



1. Will the recommendations in the report from the Facilities Advisory Committee regarding the reassignments of the students from O'Neill and La Tierra to other schools be enforced as written?

The information in the Facility Advisory Committee report is merely for recommendation. Many factors, like enrollment numbers, that may end up playing a significant role in reassignment could change over time, thus, it is prudent to wait to finalize those details. Once the board takes action in January, it may become necessary to gather more input from schools and administrative staff about the various issues of reassignment. Contiguous boundary, non-contiguous boundary and choice students will all be examined at that time.

2. Will a change in elementary assignments mean there is a change to intermediate and high school assignments?

Intermediate and high school assignments are based on residential grids and not where a student attends elementary school. No changes have been made nor recommended to the intermediate or high school boundary grids. It would be a completely separate study and action. Therefore, a closure of an elementary school will not impact intermediate or high school assignments.

3. How much does the district project to save with the closure of O'Neill Elementary and La Tierra Elementary?

According to the three-year 2008-2009 First Interim Budget (found here: <http://www.svusd.k12.ca.us/budgetimpact/interim.pdf>), the savings from school closures would be approximately \$1 million of the approximately \$12.5 million that needs to be cut from the 2009-10

SVUSD budget. The breakdown of the savings estimates is the following:

Administrative	\$277,715
Clerical	\$301,565
Custodial	\$281,552
Utilities	<u>\$108,530</u>
TOTAL	\$969,362

4. Why not consider other options to reduce the budget rather than close a school? With the General Fund Budget reductions for 2008-09 combined with last year's reductions, SVUSD has cut more than \$16.7 million in just two years. Additionally, over the last six years in excess of \$15 million has been cut for a total reduction of \$33.7 million. It is projected that an additional \$12.5 million will need to be cut for 2009-10. All options for reducing the budget are on the table and they may still not be enough. The closure of the two schools would save the District nearly \$1 million per year, or only 1/12th of the needed cuts for 2009-10.

5. What are the factors which eliminated the other schools that were considered for closing? How were these factors ultimately applied to the two schools recommended for closure?

Utilizing committee input to identify critical factors to be addressed when considering a school for closure from the parents' perspective, the list included:

- Current enrollment
- Projected enrollment
- Space availability in the receiving school or schools
- Distances traveled
- Distances between schools
- Path of travel to schools
- Student residences and school locations
- Contiguous and Non-Contiguous attendance areas
- Location of special programs
- Support space

- Transportation needs
- Neighborhood schools and schools of attendance

The committee found it vital to develop measurable, objective criteria. Any other method would produce potentially biased and invalid results.

When it came to applying the factors to O'Neill and La Tierra, the committee focused on developing a plan that disrupted the least number of students while taking into account the multiple factors studied. Here is a summary of the information relevant to each school:

O'Neill Elementary

- *Disrupt the least number of students*
The projected enrollment for the 2009-10 school year has O'Neill as one of the lowest in the district.
- *Distance traveled to the new school*
Approximately 150 O'Neill students live in the contiguous attendance grids 730 and 750 that are adjacent to the school. The next closest schools (de Portola, Linda Vista, Montevideo) are less than one mile walking distance from O'Neill
- *Impact on the adjacent school(s)*
O'Neill students living in the contiguous attendance grids could be accommodated in the schools nearest to O'Neill. Assimilation can be accomplished by taking advantage of space availability at de Portola, Montevideo, and Del Lago with the final plan subject to updated enrollment projections.
- *Safe path of travel to the new school*
Students living in attendance grids 730 and 750 do not cross major streets (Jeronimo, La Paz, Muirlands, El Toro, Lake Forest Drive, etc. are considered major streets) while walking to de Portola providing the safest path of travel to school.
- *Reduce busing costs*
The O'Neill students residing in non-contiguous grids 865, 866, 875, and 876 live beyond the District Walk Distance guidelines and qualify for busing. There are no schools within the defined walking distance from these residential grids and students will qualify for busing regardless of the school of assignment. Therefore, reassigning these students to closer schools would not increase (and may slightly decrease) the transportation cost.

- Facilities utilization
O'Neill has a smaller number of classrooms and the fourth lowest usable acreage of all the 26 elementary schools. Therefore, O'Neill has a limited ability to assimilate students from other schools and/or expand to increase the number of classrooms and play space to accommodate more students.

La Tierra Elementary

- Disrupt the least number of students
The projected enrollment for 2009-10 school year has La Tierra as one of the lowest in the district.
- Distance traveled to the new school
Approximately 132 La Tierra students live in the contiguous attendance grids adjacent to the school and the next closest schools (Del Cerro and Gates) are within one mile walking distance from La Tierra.
- Impact on the adjacent school(s)
La Tierra students living in the contiguous attendance grids could be accommodated in the schools nearest to La Tierra by taking advantage of space availability at Del Cerro with the final plan subject to updated enrollment projections
- Safe path of travel to the new school
Students living in La Tierra attendance grids will cross one intersection at Muirlands and Alicia with crossing guard assistance anticipated providing the safest path of travel to school.
- Reduce busing costs
The distances from the contiguous attendance grids fall within the District Walking Distances and will not generate additional bus routes.
- Facilities utilization
La Tierra has a smaller number of classrooms and the fifth lowest usable acreage of all the 26 elementary schools. Therefore, La Tierra has a limited ability to assimilate students from other schools and/or expand to increase the number of classrooms and play space to accommodate more students.

6. What will become of the two school sites should they be closed?

No concrete plans are in place for the O'Neill and La Tierra school sites. In the event the decision is made to close the schools, the properties will remain a District asset and be utilized in a manner that is consistent with the District's educational programs.

7. What was the timeline for the process of recommending the closure of the schools?

The Facility Advisory Committee (FAC), the volunteer group who put together the report recommending the closure of O'Neill and La Tierra, has served the district for many years assisting the District in facilities and boundaries matters. The FAC is composed of parent representatives from each of the 34 SVUSD schools that have attendance boundaries, one representative from the Saddleback Valley Educators Association, one representative from the California School Employees Association, one representative from the Saddleback Valley Management Team, and two members of the District staff. All members contribute on a volunteer basis, thus there is no cost to running of the FAC. The timeline for this closure process is as follows:

November 2007 – Committee charged with formulating recommendation for closure.

December 2007 – Guidelines were established to ensure fairness and accuracy

January 2008 – List of Level I factors to consider were identified and a scoring system was developed. Applying the criteria, the committee voted unanimously to narrow the list of schools to be considered for closure down to seven (Olivewood, La Tierra, Santiago, Del Cerro, La Madera, O'Neill and de Portola).

February 2008 – List of Level II factors to be used to evaluate the remaining seven schools was established. Based on those criteria, the FAC unanimously voted to remove two schools from the list (La Madera and Olivewood).

April 2008 – FAC further studied the remaining five schools on the list and worked towards developing closure plans. Small groups examined enrollment projections for 2009-10 and all other relevant information learned throughout the process. The groups independently

achieved consensus on the same three schools to move forward with: Santiago, La Tierra and O'Neill.

May 2008 – After reviewing the Lake Forest Opportunity Study, it was decided that Santiago should continue to be studied since the potential for student growth from Lake Forest and the Great Park development appears imminent while the timing is uncertain.

November 2008 – With the state budget finally passed and next year's outlook bleak, the FAC report was presented to the board in an effort to provide the option of school closure as a money saving opportunity. Prior to the meeting, lawful posting of the agenda took place.

December 2008 – Public hearing on school closures took place. After hearing from the FAC at the board meeting in November, this was an opportunity for the Board to receive input from the communities potentially impacted.

8. What becomes of the staff and teachers at O'Neill and La Tierra?

The certificated staff will be moved to other schools where there are openings. They will not lose their jobs. A list of potential openings is not available as it depends on enrollment and staffing numbers at all sites – information not normally available until June 30. Classified support staff may also be placed at other schools, depending on seniority and openings at other sites. Again, these are not usually known until the end of the school year when enrollment, retirements and resignations are complete.

9. How many Choice students attend O'Neill Elementary? Were any Choice students turned down from attending O'Neill Elementary this year?

For the 2008-09 school year, O'Neill Elementary admitted nine Choice students out of thirty-three total applicants. Of the remaining applicants, nine went to other schools in the district, seven remain at their school of residence, and eight left the district altogether.

10. Considering O'Neill has the highest test scores of schools in our district with fewer than 600 students, why is it being recommended closure?

Test scores were not used by the FAC as criteria in determining which schools to recommend for closure. When charged with the job of re-searching schools for closure, the FAC did its job using the following assumptions:

- All schools in SVUSD have high quality teachers, administrators and staffs
- Supportive parents are actively involved at all of their children's schools
- All schools provide a caring, nurturing environment, and culture that encourages life long learning
- All students are important and are the number one priority

The size of the school relative to its score is not normally a dispositive factor. Here is a link to the California Department of Education website where users can search SVUSD scores:

<http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2008/Viewreport.asp>. Bigger schools and smaller schools are spread across the spectrum of highest to lowest test scores in SVUSD. There are *many* factors that go into how a school performs on standardized testing and the size of the enrollment is a minor one.

11. Is it fair that both schools recommended for closure are in the same city (Mission Viejo)?

As mentioned above, many factors were considered by the FAC in looking at which schools to recommend. City of residence was not one of them. Student residences and locations of schools, distances between schools, safe path of travel, and the location of special programs were considered. The fact that the results recommended two schools in the same city means nothing more than that the FAC felt those two schools best fit their criteria.

12. Is it true that O’Neill Elementary had been recommended for closing in the past?

Yes. A consulting firm recommended the closure of O’Neill Elementary in 1982. Several other schools were also recommended for closure as part of their analysis. None were closed.

13. With the two closures now official, what are the chances that the my child’s new school will be slated for closure next year?

The FAC Meeting Minutes that detail the process and which schools were more closely investigated for closure are available on-line at the SVUSD website or linked directly at this address:

http://www.svUSD.org/hp_images/7179/D59392-FAC%20Summary%20of%20Minutes.pdf

As you can see, all schools were initially studied but that list was whittled down to seven after the criteria and scoring were implemented. Those schools, Olivewood, La Tierra, Santiago, Del Cerro, La Madera, O’Neill, and De Portola, were then further investigated before the final recommendations were made to the Board. However, in looking at potential closures in the coming years, the FAC would basically have to begin this mandate from scratch. With enrollment being a major factor in the process, the influx of students at some of these schools, such as Del Cerro and De Portola, would eliminate them from the further closure consideration.

14. What are the reuse plans for La Tierra Elementary and O’Neill Elementary?

La Tierra:

The Special Education Preschool program at La Tierra will continue to occupy a significant portion of the campus. In addition, the Childcare Department will move from its current building at the District Office site to La Tierra. Smaller programs will also be moved to La Tierra. They are:

- Mommy & Me program (coming from Gates Elementary)
- TALK (coming from Santiago Elementary)
- Nurses (coming from the Silverado High School campus)

O'Neill:

The district is moving the Recreation Department and some Adult Education classes from their current locations to O'Neill Elementary. Recreation would like to add neighborhood programming to O'Neill. These and the Adult Ed programs will run during the daytime hours only. Additional parking will be added to the blacktop of the campus in order to keep cars off the streets.