

PUBLIC COMMENT REPORT (F3)

Justin Pickard, PRPE President

The challenges that we face as a district are ever-present, and one of the most daunting to remedy is rearing its head tonight when you address the report by the 7-11 Committee. Like many districts in California enrollment is a crucial variable for the viability and sustainability of our public education system. Enrollment will continue to have a large impact on us as we navigate the myriad of challenges that oftentimes are out of our control; such as affordable housing and employment opportunities for families. As a district and community, we need to address this now. Now is the time to come together to engage in meaningful discussion and planning, to take input from all stakeholders and develop a roadmap that will not only takes us through the pandemic, but lead us onto a path of reinventing and redefining who we are and what we offer the students and families in our community.

In reviewing the 7-11 Committee report, I have a hard time accepting the fourth recommendation in full. As much as I dislike the idea of having to close a school site, the factors the committee had to review in coming to its conclusion don't paint a great picture for our future especially in our current economic situation. My issue with it comes from the end of the recommendation that Georgia Brown be named the site for closure. The physical site's age, capacity, condition and renovation cost may show that it's the most feasible to close based on those factors, but I strongly disagree that those are the only factors that should go into making this decision. The community impact by closing, moving, or redistributing Georgia Brown may have longer lasting effects than the dollars and cents that we see in the report today.

In addition to other factors that need to go into the decision of closing an elementary site, I'm concerned with the process that the committee took to garner input from the community per the charge. Looking over the meeting minutes I see opportunities for public comment, with little participation from the community taking place. This is concerning on two levels; one it does not appear as though our community as a whole was aware of the process to participate, and two the method in which public input could be given was not one that best serves the demographic population that Georgia Brown serves. We need to be sure that the feedback we are given is authentic and truly represents our community. I understand the process of our board in simply accepting this report from the committee. I ask that as we move forward all stakeholders are able to communicate their concerns and input. Our families, teachers, staff, and surrounding community service centers, should all have a chance to come to the table on this matter. We can use this opportunity to create a stronger district that serves the needs of all its students, but we can only do so when all voices are heard.

Justin Pickard
PRPE President