

MEASURE A+News

**December 4
Workshop #4
Jefferson School
10:00am -
12:30 pm**

When will the decision about grade configuration and school reorganization be made?

The Board is expected to make its decision about grade configuration and determine which buildings will be used for what grades at the Board meeting to be held on December 15.

What information will the Board and the District use to make these decisions?

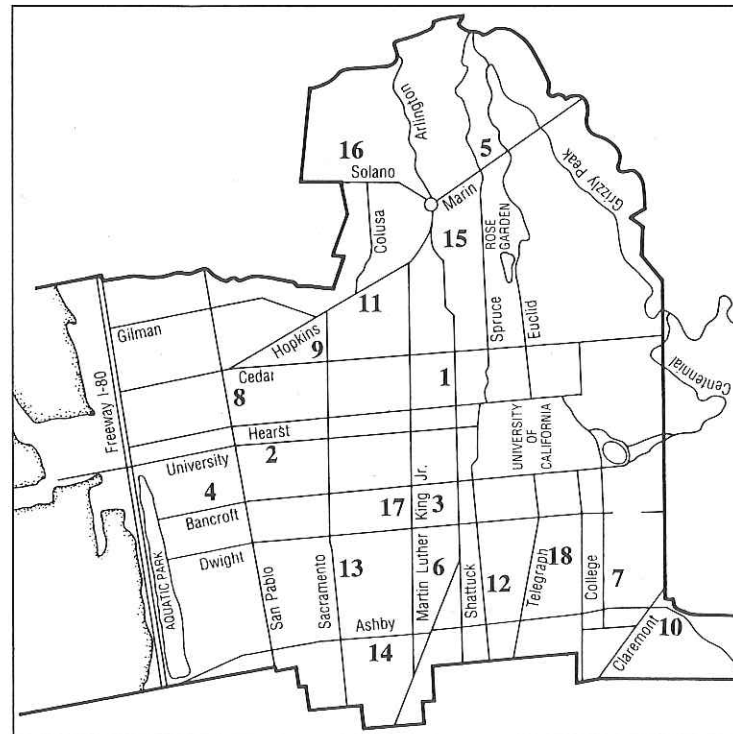
The Board will make its decision based on information from numerous sources, including the Superintendent's School Organization Task Force (SOTF); reports provided by educational and architectural consultants; information and comments from more than 70 meetings with parents, church and civic groups; and discussions with principals

School Organization:

Down to the Wire

The last city-wide workshop on school organization will be held in the auditorium of **Jefferson Primary School on December 4 at 10 a.m.** District staff will present detailed information on enrollment options for kindergarten through eighth grades to

members of the Board of Education, who will evaluate how each option serves the educational needs of Berkeley children and reflects the desires and concerns of the commu-



School Locations

1. Arts Magnet/Whittier
2. Berkeley Adult School
3. Berkeley High School
4. Columbus
5. Cragmont
6. East Campus
7. Emerson
8. Franklin
9. Jefferson
10. John Muir
11. King
12. LeConte
13. Longfellow
14. Malcolm X
15. Oxford
16. Thousand Oaks
17. Washington
18. Willard

Bright Ideas from MIT

and discussions with principals, teachers, and staff.

How quickly will the District implement the plan?

That depends on which plan is approved. If the New Zones plan is approved, it could be finalized relatively quickly. The other plans would be phased in over a period of between one and four years. A detailed implementation plan will be prepared by staff within 60 days of December 15. That plan will focus on both District-wide and site-based needs associated with phasing in the plan.

How will these decisions affect children who are already in school?

To the extent possible, all children currently enrolled in Berkeley schools would remain at their present school. For example, a student who is currently enrolled in 1st grade at Emerson but is no longer in the Emerson zone following reorganization, would remain at Emerson through 3rd grade.

When will schools be rebuilt?

Architects for Thousand Oaks and Columbus have been selected and those schools are scheduled to be built by 1996. Other schools, that might undergo extensive renovation would be completed over a 10-year period.

nity and school staff.

Following this final workshop, members of the Board will meet on December 8 to continue their discussion of these options as well as any variations in these plans that may surface during the workshop. The Board is expected to make final decisions on grade configuration, integration, and utilization of school buildings on December 15. The workshop and Board meetings are open to the public.

The Board's decision will culminate a 15-month research process as well as an intense, four-month community process that included more than 55 informal house meetings, presentations to 15 church, civic, and business groups, 3 city-wide workshops, 2 Board roundtable discussions, and ongoing meetings with principals, teachers, and staff at each school. The dual purpose of these meetings has been to inform the community about issues involved in school organization and building plans, and to give parents and other residents an opportunity to ask questions and express opinions about Berkeley's schools.

From several possible plans described in June and modified over the past months, four are currently under consideration by the Board. In all but the "Mosaic" plan, grade configurations would conform throughout the District. That is, schools would be either K-3, 4-6, 7-8; or K-4, 5-8; or K-5, 6-8. Under the Mosaic plan, some schools would be K-3, some K-4, some K-5, some K-6, and middle schools would be 4-6, 5-8, 6-8, and 7-8.

The passage of Measure A and plans to rebuild and rehabilitate school facilities provides the District with an opportunity to look at the current enrollment system as it has evolved over the last 25 years, and determine whether it can be improved. As the District has examined new enrollment methods and grade configuration it has focused on:

- minimizing busing,
- achieving integration goals that are consistent with Board policy,
- maximizing student achievement by creating schools of optimum size and with facilities that foster student learning,
- improving parental involvement and providing greater coordination among schools and staff.

A brief description of each plan follows on page 2, along with some strengths and weaknesses of each.

Imagine a system of shuttle buses transporting students to after-school enrichment programs or resource centers. Picture clusters of schools located near the Marina where all students in kindergarten through 8th grade would be bused in order to take better advantage of a concentration of resources like science labs and art studios.

These were only two suggestions contained in four models for school organization that graduate students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology presented at the November 6 Board workshop.

While many of MIT's suggestions are too costly to implement, their proposals for the location of middle schools and ways to foster better communication across grades have prompted lively discussion at the District. The "crescent" zone plan, one of MIT's presentations, is being researched further by District staff. In all four models, the District was encouraged to better utilize city resources.

The students are part of MIT's "New American School Design Project," which is funded through a grant from the Trust in Diversity.

The students will produce a document, "Planning for Berkeley Schools" in February.

K-3, 4-6, 7-8 New Zones*

This plan is similar to the zoned busing plan currently in place, but alters the current boundaries in order to achieve better racial balance in our schools, to minimize busing, and to promote better "linkage" between K-3 schools and their companion 4-6 schools. This plan proposes changing Thousand Oaks, which is currently K-3 to 4-6. Columbus, formerly 4-6 would be rebuilt as K-3. Cragmont would be rebuilt as K-3. Magnet schools could be eliminated, making John Muir and Whittier K-3. However, an arts program could be developed at one of the 4-6 schools.

The New Zones Plan:

- Shortens bus rides for children. Currently, bus rides for some children take up to an hour in each direction. Many parents feel this is too long, although interviews with children reveal they do not find bus rides unpleasant.
- Promotes better linkage between primary and intermediate schools and eases the transition at fourth grade because K-3 and 4-6 schools would be closer geographically.
- Preserves neighborhood schools and "paired" schools.
- Places a primary school in West Berkeley (Columbus) where a growing number of young children reside.
- Allows K-3 schools to be based on

K-4 (Zoned), 5-8 (Zoned or Choice)*

In this model, most K-3 schools plus Cragmont and Columbus would become K-4. Thousand Oaks, Malcolm X, King, and Willard are proposed as 5-8 schools. Enrollment in the 5-8 grades could be assigned by zone or through a choice system. (In this plan it is also possible for a new 5-8 school to be built at the current East Campus site, freeing the Malcolm X building for other District activities.)

The K-4, 5-8 Plan:

- Reduces the number of transitions between kindergarten and 8th grade.
- Achieves better racial balance in schools than exists currently.
- Shortens bus rides.
- Creates middle schools, which many educators prefer, and lengthens the total number of years at primary school.
- Allows children to switch schools after 4th grade when they are better prepared developmentally.
- Provides a stable environment for state testing at 4th grade, allowing better assessment of school performance.
- Assists coordination of curriculum among schools because schools are either K-4 or 5-8, enhancing potential for standardization of instruction.
- Provides access to bigger libraries, science labs, art rooms, etc. for 5th and 6th graders.
- Allows opportunity for peer teach-

K-5 "Controlled" Choice*

Under this plan, most schools would become K-5 schools. Cragmont and Columbus would be rebuilt as K-5 schools. Longfellow would be modified to become the third 6-8 school with Willard and King. A computer program would assign children to their first, second, or third choice based on maintaining racial and ethnic balance within each school.

The K-5 Controlled Choice Plan:

- Provides a longer stay at elementary school for children.
- Creates middle schools.
- Enables K-5 schools to develop "themes" and focus identities.
- Provides an opportunity to select a school, which may encourage parental involvement.
- Fosters tighter integration than is possible with a zoned system.
- Reduces the number of transitions from three to two.
- Enables parents to consider the bus ride when they choose a school.
- Reflects the desires of many school site committees.
- Could encourage competition rather than cooperation among schools.
- Raises concerns of many parents who believe that if all schools are good, there is no reason to choose.
- Requires parents to accept and trust the "fairness" of computer matching.

The Mosaic*

This plan reflects the grade configuration desires of many parents who currently have children in school. Under this particular Mosaic plan, Emerson, LeConte, and Jefferson would remain K-3 schools and would feed into Malcolm X for grades 4 through 6 and Willard Junior High for grades 7 and 8. Cragmont and Columbus would be rebuilt as K-4 schools that would feed into Thousand Oaks, which would be rebuilt as a 5-8 school. Washington, Oxford, and Longfellow would become K-5 schools that would feed directly into King Junior High, as a 6-8 middle school. Arts Magnet and John Muir could remain K-6 and would feed into Willard for grades 7 and 8. A third junior high school could also be created.

The Mosaic Plan:

- Provides numerous options for parents as well as a range of grade configurations.
- Allows schools that are doing well to be preserved in their current configuration.
- Follows the recommendations of some site committees.
- Would be difficult to administer and would require a commitment by parents to remain in matched schools.
- Could require more administrative and clerical staff to implement the enrollment

- Creates K-3 schools with approximately 300 children.
- Retains two-year junior high schools, a configuration that some educators believe offers students fewer benefits than 6-8 middle schools, and is inconsistent with the trend toward middle schools adopted by most other districts.
- Fails to address concerns of K-3 principals who think children are better prepared developmentally to move to new schools between fourth and fifth grades.
- Makes testing assessment more difficult. All children take state tests in 4th grade to determine how well they are learning and how well schools are teaching. Under the K-3, 4-6 system children take these tests soon after they come to the 4-6 school, making it difficult to assess primary school performance.

- ing older and younger students at both schools.
- Distributes 7th and 8th graders among four rather than two campuses.
- Limits the number of teachers in each "department" for 7th and 8th graders, although it might promote core teaching between disciplines.
- Raises concern about the readiness of 5th graders for middle school.
- Requires design of educational and social programs appropriate for 5th grade at 5-8 campuses.
- Creates two 5-8 schools that might not have facilities (fields and swimming pools) equal to those of King and Willard.
- Requires the 5-8 school to be designed so that 5th and 6th graders could be "sheltered" in classrooms with their own teacher, while 7th and 8th graders would change classrooms.

- Raises the possibility that parents whose children do not get their first or second choice may leave the system.
- Would reduce busing costs if "neighborhood preference" was incorporated into the plan. However, offering preference to children who live near a school might create other problems. For example, if all white children living near Oxford choose to attend Oxford, then white children from other parts of Berkeley might be denied admittance to Oxford. Similarly, if all African American children living in West Berkeley select Columbus, there might not be room for African American children from other parts of Berkeley to attend Columbus.
- Requires more parent information and outreach so that parents can make informed choices. This could add significant costs.

- of students and help newcomers to the District understand how it works.
- Relies on controlled choice at K-5 schools and zoning at K-3/4-6 and K-4/5-8 schools.
- Inhibits standardization in implementation of curriculum and effective instructional strategies.
- Makes it difficult to schedule and hold meetings for teachers and principals and to coordinate curricula because configurations differ widely throughout the District.

* All four plans are still preliminary, but they will form the basis for Board discussion. At the December 4 Community Workshop more details and revisions to these plans will be provided by District staff.

Why is the District thinking about different grade configurations?

Berkeley's current plan was developed more than 25 years ago as a method of integrating schools. It paired K-3 schools with 4-6 schools across town. Demographic changes in the city, private school enrollment, and school closures have altered the original plan. Currently some schools are not well integrated and grade configurations vary throughout the District. While most schools are either K-3 or 4-6, the magnet schools are K-6 and Franklin -- created when Cragmont and Columbus students were relocated due to the Loma Prieta earthquake -- houses grades 1-5. King Junior High School is actually a middle school with grades 6-8, while Willard serves grades 7 and 8. The District has two magnet schools (Arts Magnet at Whittier and John Muir School) as well as bilingual and bicultural programs at certain schools. These schools and programs attract students from throughout the city, but not equally from all parts of the city.

What happens after the Board decides on grade configuration on December 15?

District staff will develop a detailed implementation plan after the Board makes a final decision on grade configuration and school building utilization.