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Published June 17th, 2015

## Tough Choices to Ease AUHSD School Crowding

*By Cathy Tyson*

A projected 820 new students are anticipated in the Acalanes Union High School District in 10 years time. How to accommodate all of those kids will be challenging, so the AUHSD governing board is starting to take a hard look at options to deal with the growth.

With the same space and more teenage bodies, obviously something's got to change. Although enrollment at Campolindo and Miramonte high schools are slated to gradually increase, at its recent meeting the school board focused mainly on Acalanes and Las Lomas high schools, which are nearing maximum capacity.

Looking at enrollment happens every year, so the district can project with a reasonable amount of accuracy how many students will be attending the four main AUHSD campuses in the future.

Enrollment at the Acalanes Center for Independent Study, and Transition schools is under a 100 students, so the focus is on the larger facilities.

Escalating student enrollments are projected throughout the district and are expected to climb from a total 2015 school year enrollment of 5,380 students in grades 9 through 12, gradually stepping up to an anticipated 6,200 students in 2025.

Las Lomas has the largest student population at 1,541 students, a good bit more cramped than the least crowded school, Miramonte, at 1,155 students this year.

Top of the possible solutions list was considering intra and interdistrict transfer policies. Intradistrict transfers are students who reside inside the AUHSD boundaries but wish to attend a different school within the district. Interdistrict transfers are students who reside outside the district boundaries who want to attend school in the AUHSD.

Las Lomas, almost bursting at the seams now, has been closed to interdistrict transfers due to school impaction, but there have been a few administrative placements.

For the 2015-16 school year, there are a total of 275 students anticipated to transfer from outside the district into Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte. Limiting those students coming in is one way to reduce the student population. The governing board recognizes that there are justifiable, compelling reasons for interdistrict transfers; it deals with transfers on a case-by-case basis, and may change the current policy.

Another option is to increase room availability, which could happen in a variety of ways: install portable classrooms, new construction, or convert office space or study halls to classrooms. Each option has positives and negatives.

"We believe the limiting factor is classroom space," said Superintendent John Nickerson, adding there's "not a lot of opportunity" for that at Las Lomas; the 58 classrooms are basically entirely occupied. A tight parking situation adds to the overall congestion there. "Acalanes had some easier solutions," he explained. Rooms 105 and 106 could be converted to classrooms, and study hall space could be moved elsewhere on campus.

School board members expressed concern over portables. Leasing a standard-size 24 by 40 foot portable costs \$7,000 per year, but the set-up costs are steep - roughly \$150,000 to bring electrical service out to the building(s), furniture, fire safety equipment, paving a pad to place the portable on, and more.

"Long-term portables don't answer the educational issue," said Board Member Kathy Coppersmith. Newcomer to the board, Bob Hockett, saw it as an east/west issue and suggested shifting students west to less crowded campuses, or finding a way to utilize the Del Valle facility.

Also on the table: offering an eight-period day, creating a block schedule for seven periods, opening a magnet school or a Las Lomas satellite school at the Del Valle campus, and finally, shifting school boundaries.

Board Member Nancy Kendzierski wondered about timing, recognizing that many of these solutions take a fair amount of time. "At what point do we hit a crisis level?" she asked.

Conversations about possible solutions will continue in the fall. More data gathering and analysis is

slated to occur this summer. In the meantime, Board Member Richard Whitmore said he is aware of "a low level of parent hysteria" in the community.

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