

"None of these options are desirable ... but each must be considered," Steele said.

To follow the class size policy, the district would have to hire 12 new teachers at a cost of \$661,000. No salary hikes are projected, but the cost of health benefits will soar by about 12 percent, according to estimates.

As costs rise, funds from the state will stay flat at best. Gov. Pete Wilson's proposed budget for next year holds school funding level — which means a loss of about \$61,000 for Berkeley.

Berkeley's general fund revenue for next year is projected at about \$44 million, but such unknowns as the state budget could change that figure drastically.

BERKELEY — The Berkeley Unified School District will face a shortfall of \$4.5 million next year if it keeps class sizes down.

A school board policy from last year sets pupil-teacher ratios at 30-to-1 for lower grades and 35-to-1 for upper grades. Those figures will be brought down further to 25-to-1 and 27-to-1 with tax money from the Berkeley Schools Enrichment Project.

But small classes will come at a large cost, according to an initial budget presented to the board this week.

"The board would have to make some tough choices in order to fully implement class-size goals," Superintendent

would ensure white students, great, but for Noguera, high-quality education for minorities at the public flatland schools had to come first.

Noguera's statements as the only black school board member encouraged other people, particularly white parents from the Berkeley hills, to push for neighborhood schools.

But after attending meetings, Noguera said enough parents were more concerned about a school's location than its program to undermine chances for even minimally integrated magnets in the flatlands.

"I thought before that going to neighborhood schools would allow us to both increase our ability to serve the kids ... and increase the accountability of the schools to the communities. I thought you could have a neighborhood focus and still maintain a multicultural character to the school," Noguera said.

"Part of the reason I've changed my mind is because the process of the task force has been so chaotic, and some of the neighborhood school proposals seem as though they would take us backwards. Some people have said they are willing to accept plus or minus 15 percent racial imbalance, when our current system strives for plus or minus 5."

Another drawback to neighborhood schools, he said, is that it would be mostly minorities who would be bused during the six years of their elementary school tenure, instead of the shared busing plan now being used.

"In this whole process I've developed enormous respect for those who came up with the shared busing system in 1968," Noguera said.

"I got a call from one parent who said her kids hate black kids now because the experience of going to school with them has been so negative and that's why she wants neighborhood schools. And you hear other parents saying they are concerned about their kids' safety.

"So those things have alerted me to the fact that really some people see neighborhood schools as a way of eliminating contact with the flatland neighborhoods, and we can't give in to that."

MEREDITH MAY

About-face for Noguera on school plan

AS MOUNTING numbers of Berkeleyans climb aboard the neighborhood-school train, one of its engineers, Berkeley school board president Pedro Noguera, is jumping off.

Noguera said the plans emerging from the 13 elementary school committees on how the city should spend its \$158 million in Measure A bond money have glossed over racial equity. Unless a plan for integrated neighborhood schools surfaces by the Feb. 17 deadline, Noguera told the Bay Guardian, he plans to vote for keeping the current K-3, 4-6 grade configurations (see "Neighborhood Schools vs. Integration," 1/13/93).

Last September, Noguera advocated creating three neighborhood magnet schools in the flatlands that could stay open after hours to serve as day care, tutoring, or community gathering places. Busing had ruined a sense of attachment to the schools, he said, and, combined with a notable white flight at the 4th-grade level, had led to de facto school segregation.

If magnet programs and quotas