

## An Open Letter to the 7/11 committee members,

My name is Amy Caterina and I live on Bahama Cove in Del Mar. My daughter attended Del Mar Hills Academy for Arts and Sciences from 2001 through 2007 and my son is currently attending the Hills. My husband and I purchased our home due to its proximity to the school and after living here for more than 10 years, we are heavily vested in the community. I am writing to you today because 1. I am disabled and am unable to attend the meeting today and 2. I want to ask you to do something very important. I want you take a minute and think about the implications of closing our neighborhood school. And I want to ask you to put yourself in our shoes. How would you feel if someone called you up and said "The District is closing your school. Next year!"

To Susan Paul; Torrey Hills principal, you get to trade places with Susan Fitzpatrick, Del Mar Hills principal. Place yourself in her shoes. As a result of the potential school closure issue, what problems do you think she is dealing with every day? What do you think the second part of the school year is going to be like for her; dealing with confused, displaced children?

To Wayne Harris; Ashley Falls parent, you get to put yourself in our shoes. How would you feel as a parent and community member of Del Mar Hills? You get to attend meetings and hear that your school deserves to be closed because it has the lowest enrollment because it is the smallest school. Is this really a valid reason? Or listen to misstatements such as it is underperforming? Or old? Or ugly?

Cinda Peck; school teacher, you get to trade places with one of the teachers at the Hills. How does it feel to worry about what will happen to you next year? Are you thinking about the impact a school closing might have on your students? What about your job? Will the union protect you?

To Jennifer Endberger; Del Mar Heights parent, you get to imagine what will happen at your school next year. What will happen when an additional 350 kids show up next August. Where will they go? They won't all fit? How long will it take to get to school in the morning? What happens if your own child is displaced?

To Janet Handzel; Sage Canyon parent, you get to imagine that Sage Canyon will be closed next year. I'm sure that you have been thinking, "Whew! At least they won't close my school." Well, now imagine that Sage Canyon is on the top of the list. How do you feel? What would you do?

Randy Wheaton; Del Mar Union School District Employee, you get to pretend that you are retiring in five years and live across the street from the Hills. What will happen to your nest egg? Should you sell your house now? How much less will it be worth with a maintenance yard across the street?

To Bob Shopes; Del Mar Hills parent, you get to pretend that your child attends Ocean Air. You are the lucky one.

Let's forget about all the other criteria and think about whom this decision is really going to impact; over 350 kids will be displaced. I know it is very easy to look at this situation logically and remain detached, but you must realize the steep price to save a little money. Currently, the District administration is telling us that they will save approximately \$500,000 through school closure. This is approximately 1.67 percent of their \$30 million operating budget. 1.67 percent! I have to ask myself, and you should too, isn't there another way to save 1.67 percent of the operating budget that does not involve closing a vibrant, nationally-recognized Blue Ribbon, and California Distinguished school that has been an integral part of this community for 30 years?

My main frustration with this whole process is that it is unnecessary and it has caused significant discord within the District. I get that the District office needs to be relocated, but why close a school? I have no problem with closing a non-performing school, but there aren't any non-performing schools in our District. I have no problem closing a school with low capacity, but since when is 75 percent capacity a problem? What about demographic trends that predict declining enrollment? The

Hills turned kids away this year. I urge you to evaluate the current facilities. Find space for the District Office, the preschool, and the maintenance yard. Find a home for these divisions and save our school. Please.

Sincerely,

Amy Caterina

Dated: 10-21-09