer schools and the same maintenance budget, we could probably do a better job of maintenance than we do now. There are some economies of scale involved with larger institutions.

### **34. Is there a fiscal implication to site-based management?**

One goal of site-based management is to have teachers, the principal, staff, students, and parents make and implement more of the decisions at their school. But site-based management must be defined before the specifics related to cost can be answered. There is a wide range of interpretation regarding what functions can move from central administration to site. Certain economies of scale could be lost if some functions, such as payroll and purchasing, are done by many sites instead of by the central administration. Site-based management also requires a large personal commitment of time on the part of all staff at the site.

### **35. How does increased enrollment affect the District's fiscal situation? How does decreased enrollment affect the District's fiscal situation?**

Increased enrollment brings in more revenue from the State because our funding is based on Average Daily Attendance (ADA). However, increased enrollment would not increase BSEP funds (as they are tied to local taxes) or certain categorical funds. In addition, the state gives us the choice of claiming the ADA from the previous year if we have a decline in enrollment.

Decreased enrollment hurts the District because fixed costs may not change. We still pay for one principal at an elementary school, even though there are wide variations in the number of students attending and, therefore, in the amount of ADA that school generates.

### **36. What is the relationship between fixed and variable costs?**

Variable costs are frequently those that are tied to the number of students, such as teachers hired on a 25:1 basis and clerical/custodial/aide staff at a school related to the number of pupils. Fixed costs are there in spite of small variations in the number of students. For example, the District must pay one superintendent, one personnel manager, a fee for mowing

the lawn or painting the building no matter how many students attend the school.

Information about savings to the District from prior closures is being researched.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the previous wave of closings helped create private schools such as the Prospect and Sierra schools and resulted in a loss of enrollment for BUSD.

**37. Are there funds available to provide community services and create community centers at school sites?**

Not at this time, but staff is looking into possible sources.

**38. Can the District offer after-school care at all school sites?**

That is our goal. Many sites, however, have limited facilities and after-school care at these sites could require sharing space. We may have to settle for after-school care at or near all school sites. We hope to have a Board decision on this matter by ~~xxx~~ so we can complete design specifications for new schools.

**Educational Research**

**39. What do we know that can help us raise the educational achievements of minority students?**

Learning styles: The most promising research in recent years shows the need to have a variety of instructional strategies to match different learning styles. When teachers include visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (or hands-on) activities in each lesson, they are more likely to be successful with all students.

Sheltered strategies: Key points in "sheltered instruction," such as building on prior knowledge, pointing out relationships, and making clear connections, are strategies that all work to improve achievement of minority children and children for whom English is a second language. Much of what is in *It's Elementary* also stresses linking new knowledge to the child's previous experiences, as well as integrating language skills and remembering that speaking precedes writing. The Montessori methodology also appears to work well with low-income children.

Technology: Within our own school district, the systematic use of technology has been shown to increase the achievement of minority students at a rate faster than that of non-minority students. The program at Emerson School shows such results. (See Penny Dyer study of Emerson program.)

More in-depth teaching of "Big Ideas": Most BUSD teachers also support the California State Department of Education's promotion of teaching "the big ideas." The Department, in its criteria for both elementary and middle schools, stresses teaching less detail but teaching in greater depth. Of course, that means changing the way in which we

assess students, focusing more on assessing a student's ability to solve problems rather than recall knowledge.

Learning to "do school": According to the recent book *The Learning Gap*, we need to teach students how to "do school"--in other words, how to learn, how to organize their desks and materials, how to develop good study habits, etc. The assumption that such things are taught at home is no longer always true.

Keeping teachers and students together longer: Some teachers strongly support the concept of keeping a class for two years so that the teacher gets to know the students and their families well. Advocates of the plan say students get off to a much quicker start the second year, that classes move ahead much faster than those that are formed "brand new" each September. Many BUSD teachers also support the elimination of pull-out programs.

Teachers' expectations: Teachers must have the expectation that all children can learn and they must be trained not to unconsciously favor boys over girls or one racial group over another. Two programs, Teacher Expectations for Student Achievement (TESA) and Gender Expectations for Student Achievement (GESA), offer teacher training. Many BUSD teachers have taken these training courses.

#### **40. Is there research that shows that different grade configurations are better for education?**

Good educators can make any configuration work. However, the current trend to the Middle School concept has received much support because it eliminates the two-year school. K-5/6-8 is the configuration recommended by the state and appears to be most popular throughout the United States.

#### **41. What about transitions between schools?**

We have no documentation that shows that the transfer to fourth grade is difficult for children. Some of our schools have been working hard at easing the transition through orientation programs and joint PTA meetings.

If we keep three transitions, we should do additional visitations and other activities to make students more familiar with the next level. In addition, third and fourth grade teachers need to meet and discuss more thoroughly what third graders have been working on so that fourth grade is better linked to what has come before. This link is especially important with a K-3/4-6 grade configuration because all of the major state testing is at grades 4 and 5, just after students have changed sites.

If we go to the K-5 model there would be fewer transitions. Fewer transitions could mean that students do not have to go through the process of learning a new school's staff, rules, facilities, etc. This would also help the situation at the junior highs where kids only attend two years. Going to a 6-8 configuration would give students a better chance to "bond."

#### **42. What is the impact of changing junior high schools (grades 7 and 8) to middle**

**schools (grades 6 through 8 or 5 through 8)?**

Research and the State of California strongly support the middle school grade configuration (see *Caught in the Middle*). However, moving current sixth graders to Willard and King would increase the size of those schools. Research supports small schools for this age level. Thus, the 6-8 middle school concept may force the discussion of creating an additional middle school. It would also imply the end of the 4-6 configuration.

**43. What is the best classroom size?**

Research has shown a positive impact on student achievement when class size is reduced to the 18-20 student range. There is no research to support improved student achievement in moving from the standard 32 to Berkeley's 25; however, teachers report an enormous difference because they can give students more individual attention in a smaller class. Most parents support it and continue to vote tax funds to pay for lower class size. It will be interesting to see if the smaller class sizes in freshman English, introduced in the spring of 1991, have an impact on student achievement at Berkeley High School.

**44. Is there any educational literature from other districts about the K-4/5-8 configuration?**

The closest school district with a K-4/5-8 configuration is New Haven Unified in Union City. Many schools in that district have been named a Distinguished School at one time or another, and several have gone on to the National Recognition Program in Washington, D.C. Standardized test scores for minority children in New Haven Unified show them performing ahead of other California children within every racial group.

New Haven Unified originally went to a K-4/5-8 configuration for reasons of space. According to that District's Associate Superintendent of Instruction, Ruth McKenna, the new configuration has been a success. "You can't imagine the difference in the Middle Schools with four grades," she said. "Anything smaller makes the school too transitional. With four grades, the bonding and the connectedness is geometrically increased. I wouldn't have it any other way."

Grade five is self-contained. Students in grade six have two core teachers (English-History/Math-Science) plus one elective choice, such as computer class. In grades seven and eight, students continue to have two core teachers. The English-History-Language core has three periods; the Math-Science has two. There are two lunch periods, one for fifth and sixth graders, another for seventh and eighth graders. Each of the three middle schools have about 1,000 students. The district also has one large high school and six K-4 schools.

**45. What are the educational/administrative advantages of having consistency in grade configuration across the district?**

If we were to introduce a variety of grade configurations, such as K-3, K-5, K-6, and 4-6, 6-8, 7-8 it would require a great deal more administrative and clerical time. It would be extremely confusing to new parents and parents moving into the District. Coordination among sites would become more complex and require more administrators, which in turn would require spending funds that might be better spent in the classroom.

**46. Would moving the Berkeley Adult School devastate the program? What is the utilization of the building with its current programs? How many BAS students are Berkeley residents?**

BAS has moved before without devastating its programs. Currently, classrooms are all occupied in the morning but many are vacant in the afternoon and evening. In addition, even in the morning there are classes with six to ten students in rooms built for 32 students. Two gymnasiums, an auditorium, an aquatic center, and other large spaces are underutilized. As of July 1, 1993, 4,720 students were enrolled. Of those, about 2,300 lived in Berkeley. Students come from 22 different cities to attend BAS.

**47. What would a marketing plan look like and cost? How would we tell about the exceptional programs the District already has?**

A marketing program would require the services of a good communications/public relations firm to develop a good short- and long-term strategy regarding what information is needed and how to target diverse audiences. This plan would prioritize and identify different outreach efforts ranging from one-on-one meetings to the production of appropriate brochures and materials. Obviously the District already has many strong programs that are not visible to large numbers of families. However, for a choice program to be explained in a way so that every school is described adequately, each school will need to work quickly to identify its unique elements so that parents not already familiar with that school can understand its strengths. Ultimately, the Communications Manager would lead the staff at the parent information center and would develop brochures, videos, and other tools. A systematic program of information in local newspapers would also need to be developed.

**48. What might a K-4/ 5-8 model look like? Which schools would be K-4 and which would be 5-8?**

While there are many options as to which schools might become K-4 and which might be 5-8, the attached chart gives some indication of what an enrollment plan for this grade configuration might look like in our District.

You should note that it would be possible to make the 5-8 portion of this plan either zoned or "choice."



**Preliminary Model for  
ZONED K-4 / with Zoned or Choice for 5-8**

Name of School	Proposed Grades	Proposed Enrollment (+/-)	Possible Implementation	
			9/94	9/95
Whittier	K-4	300	K-5	K-4
Emerson	K-4	300	K-4*	K-4
Oxford	K-4	300	K-4*	K-4
LeConte	K-4	375	K-4	K-4
Jefferson	K-4	300	K-3	K-4
Washington	K-4	300	K-4	K-4
Longfellow**	K-4	375	K-5	K-4
John Muir	K-4	300	K-5	K-4
Cragmont***	K-4	300	***	***
Columbus***	K-4	375	***	***
Thousand Oaks**	5-8	600	1-4	2-5
Willard	5-8	600	6-8	5-8
Malcolm X	5-8	600	5-7	5-8
King	5-8	750	5-8	5-8

\* For 1994, current 3rd grade parents would choose their 4th grade school as there would not be room for all 3rd graders at these schools to remain as 4th graders. Some schools might want to consider developmental approaches to learning which would encourage split grade levels, beginning '95.

\*\* Alternatively, Longfellow could be 5-8 and T.O. could be K-4.

\*\*\* Cragmont and Columbus would remain at Franklin until schools would be rebuilt. (Expected completion date for Columbus - Sept. '96)

Notes: In this scenario, schools currently housing kgns would enroll fewer kindergartners, however some schools not currently housing kindergartners would begin to have them.

Special education needs to be considered.

K-4/ 5-8 Could also be handled as K-4 Zone and 5-8 Choice.

**49. What might a K-5, 6-8 plan look like? Which schools would be K-5 and which would be 6-8?**

It would be recommended that the 6-8 schools be King and Willard, and that a third middle school be established at either Longfellow or Malcolm X.

**50. Has anyone worked out what a "mosaic plan" would look like?**

The School Organization Task Force's model is something like a mosaic since it attempts to allow each school site to select the grade configuration it prefers. Based on the membership of the site committees last year, some schools would remain K-3 and 4-6 and others would change to K-5.

A possible "mosaic" model has been proposed and it looks like this:

SCHOOL	PROPOSED GRADES
Emerson	K-3
LeConte	K-3
Jefferson	K-3
Malcolm X	4-6
Columbus *	K-4
Cragmont *	K-4
Thousand Oaks *	5-8
Whittier/ Arts Magnet	K-5 (magnet)
Washington **	K-5
Oxford **	K-5
Longfellow **	K-5
John Muir	K-5 (magnet)
Willard	7-8
King	6-8

With this model, parents might select a zone and then move through schools within that zone (eg. Emerson to Malcolm X to Willard/ K-3; 4-6; 7-8) or from Columbus to Thousand Oaks (K-4; 5-8).

\* Columbus and Cragmont are intended here to be feeder schools to Thousand Oaks. This "cluster" could remain the Spanish bi-lingual choice program.

\*\*Washington, Oxford and Longfellow could become K-5 magnet schools

The junior high schools could have open enrollment or King could take students from the K-5 schools.

**51. What considerations need to be clarified in order to determine how to rezone for a K-3 4-6 paired school/ shared busing model?**

The District has been looking at what the zones might look like, if the K-3 4-6 model is retained, but if a better effort could be made to minimize the time spent on buses, and to more successfully meet the integration goals.

To do this, boundaries would need to be shifted in order to attain better ethnic balance and reduce busing times. School might have different grade configurations than they currently have. For example, a K-3 might need to become 4-6 and vice versa. There would need to be discussion about whether or not to retain "magnet" schools and if they are retained, what grades they should be. The District would need to consider issues like whether or not zones should cut across major streets such as University Avenue.

In order to maintain the ethnic balances that could be achieved through re-zoning, the District would need to alter its transfer policies. Cut off dates for transfer would have to be established and upheld and strict rules regarding the impact of transfers on the ethnic balance of both the receiving and the sending schools would need to be considered.

In order to allow access to the bilingual programs, there would need to be a policy that allows a variance from the integration goals.