

Dear Dr. McClain, School Board Members, and 7/11 Committee,

My daughter, Ashley, is in first grade at Del Mar Hills Academy. With all my heart I ask you not to close, merge or otherwise disrupt our school and the district.

In 2004 my family moved from Rancho Santa Fe to Del Mar. At that time my son, Connor, entered the third grade at the Hills. We were overjoyed to live next door to Del Mar Hills and had nothing more to worry about on the first day than having a handful of #2 pencils! You see, we had just moved from an academically top notch public school (Roger Rowe Elementary) which had become fraught with bitterness, anger, and strife. It was an anger with so much venom that it destroyed the morale of a school community.

When Connor entered kindergarten in 2001, the RSF district (comprised of only one school) decided they had outgrown their current facility in the heart of RSF and needed to build a new school. The opposition to the suggestion to build a second school started as a low grumbling and grew into an enraged frenzy. It was a firestorm which would burn through numerous voter propositions, see the exit of a fabulous superintendant (Dan Vincent), and pit neighbor against neighbor.

The district expansion included ideas which threatened to take private land by eminent domain from long time residents which resulted in lawsuit threats against school board members and community members. Neighbors sued neighbors, children planned play dates and birthdays based on their parents' voting position! I am not exaggerating when I write that the experience was devastating. This malice was focused on the threat of creating a new school.

Can you imagine the anger and hurt that would be caused by the threat to close a top notch school within an established neighborhood? I know you can, because you are embroiled in

that scenario now! The anger and frustration we see today is just the tip of an enormous and dangerous iceberg. As a community this “iceberg” is one we should avoid. It may be expensive and timely to navigate around, but it is safer than sinking the ship.

I beg you to take a step back from your position on the board and look as a community member at what a school closure or reconfiguration will do to our community. The conflict in RSF was recently resolved with the decision to expand the existing campus, however, the eight year conflict has left a bitterness between many neighbors. Please don't let that happen to our community.

Sincerely,

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