Post-visit email to Dr. Su

On Oct. 21, 2024, HMCRA PFC President Joanna Lin replied to the pre-visit email to Dr. Wayne to address Dr. Su:

Subject: Preparing for HMCRA visit 10/16

Hi Dr. Su,

The Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy community welcomes your commitment to strengthen and repair the district's relationships with public school families.

When Dr. Wayne met with our school community last week, he did not address the questions in my Oct. 14 email or additional questions subsequently shared by our principal. These are still important questions for SFUSD to answer. The district owes public school communities transparency and accountability about its now-shelved school closure process and methodology, and assurance that it will not repeat the same mistakes in the future.

As some members of the Harvey Milk community stated tonight in an email to Dr. Khanna (with recipients of this email CC'd), the fallout of the school closure list has harmed our communities, endangering enrollment not only at targeted schools but also in SFUSD at large. Our public schools cannot afford this reputational damage and breach of trust.

Please let me know when you and your staff intend to address our questions.

Thank you,
Joanna

Post-visit email to SFUSD re: school closure methodology

On Oct. 21, 2024, HMCRA parents sent the following email to Dr. Ritu Khanna, Board of Education commissioners, Supervisor Mandelman and staff, members of the school stabilization team, Interim Superintendent Maria Su, and Enrollment Center Executive Director Lauren Koehler:

Subject: [Action requested] Repair harm to schools targeted for closure

Dear Dr. Khanna and team,

Thank you for your time and for reaching out to clarify our concerns. We were happy to hear that the school closure process has been canceled for the 2025-26 school year. However, we remain concerned that the previously-released school closure list has caused significant reputational damage to targeted schools. **The district must act immediately to minimize the fallout and harm caused by the release of a list based on a critically flawed methodology**.

SFUSD has caused serious reputational damage to all the schools on the published list which could become a self-fulfilling prophecy and unjustly lead to under-enrollment in these schools in the future. Families are understandably hesitant to select schools for their children if they feel those schools are a target for potential future closures. For example, **HMCRA has immediately seen a 35% decrease in school tour interest by prospective parents** as compared to last year.

Dr. Khanna, we urge you and your team to work with the BoE and SFUSD, including the Enrollment Center, **to take action now to mitigate and repair the damage** done as much as possible. We ask that you and the BoE:

1. Publish a clear and strong statement that the process used to develop this list and the composite score methodology was flawed, and that **the list and methodology used will not be considered in any future efforts around potential school closures.**
2. Update the SFUSD website to remove any identification of schools on the closure list, any ranking of schools by composite score or reference to the scores, and instead **replace with messaging that the process was flawed and will not be "re-used"** in the future. Ensure SFUSD staff, including at the Enrollment Center, share this message with prospective families.
3. Reach out to affected schools and their PTA/PTOs to **understand what else can be done to support them** and reduce the highly damaging impact this process has had on them.

As we mentioned during the meeting at our school, we were all highly surprised that Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy is on the list of schools considered for closures. HMCRA is a thriving school, in high demand by SFUSD families, in a building recently remodeled by taxpayers, and — perhaps most importantly — it is a safe space for our LGBTQIA+, bullied, and neurodiverse students and families. The district has artificially capped our enrollment despite high demand and turned families away, telling them our school "is at capacity." **HMCRA should never have been a candidate for closure.**

To understand how this happened we and many other community members have spent hours of our own free time diving into the details of the selection criteria and the composite score computations. We have found serious errors in the RAI methodology, including:

- **The district's claim that the composite score is composed of 50% equity, 25% excellence, and 25% efficiency is false**. To mention only one example here, Galileo High's "school access" metric (one of three subcomponents of the Equity score) **alone accounts for 65 points** out of its composite score of 91.88. The metric should contribute no more than 21 points on the 0-100 scale (see attached for more examples and details).
- The data going into the individual metric scoring is not transparent and its accuracy is highly questionable: **"Garbage in equals garbage out."**
- The district's rigid enrollment threshold (260 for elementary schools and 400 for high schools) **was introduced after community engagement, seems arbitrarily designed, and was applied without context**.

For details on these and numerous additional critical findings, please see the attached document.

We thank you for your urgent and prompt attention to this matter.

On behalf of the HMCRA community and all SFUSD families harmed by the previously proposed school closures,

David Huland
Andrew Pariser
Matthew Good
Tiffany Furrell
Nicholas Macias

Pre-visit email to Dr. Wayne

On Oct. 14, 2024, HMCRA PFC President Joanna Lin sent the following email to Dr. Wayne, Board of Education commissioners, Supervisor Mandelman and staff, and members of the school stabilization team:

Subject: Preparing for HMCRA visit 10/16

Hi Dr. Wayne,

The Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy community is looking forward to your visit on Wednesday, Oct. 16, 4-6 PM. Our community requests that you please come prepared to address the following questions:

(1) Equity criteria

How will the district mitigate the adverse impact that closures and mergers will have on LGBTQIA+ students? How will you ensure that the support that exists for the LGBTQIA+ community at HMCRA exists at the welcoming school?

At HMCRA's Oct 9th meeting, SFUSD representatives (Janice Jones Mitchell, Tami Benau, Raul Chavez, Bonnie Lo and Conrad Tanasychuk) told our community that the district did not consider the LGBTQIA+ community in its equity criteria when determining schools eligible for closure.

We are aware that SFUSD's demographic data collection does not include LGBTQIA+ identity. Yet gender, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation are protected class characteristics in the United States, making the district's exclusion of such factors a concerning oversight.

(2) Enrollment

Please prove that enrollment will not grow at Harvey Milk if the district lifts its caps on our enrollment capacity and implements its plan to move to a zoned assignment system that more accurately reflects family preferences.

(3) Welcoming school criteria

Please provide your rationale for why Sanchez is the right school for HMCRA families. Did you base your proposal on the district's "Ideal Welcoming School Characteristics"? If not, please share the criteria you used to choose the welcoming school.

In the draft agenda for the BOE special meeting on Aug. 27, SFUSD defined 4 ideal welcoming school characteristics:

- Capacity
- Proximity
- Condition, based on Facilities Conditions Index (FCI) score
- Academic quality, based on excellence category

The district said a welcoming school's condition and academic quality could not be 10 percentage points less than the closing school, but the available data on FCI scores and excellence rank are not presented as percentage point values. For reference, HMCRA has an FCI score of 0.02 and an excellence rank of 73.

(4) Budget projections

Can you demonstrate how and when these school closures will result in fully staffed schools? Can you provide a fiscal analysis that is tied to a staffing allocation plan to

demonstrate savings and future change in staff? Does the district's projected $22 million in cost savings, as reported by the SF Chronicle and other media, represent site budgets of the 11 schools on the proposed list?

(5) School identity

How will the district ensure that, given these transitions, the school community can remain as whole as possible, including administrators, teachers, programs, and curriculum? Please detail how you will work with unions to ensure placement of educators and staff displaced by mergers and closures at welcoming schools.

Our HMCRA educators and staff have created the civil rights curriculum and inclusive community that our students and families rely on.

Please let me know if I can provide any clarification or if you have any questions.

Thank you,

President, Harvey Milk Parent Faculty Club

Summarized questions for Dr. Wayne meeting

A summary of questions submitted by the HMCRA community. Our principal shared these questions with SFUSD administration the morning of our meeting with Dr. Wayne (Oct. 16, 2024).

Theme	#	Question	NOT sent to District by HMCRA (came in too late)
LGBTQIA+ representation and support	1	How will the district ensure trans kids and kids from queer families are fully supported in schools that historically struggle to meet their unique needs?	
	2	How will the district ensure structural safety and belonging for trans and non-binary children — for example, by updating all school campus bathrooms to be non-gendered?	
	3	Why wasn't the LGBTQ+ community included in the equity score, even though it was part of the district's surveys?	
Enrollment and school size	4	Why is the district artificially capping HMCRA's enrollment, despite clear demand, and then claiming the school is too small?	
	5	SFUSD has targeted only small schools for closure. However, decades of academic research and the lived experiences of thousands of SFUSD families demonstrate that small schools are essential: Small schools enable many	x

		students — particularly those who are poor and/or racial/ethnic minorities — to thrive. Why is there no longer a place for small schools in SFUSD's portfolio? Should families seeking small schools enroll in private or charter schools, or leave San Francisco?	
Merger concerns	6	What will happen to HMCRA's staff during the merger?	
	7	Why merge two schools with different start times and pathways without addressing Milk's unique programming, staff retention, or identity?	
	8	Do all welcoming schools have equal or better facilities than closure schools, and do all have lead-free water pipes? For example, HMCRA has air conditioning and a new HVAC system, which we understand is rare among SFUSD facilities.	
	9	What is the current enrollment at Sanchez? What, if any, communication has SFUSD had with the Sanchez community about absorbing HMCRA students? Did this decision come as a surprise to them?	
	10	How do you propose families adjust to a 7:50 AM start time when they chose Milk in part for its 9:30 AM start?	
	11	Closing small schools will hugely impact kids on the autistic spectrum who thrive in smaller environments. How did you account for these students in closure decisions?	
	12	How will the district support students who are in the middle of the IEP process during the transition?	
	13	What are the barriers to making these real mergers that blend the best of both schools? The current proposal simply dismantles almost everything recognizable about Harvey Milk while pretending that students and families will go along and stay together.	x
Curriculum recognition	14	Why isn't HMCRA's unique civil rights curriculum given the same recognition as specialized programs, like immersion programs?	
	15	Why is SFUSD against combo classes? District reps said that they want every grade to have 2 classrooms to enable collaboration. HMCRA has historically had 2 or more classrooms of combined grades (typically 4th and 5th grades, this year we have 2nd and 3rd grade combos too). This works well for our community, and it still enables collaboration across a minimum of 2 grade-level classrooms.	
Transparency and accountability	16	When will SFUSD provide full transparency on the projected savings from school closures and the costs of the RAI process?	
	17	When will SFUSD provide the full data and methodology behind the composite scores used to decide school closures?	
	18	How did you come up with the school closing and student reassignment plan?	

	19	Did you reach out to families who may have faced barriers in completing the district's questionnaires?	
	20	What was your process for testing and refining the questionnaire used to gather input from families?	
	21	Will the same flawed system be used for future rounds of school closures, or will you revise your process based on feedback from this round?	
	22	How does the closure of thriving schools align with your guardrails and budget targets?	
	23	How did SFUSD determine each school's capacity in the composite score calculation? The district has published various, inconsistent capacity metrics.	
	24	If changes are needed for budget reasons, wouldn't an approach that includes all of SFUSD be much more effective? Why only make cuts that affect 10% of families to save money? Are you scared of the response if all of SFUSD was affected and responded?	x
Future use of school facilities	25	HMCRA has the second-highest facilities conditions index of all SFUSD elementary schools, thanks to $14 million in modernization from Prop A bond funds just a few years ago. How will the district honor taxpayer investment in this site, ensure it serves the immediate needs of public school students, and does not become a source of neighborhood blight?	
	26	Four of the schools on your list have an "excellent" ranking in facilities. Three of them have been renovated in the last 10 years, including this one. Why are we as taxpayers paying to renovate buildings to then let them sit empty?"	
	27	Why open an early education center at this site despite enrollment declines, budget cuts, and unproven demand?	
	28	Have there been any bids, contracts, RFPs, etc. related to the idea of the Early Education center, and how does this square with Attorney General Bonta's guidance on school closures?	
Logistical questions for Families	29	Can families do a mid-year transfer if the school is closing, or do they have to wait until the spring transfer?	

Answered questions

We're sharing questions raised in the Oct. 9, 2024, PFC meeting that the PFC is able to answer:

1. **What is the capacity for our school with 2 classes per grade?**
    a. **Response from PFC**: HMCRA has 11 classrooms, historically used for 2 classrooms grades K-3, and 3 classrooms for combined grades 4/5. The community typically used PFC funds to lower class sizes in 4/5 combos, so that their total enrollment was more similar to 2 classrooms at max capacity.

Grade	Capacity per classroom	# rooms	Capacity per grade
K	22	2	44
1	22	2	44
2	22	2	44
3	22	2	44
4/5	33	3	99
Total	121	11	275

However, SFUSD appears to be using various capacity metrics, and we are requesting they explain further.

2. **Will the board members voting in December possibly be outgoing board members? That may not be representative of people's viewpoints as indicated by the election.**
    a. **Response from PFC**: Yes, current members of the Board of Education will vote on the proposed list of closures in December.

3. **Are all the closing schools under 260 in enrollment?**
    a. **Response from PFC**: Yes. The district's closure eligibility criteria for elementary and TK-8 schools are fewer than 260 students and lowest 50% of composite scores. (source)

4. **What is the plan for our budget? We work very hard at fundraising. Where does this money go?**
    a. **Response from PFC**: Money we raise for HMCRA is through the Harvey Milk Parent Faculty Club, a 501(c)3 nonprofit. SFUSD does not control the money the PFC raises. We have legal restrictions for how we can spend this money, and our bylaws require community approval of our annual budget and large expenditures. Most of our 2024-25 budget is already allocated for this school year.