

# M.I.T. visitors shed little light on BUSD's murky reconfiguration plans

If you attended the citywide Town Hall meeting at Washington School Nov. 6 and left feeling like issues were being whittled down to a finite number of do-able steps, you aren't listening. The December decision on Measure A school reorganization BUSD is shrouded in more questions now than it was last December, although tempers are hotter and more of the faithful have expired like long-term parking meters.

When Dr. Noguera introduced the M.I.T. presenters as outsiders....who don't know very much about Berkeley," I hope you pricked up your ears to find out what was challenging in the presentation.

If you, along with the other 9,900 Berkeleyans, missed the meeting, you can pick up a few of the contretemps here and now. Figuring out the meaning, the central significance, is, on the other hand, a riddle wrapped inside a conundrum.

Gil Kelly, city planning director, reminded us that the city and the school district do have common concerns about education and job development, schools as a community resource, and surplus sites.

Dr. Nancy Spaeth, associate superintendent, briefly outlined our options the staff is investigating. She mentioned that the present system is retained and the boundaries of the zones are readjusted (probably to within 10 percent of the targeted racial percentages), the average bus ride would be 1.95 miles.

A strict district intradistrict transfer policy could be considered to help maintain racial balance. If a K-4, 5-8 system is adopted like New Haven's, the ride could be reduced to 1.74 miles.

considering the "mosaic" (non-uniform transition levels) and the staff isn't.

Professor Roy Strickland from M.I.T. identified his group as part of the New American School Design Project, an offshoot of the bipartisan national school reform movement, America 2000. During the Bush administration, radical Berkeley did not participate in America 2000 in any form.

Now that President Clinton is calling it bipartisan also, taking advantage of the expertise of planners and architects who are specifically devoting themselves to major school redesign projects across the nation, it appears to be acceptable.

Professor Strickland pointed out that the nation was interested in Berkeley's decision because of our ground-breaking role of being the first school district to voluntarily undertake bussing for racial balance.

He also pointed out that since Berkeley has so many local cultural and educational resources, the district, like the private schools, could capitalize on them. This was a theme in all four of the M.I.T. plans.

Two of our board members protested that we, as a school district, do already take advantage of our surroundings. Part of the recurrent theme, envisioned for the future, was the establishing of community/resource centers at the waterfront, the city central spine, and the Tilden green center.

The most radical plan, the New Pacific School, proposed reassembling the school district in West Berkeley, or at least grades K-8, in a configuration which would allow flexible cross-age interest groupings.

Busing time could be carefully equalized along a series of east-

and social issues are resolved by a scheme whereby not just some, but everyone is asked to adapt to a new order."

Our batting average has hit a chronic slump in adjusting to the old order. Having everyone adjust to a new order sends a shudder down the collective spine.

The City-Wide Choice School System Plan mirrored the original School Organization Task Force plan option for K-5/6-8 with a few refinements such as academic focuses in common among what used to be called a feeder system and a neighborhood preference priority. The 6-8 schools were Willard, Whittier, King and Thousand Oaks.

Franklin was a community center and the rest, including Cragmont, were K-5. The BUSD Ad Hoc Task Force and Komatsu, Ivelich & Tucker reports' assumptions of no students returning from other districts or private schools were accepted without question in the plan.

The remaining two plans were zone plans where the present pairing of extremes within Berkeley was abandoned.

Instead, in the City as School Crescent Plan, with the grade configuration unchanged, Berkeley was divided into three bands resembling the outer rings

of a dart board. In Zone 1, Jefferson, Thousand Oaks, and Oxford feed to Franklin and then to King.

In Zone 2, Columbus, Whittier, and Longfellow feed to Washington and then mostly to King presumably, because of the large number projected there.

In Zone 3, LeConte and Emerson feed to Malcolm X and then Willard. There is also a variation called the Diamond Plan.


The fourth plan, the Tricycle Approach adopts a K-5, 6-8 configuration with three zones, North, West, and South. For the north, Thousand Oaks, Oxford, Jefferson, and Whittier feed to King.

For the west, Washington, Columbus, and Longfellow feed to "West Jr. High" (Franklin?).

Both plans do not rebuild Cragmont and project a depressingly low portion of the K-5 population from North Berkeley in the schools.

When pressed to narrow options and to rule on Cragmont by the superintendent, the board declined. After about 30 minutes of public testimony, Phase I for the M.I.T. design team finished. Next month is the examination of general architectural options excluding style in Phase II.

November 28, 11 a.m.  
following the 10 a.m. celebration:



**"Gifts from the World  
for the World"**