

# Roseville



2/11/09

## Q&A: Eureka School slated to close; so what's next?

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It's the end of the road for Eureka Elementary School. For real, this time.

After more than a year of wrangling with the issue, trustees this week unanimously approved closing Granite Bay's Eureka Elementary School – the Eureka Union Elementary District's oldest existing school, dating back to 1947 – in an effort to close a growing budget gap. The closure goes into effect beginning in the 2009-2010 school year.

Although hardly unexpected – trustees last year approved the closure, then reversed themselves temporarily – the decision means big changes for families whose children currently attend the fourth- through sixth-grade campus. Here are some answers to questions many families still have about the closure.

- **My children currently attend Eureka; where will they go now?**

It depends on which junior high boundary you're in. Eureka students who would continue on to Olympus Junior High school will finish out their primary years at the grades 4-6 Excelsior Elementary in Roseville. If you live in the Cavitt Junior High attendance area, your children will go to grades 4-6 Ridgeview Elementary.

- **What is the reason for the closure?**

Because of declining student enrollment, the district needs to reduce facilities to save costs, officials say. Add to that a state budget crisis that's sapping funding, and the district says it needs to save \$1.4 million in each of the next four years. Closing Eureka provides ongoing savings of \$450,000 per year, according to district estimates.

- **Is there opposition to the closure?**

Some parents have spoken out against the closure, questioning whether the district would really save the estimated funds and whether additional planning could alleviate the need to close a school. But many families appear resigned to the change; no one spoke against the plan at Tuesday night's meeting.

- **How will the other schools house the additional students from Eureka?**

Existing schools should be able to handle the incoming Eureka students without adding additional portables, said former Superintendent Ron Feist, who is now working as a consultant on the transition. Excelsior can handle 600 students and will be at capacity; the dual-campus Oakhills/Ridgeview can take 1,080 students, and enrollment for next year is expected at 1,025.

- **How will the transition work?**

In the weeks ahead, teachers will begin discussions with students about making the move to a new school, said Heidi Dettwiler, Eureka's principal. Students in each grade level will also take a field trip to their new campus in March; a parent's night is also scheduled for later this month.

- **I thought more than just one school was closing and the grade levels were changing. What happened?**

Correct. Trustees first approved closing both Eureka and Excelsior elementaries and merging the dual-campus Oakhills/Ridgeview schools, while also shifting grade configurations to a more traditional K-5 and 6-8 setup. Then they decided to keep Excelsior open and instead close Maidu. But officials say that plan would actually add costs due to construction needed at surviving schools needed to take on so many new students.

- **Will the district have to close another school?**

The district anticipates a school closure is necessary for every 500-student drop in enrollment, which at current trends won't be necessary for several years. A long-term facilities plan is expected in the months ahead that will spell out in advance what would happen in various scenarios.

- **What happens to the Eureka campus now?**

Expect "for lease" signs soon. Several parties have expressed interest in renting out at least part of the facility, officials said. But with high vacancy rates, it's unclear when the first deal will be struck.

- **Is the district making other cuts?**

Yes. Drastic measures are still needed to keep the district solvent in the current budget mess. Trustees this week approved a variety of budget cuts accounting shifts to save an additional \$720,000 next year. But the toughest choices – the kind that will impact popular programs such as music, libraries, special education and computers – will be made in the weeks ahead.

- **Where can I find more information?**

The district's Web site maintains a page on the reconfiguration plan. You can find it at <http://www.eureka-usd.k12.ca.us>