

To the DMUSD Board of Directors, the 7/11 Committee, and Superintendent McClain:

As a parent of three children at Del Mar Heights school, I have closely observed the 7/11 committee process. I greatly appreciate all of the hard work the members of the 7/11 committee have put into their task, and I believe that a great deal of useful information has been obtained from the process. First and foremost, however, is the realization that no school closure is appropriate at this time.

As shown from the analysis of Proposal B, the closing of Del Mar Hills would require moving 78 children in the 16 G, J, K area to Carmel Del Mar, “returning” 55 intra district transfer students to their home schools, sending special education children – including those who live on the west side of the 5 – to Ashley Falls, and would **still** leave at least 17 children in the Hills/Heights area who **would not fit** into the consolidated school at the Heights.

Leaving aside the obvious inequity of overcrowding our children into ancient portables at Del Mar Heights (a school that was never designed for so large a population) while the other schools in the district have entirely new facilities, leaving aside the cruelty of kicking children out of the school they have attended since kindergarten while the majority of their friends remain there, leaving aside the potential violation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 in refusing to accommodate children with special needs in their home school, and leaving aside the nonsensical idea of designing one school for an area that will **never** be able to accommodate all of the children in that area, we are still left with one major problem: where would the 72 children displaced by this consolidation go?

The consolidation of the Hills and Heights requires the removal of 55 intra district transfer students (children who live east of the 5, but whose parents have selected the Hills or Heights as a better fit for their children) and at least 17 children from the Hills/Heights area. While these numbers are snapshot of one year, they are a reasonable estimate of numbers in years going forward, if not an underestimate given the nature of housing turnover in the Heights/Hills area. Where could these children be placed? Not in Ocean Air or Sage Canyon, as those schools are impacted and will become even more impacted as the development of Carmel Country Highlands continues. Not in Torrey Hills, because as parents there have pointed out, a massive high density complex is being developed in that area which will cause Torrey Hills to be over-capacity as well. Not in Carmel Del Mar, as it becomes filled to over 100% capacity when the children from the 16 G, J, K area are moved there from the Heights and Hills. And while Ashley Falls and Sycamore Ridge have space at the moment, that space will be needed to accommodate the large number of students overflowing from the Torrey Hills/Carmel Country Highlands area, and will also be needed as development of the Pacific Highlands Ranch area continues. The residents and developers of Pacific Highlands Ranch have recently asked the city to waive the requirement that a connector to the 56 be built before development continues in that area. We simply cannot know when building there will continue or what such development will look like. Moreover, as the new unexpected high density development in Torrey Hills shows, we cannot know what type of housing will be built on any of the undeveloped properties in our district, or when such properties will be developed. Clearly, this is not a time to be impacting additional schools and sending more children out into the district to search for seats.

Whether a consolidation of the Hills and Heights is something that could be made to work is certainly something that should be considered as part of the long-range plans of the district. There could be educational benefits to such a consolidation if the necessary changes to the school facilities and the infrastructure of the area could be made to safely and comfortably accommodate **all** area children, and if such a consolidation could be made gradually with sensitivity to the children presently attending these schools. But to close a school now – requiring the annual displacement of students from a relatively stable population area to an area where the student population is expected to soon grow beyond capacity, and closing or impacting schools which currently accept children from impacted schools – is not a reasonable solution.

As the efforts of the 7/11 committee have shown, there is temporary space to be found for administrative and childcare functions in buildings and space throughout the district. A more permanent home for these functions could be found when the district population stabilizes, and when we have a better idea how much interest there is in the community for a district preschool. Permanent decisions regarding school closure should not be made at this time.

Sincerely,

Amy Hellenkamp