

FUTURE FOCUSED
SCHOOLS TEAM

REPORT

January 23, 2018

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I. INTRODUCTION

Approximately, one year ago the Board of Education of the Beverly Hills Unified School District (the “District”) approached Superintendent Bregy, indicating that the District’s budget must be reduced by several million dollars. Superintendent Bregy responded that such cuts would severely impact the quality of education in the District and he requested additional time to address the situation. The 2017-2018 Future Focused Schools Team (“FFST”), was formed to explore possible reconfiguration of the District with the stated task of:

Developing viable configuration options, and to improve and enhance educational opportunities for students while ensuring long-term financial sustainability for the District.¹

A. WHAT IS FFST?

FFST is a diverse group comprised of:

- Current and former teachers
- Current administrators at the elementary, middle and high school levels
- Parents of current and past students in the BHUSD
- Parents of students in nearby private schools
- Alumni of the BHUSD
- Beverly Hills Community members.²

While engaging in our task, the FFST kept our mission statement in mind, along with the District’s mission statement:

To inspire and enable each student to achieve academic excellence and meet the goals of college and career readiness.³

¹ [FFST Page on BHUSD.org](#)

² [Future Focused Schools Team Members](#)

³ [BHUSD Mission Statement](#)

B. HOW OUR DISTRICT IS FUNDED

1. Historical Background

California school districts are funded in two basic manners. Most districts are funded on a per student basis formula (sometimes referred to as LCFF or ADA). Under LCFF, a district is primarily funded based on the number of students in the district.

Prior to 1968, California school districts were primarily funded from local property taxes. Since Beverly Hills had high property values, the revenue from its property taxes were high and our schools had significant funding. Two significant events dramatically affected funding. First, in 1968, under the legal opinion in the case *Serrano v. Priest*, the State became legally obligated to equalize per pupil funding throughout California, which resulted in the State funding school districts on a per student basis and our district receiving less State funding. Second, in 1978, Proposition 13 capped property taxes at 1% of the value of the property, with 2% annual increases permitted. This had the effect of lowering property tax revenue.

Starting in the 2010-2011 school year, our district was no longer funded per student, but under a Basic Aid formula. Under Basic Aid, we receive funding (as a lump sum) based on a percentage formula of Los Angeles County property taxes, regardless of the number of students we have. Under California State Law, when a school district's percentage of local property tax revenue reaches a certain level, it automatically becomes a Basic Aid School District. Since the 2010-2011 school year, our district became a Basic Aid School and has remained a Basic Aid School to the present date.

2. Revenues and Expenses

Total District revenue for 2016-2017 was approximately \$68 Million. Revenue was generated from the following sources:⁴

● Property Tax Revenue	71%
● Local Revenue (primarily JPA)	21%
● State Revenue	4%
● Federal Revenue	3%
● Lottery	1%

⁴ [BHUSD Basic Aid Revenue Comparison](#)

Expenses for the District can be broken down into the following basic categories:

• Teachers' Salaries	39.6%
• Employee Benefits	17.4%
• Contracted Services	16.6%
• Classified Salaries	13.6%
• Other Certificated Salaries	9.2%
• Books and Supplies	2.7%
• Other	0.9%

C. ENROLLMENT DECLINE

The decline can be primarily attributed to the elimination of the permit program, which allowed out of District students to attend BHUSD schools, and a flight to private schools due to the perceived decline in educational excellence and the on-going construction. District enrollment has significantly declined in the last decade. We have approximately 20% fewer students today (3,924) than we did ten years ago (4,900+). In the 2009-2010 school year, Beverly Hills High School had 2,201 students. It now has 1,458 students.

D. LIMITATIONS

FFST did not independently verify information provided to us by the District. For example, no forensic accounting or independent research was undertaken by the FFST. We relied on the demographic, enrollment and financial information provided by the District in response to our requests for information.

We have been told that the District faces a significant structural deficit. While we did review budgets and audited financial reports, the FFST has not independently verified the financial information and appreciates that there is public skepticism about the severity of any structural deficit.

E. OUR FOCUS

FFST focused our discussions on ways to improve opportunities and support for 6th - 8th grade students. We recognize that many other complex issues and challenges face the District, and this report should not be interpreted to mean that the middle school is the only area deserving of study or change.

We analyzed strategies to maximize the quality of educational opportunities for our students, including an analysis of ways to achieve efficiencies in order to maximize the District's resources. The FFST recognizes that the District's resources are limited and that any District must have its finances in order to sustain educational excellence, but we were not guided by achieving any specific financial goal, such as reducing a certain amount of expense from the existing budget.

In furtherance of our mission, we met, studied, discussed and debated various options and configurations that would move the District forward in a positive direction. Early in the process, we visited each school site and set our goals. The key concepts we all agreed to include openness to ideas presented by others, flexibility and respect. We held brainstorming sessions and identified information we needed, including sources of District revenue and expenses, campus capacity (current and post-construction) enrollment levels, educational theories and concepts, advantages and disadvantages of various educational concepts and designs, and how we compare with other districts.

We had several meetings in which we broke out into groups to further develop various possibilities, with each group independently presenting an idea or concept to the group. The remaining meetings involved debating ideas, discussing community input, voting on which options to present and recommend and preparing this report and the presentation to the Board of Education.

E. PAST RECONFIGURATION STUDIES

The topic of middle school configuration in BHUSD has been studied many times since Prop 13 and *Serrano v. Priest* changed how our district is funded. In our work, we were informed of past reports that studied the issue in 1991, 2003, and 2009.⁵ All recommended that the District be reconfigured to include a consolidated middle school.

For example, the 1991 Report recommended creation of a separate middle school because "the delivery of a more effective educational program would be best facilitated in the context of a separate middle school." The 1991 study listed certain "postulates" and we restate them here, (nearly verbatim) as they remain apt:

1. The District should aggressively explore alternative ways of utilizing (maximizing the impact of) dwindling financial resources.
2. Change for the sake of change is foolish, but resistance to change based on blind reverence for the past is a prescription for mediocrity and stagnation.

⁵ Past BHUSD Reconfiguration Studies: [1991 report](#); 2009: [Agenda](#), [Notes](#), [Presentation 1](#), [Presentation 2](#), [Presentation 3](#)

3. Financial limitations are not necessarily a barrier to creative change.
4. As we chart new educational waters, we need not “throw the baby out with the bath water.” We should build on our many strengths, maintaining programs that meet our students’ needs and fully utilize the considerable skills of our high quality staff.
5. Educational change requires substantial dialogue and involvement of all parts of the school community and the community at large. Just as perceptions are sometimes as significant as reality, so too is process often as important as substance.
6. We must be open and willing to take a penetrating look at delivery of our middle school program. Albeit potentially uncomfortable, such discomfort is often a precursor to quality change.
7. We should strive to be ahead of the curve instead of keeping up with change.
8. We must recognize that the pace of effective change is directly related to the community’s readiness for change. Some change can be made quickly while others require dialogue, adequate planning and lead time for implementation.

E. THE NEED FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

We are convinced that the current offerings for middle school students are inadequate and can be improved with consolidation. With the decline in enrollment resulting in fewer 6th – 8th graders on each campus, in the current configuration no school can offer a comprehensive program that adopts the middle school philosophy.⁶ The tenets of middle school philosophy, as set forth in *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents* by the Association for Middle Level Education, are:

- Interdisciplinary teams in middle school
- Robust curricular options
- Robust extracurricular options
- Flexible grouping of students
- Concentration of resources to best meet student needs
- Teacher collaboration opportunities
- Professional learning opportunities

⁶ *This We Believe in Action: Implementing Successful Middle School Levels*, by Association for Middle Education; [Middle School Teaming Philosophy](#)

Many programs currently in place are not consistent across the four K-8 campuses, resulting in great inequity and missed opportunities for students and teachers.

We recommend that the District design and implement a middle school action plan with the goal of offering all students equitable access to a comprehensive program of academic courses, enrichment opportunities and social emotional supports.

II. CURRENT REALITIES

In analyzing possible changes in configuration of the schools, it is critical to begin with a frank assessment of where we are currently as a District. Overall, the elementary school grades (TK - 5th) appear to be succeeding in their core mission. As such, we are not surprised that we have not witnessed a significant decline in enrollment in the lower grades over the past decade.⁷ The current delivery of education in the middle school grades (6th - 8th) is, however, in need of improvement.⁸

The current structure in middle school limits educational opportunities. Having four middle schools creates systemic issues that are difficult to address by simply “better teaching” and “better administration.” These include:

- Inequitable access to elective coursework
- Traveling teachers
- Smaller honors and special education programming
- Inflexible master scheduling
- Limited collaboration for teachers on curriculum and student support
- Limited professional development and mentoring opportunities for teachers
- Limited middle school-specific leadership and athletic opportunities
- Inequitable distribution of academic programs
(i.e. Robotics/ Science Olympiad)

⁷ [DRAFT Student Population Forecast, School Year 2017/2018 Report](#)

⁸ [School District Size Comparison, Tenants of Middle School Philosophy](#)

- Limited pathways to high school curriculum
- Limited sharing of best practices

The breadth, scope and quality of education currently provided in BHUSD middle school is uneven among the schools, and often uneven within the same school. The electives offered at each middle school vary significantly from one another, resulting in significant differences in the opportunities provided to the students of the District.⁹ Thus, both the quality of education and the opportunities being presented vary substantially from campus to campus. Students enter high school with varying degrees of readiness.

Compared with other school districts, BHUSD spends significantly more per student, while offering less robust educational opportunities, both in type and quality.¹⁰ Our District's standardized test scores have fallen below those of other top districts.¹¹ Moreover, our middle schools' offerings in sports, music, science, debate, robotics all lag behind other comparative districts.

In short, while some of the middle schools' programs are stronger than others, overall, our middle schools are falling significantly short of our community's standards. The reasons for this are multi-faceted and include a series of divided Boards of Education, high turnover for superintendents and principals, and major construction on several campuses.

Furthermore, having four middle schools creates a systemic structural challenge. Despite the decline in enrollment in the last ten years,¹² the school sites have remained the same size with no reduction in school space and no meaningful reduction in staffing. Thus, roughly the same number of teachers teach at the same number of sites, but they are teaching significantly fewer students. We have under-enrolled classes:¹³ For example, there are 7, 12, 14 and 18 students at each of the middle schools' French classes. There are 12 students in Algebra Honors and 14 students in Math 7 Honors at Horace Mann. There are 10 students in Beginning Art and 10 students in Advanced Choir at Hawthorne. There are 11 students in Beginning Orchestra at Beverly Vista and there are 14 students in Beginning Band and 14 students in Advanced Band at El Rodeo. The structure of four middle schools leads to an inefficient use of our teachers and staff.

⁹ [Middle School Electives](#)

¹⁰ [Dollars Spent ADA Comparison](#)

¹¹ [CAASPP Math Scores, CAASPP ELA Scores](#)

¹² [BHUSD Decline in Enrollment](#)

¹³ [Middle School Inequities](#)

Due to the decline in enrollment and the fact that there has been no corresponding change in staffing and site administration, we are not utilizing our scarce resources efficiently. We spend more per student than other comparative schools without measurably better results.

At each of our current middle schools, we do not have the “critical mass” of students necessary to create a middle school culture of excellence, establish true interdisciplinary planning, and foster professional camaraderie. Currently, middle school teachers are teaching multiple grade levels, but these teachers cannot attend all of the 6th grade, 7th grade and 8th grade meetings on professional development. Moreover, meeting other teachers teaching the same subjects and grade level is made difficult because the teachers are spread out on four different campuses. Much more significant interdisciplinary planning, professional camaraderie, coordination and communication should be part of an improvement plan.

Teachers can and do learn from one another and master teachers can more effectively mentor other teachers at the same site. Team teaching, professional development, and strong camaraderie has led to better results and a positive culture at the elementary level when compared with our 6th – 8th grade middle schools, with corresponding positive results.

Based on the District’s current enrollment of 3,915 and the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year audited revenue number of \$68 Million, **we are now spending \$17,375 per student**. Compared with most other districts, we are spending more per student than other comparable districts.

- Beverly Hills Unified School District: \$14,663 per student*
- San Marino Unified School District: \$12,689 per student
- Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District: \$12,521 per student
- Manhattan Beach Unified School District: \$10,660 per student
- La Canada Unified School District: \$10,305 per student
- Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District: \$9,831 per student
- Las Virgenes Unified School District: \$9,150 per student

* *Please note, this dollar amount is lower than the current \$17,375, because the information provided to us regarding the comparison with other districts was not for the current year.*

III. OPTIONS STUDIED

A. CURRENT MODEL: FOUR TK-8 AND ONE HIGH SCHOOL

Cost Savings: This is the current model and offers no savings without change.

Advantages:

No Disruption to the Community - The K-8 Beverly Hills model has strong support in the Beverly Hills Community and any disruption in that model will cause both discomfort and objections from the Community. It is viewed with real emotional connection by many, particularly those who attended schools in the District. It is a connection to the past, when the District was synonymous with excellence in education.

Less Disruption to Students - Having students experience only one transition from K-12 is a potential advantage of the K-8 model. By staying on the same campus for longer, students and families have a longer opportunity to form lasting friendships at their “community” school. Students, particularly in the transition year, are not disrupted and can better focus on academics, rather than re-establishing themselves socially. On the other hand, many high school freshmen experience adjustment problems, which result in poor academic grades. Since students are at the same campus longer, teachers and administrators, students and their families can establish longer lasting relationships with the teachers and administration, which may result in more parental involvement with the campus through the middle school years.

Keeps the Students Younger - A K-8 model may keep students “younger” longer, with certain studies indicating that this leads to healthier social emotional development. On the other hand, some students transition to the High School emotionally unprepared, in part, due to being “sheltered” in the K-8 model.

Disadvantages:

Less Effective Lesson Planning - Teachers are stretched thin teaching multiple grade levels and subjects. Under the current model, teachers are tasked with teaching multiple grade levels and multiple subjects. For example, there are teachers who must create lesson plans for 6th, 7th and 8th grade English.

Lack of Interdisciplinary Teaching, Less Professional Development Opportunities and Less Coordination - There is less of an opportunity for teachers of similar subjects and grade levels to coordinate with one another and learn from one another and less opportunity to instill the middle school philosophy. Moreover, under this model it is

extremely difficult for teachers to function as a cohesive team in support of their students' academic and emotional needs.

Less Robust Offerings, Less Electives and Less Equity - The K–8 model as currently configured cannot offer the same number of electives or athletic programs as a consolidated middle school and the offerings are inconsistent and unequal across the four middle schools.

Not Financially Efficient - The K–8 model as currently configured is not efficient, as many classes across the District are under-enrolled.

B. CLOSING A SCHOOL SITE: THREE TK-8 AND ONE HIGH SCHOOL

Cost Savings: By closing one school site, the District staff estimated savings of approximately \$4.1 Million in staffing costs with the same level of current programming being offered. *Please note:* The FFST did not independently verify this estimate.

Advantages:

Less Disruption to the Community - The K-8 Beverly Hills model is widely respected and liked by the Beverly Hills Community and any disruption in that model will cause significant backlash in the Community and significant division within the Community. By keeping the K-8 model, disruption is limited by closing a school site versus changing the structure at all four of the TK-8 schools.

Less Disruption to Students - Having students experience one less transition is an advantage of the K-8 model. By staying on the same campus for longer, students and families have a longer opportunity to form lasting friendships at their “community” school. In addition, students, particularly in the transition year, are not disrupted and can better focus on academics, rather than being forced to re-establish themselves socially. Finally, having the same teachers and administrators for longer periods of time, students and their families are better able to establish solid relationships with the teachers and administration. As a result, parents are more apt to stay involved with the campus through the middle school years.

Keeps the Students Younger - A K-8 model may keep students “younger” longer, with certain studies indicating that this leads to healthier social emotional development.. On the other hand, some students transition to the High School emotionally unprepared, in part, due to being “sheltered” in the K-8 model.

Disadvantages:

Less Effective Lesson Planning - Teachers are being stretched thin in having to teach multiple grade levels and subjects directly affecting their educational effectiveness. Under the current model, teachers are being tasked with teaching multiple grade levels and multiple subjects. For example, there are teachers now who have to lesson plan for 6th, 7th and 8th grade, instead of simply teaching and lesson planning for one grade level. While the elimination of one of the school sites will help alleviate some of the issues, doing so will only alleviate, but not fully address the issues and the middle school philosophy cannot be as effectively implemented as it can in a consolidated middle school.

Lack of Interdisciplinary Teaching, Less Professional Development Opportunities and Less Coordination - There is less of an opportunity for teachers of similar subjects and grade levels to coordinate with one another and learn from one another and less opportunity to instill the middle school philosophy as compared to a consolidated middle school. While under this model there is an improvement to the four TK-8 model, it is still more difficult for teachers to function as a cohesive team in support of their students' academic and emotional needs when compared to a consolidated middle school model.

Less Robust Offerings and Electives - The K-8 model is not able to offer the same number of electives or athletic programs as a consolidated middle school. While closing one school site will help alleviate some of the issues, doing so is not as effective as a consolidated middle school model.

C. 6th-8th CONSOLIDATED MIDDLE SCHOOL: THREE TK-5, ONE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ONE HIGH SCHOOL

Cost Savings: With one consolidated middle school, the District staff estimated savings of approximately \$3 Million in staffing costs with the same level of current programming being offered. *Please note:* The FFST did not independently verify this estimate.

Advantages:

More Efficient - It is a more efficient model than the current K-8 model.

More Robust Academics and Electives - More subject and elective choices could be offered to the students.

More Opportunities for Students - Students will have an opportunity to meet new students and form friendships with a more diverse and larger group of students offering them more established peer connections when they enter high school. In addition, students will be able to explore more areas of interest (*i.e.* robotics, chess, coding, the arts, music) prior to entering high school, creating pathways to a successful and positive high school experience.

More Effective Lesson Planning - Teachers will have more ability to focus as they will be teaching fewer subjects and grade levels. For example, a teacher now having to lesson plan for 6th, 7th and 8th grade English, could lesson plan for one grade only (*i.e.* teaching 3 different classes of 8th grade English, instead of one class each of 6th, 7th and 8th grade English resulting in more in-depth study and attention.)

Better Interdisciplinary Teaching, More Professional Development and More Coordination - There is a much greater opportunity to institute the middle school philosophy, allowing teachers of similar subjects and grade levels to coordinate with one another and learn from one another. There will be more opportunities for professional development, coordination among teachers and mentoring of teachers in a consolidated middle school model.

Better Opportunity for Counseling and Intervention - There will be more opportunities for counseling and intervention due to the pooling of resources. For example, at a consolidated middle school there would be a full-time counselor that specializes in middle school student issues, versus having part-time counselors at each of K-8 schools, who are not always present when needed as they split their time between school sites.

Disadvantages:

Disruption to the Community - The K-8 model is widely respected and liked by the Beverly Hills Community and any disruption in that model may result in significant division in the community.

An Additional Transition for Students - A consolidated Middle School model will require students to transition an additional time to middle school.

Less Involvement by Parents in Middle School - There is a risk that parents will be less involved with the Middle School as they have not established a relationship with the Middle School during the elementary school years (although even in the current configuration, parents become less involved overall as their kids move to the higher grades.)

D. CONSOLIDATED MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ELIMINATION OF SCHOOL SITE: TWO TK-5, ONE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ONE HIGH SCHOOL

Cost Savings: By closing one school site and opening one consolidated middle school, the District staff estimated savings of approximately \$4.4 Million in staffing costs with the same level of current programming being offered. *Please note:* The FFST did not independently verify this estimate.

Advantages:

More Efficient - This plan includes a more efficient model and has additional financial savings over both the current K-8 model and the model of a consolidated middle school and a reduction of a school site.

More Robust Academics and Electives - More subject and electives could be offered to the students.

More Effective Lesson Planning - Teachers will have more ability to focus as they will be teaching fewer subjects and grade levels. For example, a teacher now having to lesson plan for 6th, 7th and 8th grade English, could lesson plan for one grade only (*i.e.* teaching 3 different classes of 8th grade English, instead of one class each of 6th, 7th and 8th grade English resulting in more in-depth study and attention.)

Better Interdisciplinary Teaching, More Professional Development and More Coordination - There is a much greater opportunity to instill the middle school philosophy, with more of an opportunity for teachers of similar subjects and grade levels to coordinate with one another and learn from one another. There will be more opportunities for professional development, coordination among teachers and mentoring of teachers in a consolidated middle school model.

Better Opportunity for Counseling and Intervention - There will be more opportunities for counseling and intervention due to the pooling of resources. For example, there would be a full-time counselor at a consolidated middle school, versus having part-time counselors at each of K-8 schools and not always being present when needed.

Disadvantages:

Disruption to the Community - The disruption to the community is significant in that the K-8 model would be eliminated along with closure of a school site.

An Additional Transition for Students - A consolidated middle school model will require one additional transition to middle school.

Less Involvement by Parents in Middle School - There is a risk that parents will be less involved with the middle school as they have not established a relationship with the middle school during the elementary school years (although even in the current configuration, parents become less involved overall as their kids move to the higher grades).

IV. RECOMMENDATION:

Based primarily on the ability to deliver a more robust and better educational experience, **FFST recommends that the District move towards reconfiguration with one consolidated 6th - 8th grade middle school.**

The ability to achieve a critical mass of middle school students, as well as a critical mass of middle school teachers and administrative staff, would offer a structure to develop a first-rate education for our students. While other structures offer advantages, it is the opinion of FFST that those advantages are outweighed by the educational advantages offered by a consolidated middle school. Reconfiguration can release resources to invest into programming excellence and student success and fully implement the middle school philosophy at the consolidated middle school.

Nineteen (19) FFST members voted in favor of the recommendation, one (1) abstained and one (1) voted against the recommendation (favoring three TK-8 model). The dissenting member believes that the middle school philosophy could be adopted and implemented in the TK-8 model and that the other advantages of the TK-8 model set forth earlier in this report made that model preferable.

A. RECONFIGURATION CONCERNS TO BE ADDRESSED

FFST recommends that the District take a methodical, tiered approach to the implementation of the proposed reconfiguration.

SLOW, STUDIED, STEADY

The community has expressed frustration over the speed with which the process has moved and that the proposed changes will be foisted upon them without a fully vetted implementation plan. FFST is sensitive to the community's concerns regarding the process. FFST finds community input to be tremendously valuable and should be sought in any event. It is important to move forward in a manner that provides an opportunity for more community input, ensures the community's input is taken into consideration, and considers the willingness of the community to adopt the change.

FFST has concluded that the implementation of the consolidated middle school should not be undertaken in the 2018-19 school year owing to skepticism that an effective implementation plan can be developed and executed within that time frame. Moreover, even if it could, it would feel "rushed" to the community. Since any change would significantly impact students, parents and teachers, having a well-thought out plan that is communicated in advance of implementation allows the community to make necessary adjustments in their personal lives to adapt to the proposed plan.

FFST believe that it is essential to have a full implementation plan in place that inspires confidence before action is taken. While it was not in this committee's scope of responsibilities to develop a full implementation plan, set forth below are examples of suggested components of an effective implementation plan. For any change to be successful, there will have to be a fully vetted implementation plan in place. We recommend a dedicated task force to address issues such as logistics, curriculum, facilities, finance, community, etc.

B. IDEAS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL MODEL

The Committee recommends a multi-tiered approach to ensure the least amount of disruption. This would require taking interim steps as part of the implementation plan. If the Board of Education adopts the FFST recommendations, we recommend appointing an implementation task force to study and make recommendations regarding interim steps and a detailed plan including optimal location for the middle school.

For example, the implementation task force could decide to close El Rodeo temporarily, while it is redesigned as a middle school. During that period, BHUSD will gain experience as a district with three TK-8th grade campuses. While these schools are operating, the District could assess how effectively the education is being delivered by the three TK-8th campuses. This course of action would also allow for El Rodeo to be constructed without any students (and thus possibly at a faster pace with possible cost savings) and be developed as a consolidated middle school.

It is possible, however, that the implementation task force could determine that El Rodeo is not a suitable site for a consolidated middle school because redesigning El Rodeo into a middle school would cause too many additional delays or that it would be too expensive. Additional facts would need to be ascertained and studied in greater detail as part of any implementation plan.

Prior to implementation of any change, the Board of Education should review a comprehensive master implementation plan, clearly setting forth possible master schedules (delineating classes, electives, departmental collaboration, etc.), financial costs and transition issues, including but not limited to the possible effect on Title 1 revenue caused by consolidation.

This type of staged or tiered implementation, would offer the District maximum flexibility going forward. It would allow the District to move forward in implementing a consolidated middle school. It would also offer the District several “off-ramps” if the District later elected to simply keep three TK-8th grade campuses (or revert to four TK-8th campuses if there is an increase in enrollment). It will also allow for the District to keep the K-8 model, if the implementation plan reveals serious issues or deficiencies that have not yet been contemplated or revealed. The additional time allows for a consolidated middle school to be built with real design elements to enhance the middle school experience.

The FFST does not have sufficient information to recommend or advocate that any particular site be reconfigured as the middle school. The above example illustrates the need for a comprehensive implementation plan that studies in detail all the issues that would be involved in switching from the K-8 model.

Any implementation plan should address possible redeployment of a closed school site and the complicated legal issues that surround a possible closure of a school site: Could the site house the administration offices? Could it house a Community College or UCLA Extension campus? Could it generate additional revenue for the District by leasing out the space? Is it subject to conversion as a Charter School?

V. RELATED MATTERS

A. SELLING/DEVELOPING/LEASING THE DISTRICT OFFICE

It was generally felt that the District Office could be moved to the High School and the District Office could be developed and leased and sold to fund an endowment that would offer the District a future and steady source of additional income. Further study on this issue is required.

B. THE NEED FOR CLARITY ON DISTRICT'S FINANCES

FFST recommends that prior to making a final choice on how the proposed plan is implemented, the District should have not only a full comprehension of the District's financial realities, but it is imperative that those facts be clearly communicated to the community. This has not been done. There is current distrust and confusion in the community regarding the District's finances. While FFST understands the need to present a budget to LACOE and the fact that the budget necessarily has some estimates, placeholders and best guesses, there appears to be a significant gap between the budget and the financially audited numbers without a clear explanation from the District to the community as to why the audited numbers (*i.e.* year-end numbers) vary so significantly from the budgets submitted from LACOE. Thus, when the District refers to a structural budget deficit, but then the budget numbers being cited are revised, the community interprets such revisions as proof that the financial numbers cannot be relied upon. The District would be well-advised to issue a financial summary to the community to ensure that the District and community are working from the same set of financial information – and that the financial information can be trusted and independently verified. Moreover, when the District states that there is a “structural deficit” it should make clear whether the District is referring to a projected budget or actual year-end audited numbers of revenue and expenses.

Creating a financial document that the Board of Education adopts in a unanimous fashion would be helpful in communicating to the community and establishing a baseline set of facts that everyone on the Board of Education can agree.

VI. CONCLUSION

Our District is almost 100 years old and many of the families attending our schools today are the children of parents and grandparents who attended our schools. We respect tradition. We respect our community. We respect our School Board's service to our community. We respect the unique qualities of our schools. We respect the sacred mission of our schools to foster an enriched academic environment that will allow each individual student to reach his or her potential and to educate tomorrow's leaders. Horace Mann, the public school educator after whom one of our schools is named, said: "Let us not be content to wait and see what will happen, but give us the determination to make the right things happen."

FFST was assembled to assist the District by making an honest assessment about how it is adapting into the 21st Century. We were brought together because our school system is no longer achieving the excellence which had once attracted many of us to this great community and which our community still deserves.

No one here will question whether the world is complex and changing – and with it, so are its expectations, demands, and opportunities. But are the Beverly Hills schools – especially our middle schools - living up to that mission? Are we changing with the world around us?

We advocate in favor of a mindful solution to the problems in our district of declining enrollment and limited resources: a solution that integrates our long-term goals with our short-term challenges and discomfort with change. We believe that, as a group, the FFST has taken the first step to bringing much-needed change to our district by debating all sides of the middle school issue and realizing that there are good arguments on all sides.

There's an old story about two people coming before a judge. One guy tells his side of the story and the judge says, "You're right." The other guy tells his side of the story and the judge says, "You're right." They say, "We can't both be right," and the judge says, "That's right." The FFST believes that this issue is not a simple one of right and wrong, nor one that should be decided as a choice between this way or that, or even a "compromise". It is an issue that requires deep and complete study through a variety of lenses, including but not limited to historical tradition of our community, academic, financial, facilities, social/emotional lenses, not locking into a position without community input, in order to implement a win-win solution for all key stakeholders. We believe that by proceeding with a SLOW, STUDIED, and STEADY approach to the middle school model, we will achieve that win-win integrated solution.

VII. APPENDIX OF FOOTNOTES

- (1) [FFST Page on BHUSD.org](#)
- (2) [Future Focused Schools Team Members](#)
- (3) [BHUSD Mission Statement](#)
- (4) [BHUSD Basic Aid Revenue Comparison](#)
- (5) Past BHUSD Reconfiguration studies: [1991 Report](#); 2009: [Agenda](#), [Notes](#), [Presentation 1](#), [Presentation 2](#), [Presentation 3](#)
- (6) *This We Believe in Action: Implementing Successful Middle School Levels*, by Association for Middle Education; [Middle School Teaming Philosophy](#)
- (7) [DRAFT Student Population Forecast, School Year 2017/2018 Report](#)
- (8) [School District Size Comparison](#), [Tenants of Middle School Philosophy](#)
- (9) [Middle School Electives](#)
- (10) [Dollars Spent ADA Comparison](#)
- (11) [CAASPP Math Scores](#), [CAASPP ELA Scores](#)
- (12) [BHUSD Decline in Enrollment](#)
- (13) [Middle School Inequities](#)