

SONOMA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
UNIFICATION FEASIBILITY STUDY
REORGANIZATION OF
WEST SONOMA COUNTY UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
INTO TWO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICTS
DECEMBER 2024



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Certified Public Accountants serving
K-12 School Districts and Charter
Schools throughout California

December 3, 2024

Dr. Amie Carter, Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools
Sonoma County, California

Dear Dr. Carter:

Christy White, Inc. (CW) was engaged to conduct a unification feasibility of hypothetical unification of the West Sonoma County Union High School District (W SCUHSD) into Two Unified School Districts (described as Scenario 2 in the Financial Feasibility Study, June 2022), modified to include Harmony Elementary School District in the Russian River Unified portion. The Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) stated the study's purpose was to help answer this question:

Would unification enhance the instructional opportunity for all students at a similar or reduced cost to the affected districts and/or taxpayers?

This study is the second part of a two-part study.

1. The first part, released in June 2022, primarily focused on the second part of the above statement, whether costs could be the same or reduced after unification and what the estimated revenues would be after each reorganization scenario. SCOE reviewed the report's conclusions at a W SCUHSD board meeting on Oct. 3, 2022. The community was provided with the option of a full unification study to evaluate the feasibility of one of the scenarios presented. Scenario 2, as modified for Harmony, was selected. This action was exploratory only, and no petition to unify has been initiated.
2. This second report studies each of the State's nine criteria for unification and provides information relevant to determine whether unification will enhance the instructional opportunity for all students (as stated in the first part of the purpose).

Consolidation of schools through unification, unionization (merging elementary or high school levels), or common administration can eliminate duplicative services, provide economies of scale and streamline administration. The cost savings that result provide the governing board with resources for educational priorities. Instructional, pupil support services and operations could be enhanced if there are net positive fiscal gains from reorganization.

For any reorganization petition to be approved by the County Committee on School District Organization and then submitted to the voters, the law requires that the reorganization continue to promote sound fiscal management and not cause a substantial adverse effect on the proposed District's fiscal status, or any existing district affected by the proposed reorganization. The law further requires that any reorganization preserve each affected district's ability to educate students in an integrated environment and not promote racial or ethnic discrimination.

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School District Reorganization Background

The West Sonoma area districts included in this study are:

- ✓ West Sonoma County Union High School District
- ✓ Fort Ross Elementary School District
- ✓ Montgomery Elementary School District
- ✓ Monte Rio Elementary School District
- ✓ Guerneville Elementary School District
- ✓ Forestville Elementary School District
- ✓ Harmony Elementary School District
- ✓ Oak Grove Elementary School District
- ✓ Sebastopol Elementary School District
- ✓ Twin Hills Elementary School District
- ✓ Gravenstein Elementary School District

This hypothetical analysis will create two unified school districts. The consolidation of school districts would be as shown:

Two Unified School Districts in West Sonoma County
Russian River Unified
Elementary School Districts
Fort Ross Elementary School District
Montgomery Elementary School District
Monte Rio Elementary School District
Guerneville Elementary School District
Forestville Elementary School District
Harmony Elementary School District
Oak Grove Elementary School District
<i>West Sonoma County Union High School District (includes El Molino High campus)</i>
West Sonoma County (Sebastopol) Unified
Sebastopol Elementary School District
Gravenstein Elementary School District
Twin Hills Elementary School District
<i>West Sonoma County Union High School District (includes Analy High campus)</i>

School District Reorganization Background, Cont'd

In the State of California, the goals for school district reorganization (e.g., unification) include promoting a high-quality education, fiscal responsibility, equitable access to educational resources and programs, and aligning boundaries with changing community needs.

The Sonoma County Committee on School District Organization (SCCSDO) is responsible for school district reorganization in the Santa Rosa area and countywide. Duties include administering state laws and regulations, studying validated petitions, setting elections, and approving trustee areas. The SCCSDO may proactively initiate studies but reorganization actions that could lead to an election are left in the hands of the citizens. The SCCSDO has approved this study but there is no action before the committee for consideration.

School district consolidation in Sonoma County has long been discussed as student enrollment declines county-wide and state funding struggles to keep up with educational needs. The Sonoma County Grand Jury examined school district consolidation, which is recapped by Staff Writer Laura McCutcheon, Sonoma West Times:

Sonoma County Grand Jury Report on School District Consolidation, June 1, 2011: “The Grand Jury believes better education, not cost savings, is the most compelling benefit that school district consolidation/unification may achieve. Improved education can take place through articulation and the implementation of some standardized teaching methods, which will provide a better focus to get students the best education possible,” the report states, citing the success of Twin Rivers School District in Sacramento — a consolidation of districts that since becoming one about three years ago has seen better test scores.”

In addition, the report noted that the decline in enrollment and funding made the “current school district configuration not financially sustainable, and there could be dollars saved by school district consolidation/unification.”

Consolidation of schools through unification, unionization (merging elementary or high school levels), or common administration can eliminate duplicative services, provide economies of scale, and streamline administration. The cost savings that result provide the governing board with more resources for educational priorities. Instructional and pupil support services and operations could be enhanced if there are net positive fiscal gains after reorganization. However, other criteria need to be examined, and that is the purpose of this study.

Methodology

About the Consultant: Christy White, Inc. (CW) is a licensed Certified Public Accounting firm specializing in school district auditing and consulting. President Christy White, CPA, CFE, was the lead consultant on this study and the financial feasibility study. She has 38 years of experience working with educational agencies throughout California and a specialty in school district organization. Ms. White has worked on dozens of reorganization feasibility studies throughout California, including Sonoma County. CW was engaged by the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) after a formal selection process in 2021.

District Interviews: CW met with all ten independent feeder elementary school districts and the West Sonoma County Union High School District. The study was discussed, and each district was provided an opportunity to provide input on how their school district and community might be affected by school district reorganization.

Use of District Data: CW utilized state reports provided by the districts to the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) and the California Department of Education (CDE). The data is from mandated state reporting that includes:

- ✓ California Dashboard – statewide academic performance
- ✓ California Assessment of Student Performance (CAASPP) – student assessment results
- ✓ SACS financial reporting – interim, budget, and unaudited actual reports
- ✓ CBEDS – enrollment census counts
- ✓ CalPADS – unduplicated pupil counts by subgroup
- ✓ Apportionment schedules – the amount paid by the state and federal government
- ✓ ADA reporting – average daily attendance
- ✓ Charter School Directory – listed by the school district
- ✓ Property Tax Reporting – actual property taxes collected by each District

The CDE and Ed Data Partnership aggregate this data and have search engines CW used for downloading data for each school district in the study.

In addition, CW found data from these sources:

- ✓ Sonoma County Assessor's Office – data on assessed valuation
- ✓ District websites

Executive Summary

The Sonoma County Committee on School District Organization's study question was, "***Would unification enhance the instructional opportunity for all students at a similar or reduced cost to the affected districts and/or taxpayers?***"

In the view of Christy White, Inc. (CW) and based on the study analyses, the answer is no.

School district unification would not be a clear path to enhancing instructional opportunities at a similar or reduced cost. The only exception would be if the majority of school districts, including West Sonoma County Union High School District (WSCUHSD), favored joining the unification in their area and were committed to working together for a transition that would not significantly disrupt the educational programs and continue to promote a sound education for the two new K-12 school districts. Without broad support from the school districts and local communities throughout the area, CW believes the challenges are too significant to overcome to get a "yes" answer.

The unification challenges presented today include:

- **There are significant challenges in creating two academically successful comprehensive high school programs**, with about 780 pupils each, with a reopened El Molino High. There is no assurance that all the feeder elementary school families would send their pupils to their assigned high school, causing the schools to be even smaller in student numbers and program offerings.
 - As it stands today, Analy High has a good track record of academic performance as a comprehensive high school program. WSCUHSD has established alternative school programs and is in the process of expanding learning opportunities and new programs at El Molino High. Interrupting WSCUHSD's programs and trying to replicate them in two smaller high schools without disrupting the educational programs would be a major challenge.
 - Secondary educational leadership and community drive would be needed to create two new unified school districts, reconfigured into a K-12 educational structure. This requires broad support. In our meetings, we found enthusiastic support from some, yet the majority did not express support or were neutral on the question of unification. Many in the Russian River area liked the option of a reopened El Molino but want to keep their current K-8 structure.
- **There are no additional funding sources to help create a new secondary program at El Molino.** In fact, revenues would be lost until cost savings from consolidating administration and staff are realized. Funding diverted to reopening El Molino as a comprehensive program with requisite pupil support systems might negatively impact the elementary schools or result in a program that is less rich in offering or successful than the present one at WSCUHSD.
- **There is a lack of a clearly defined and publicly supported pathway to unification.** In theory, one elementary school can create a unified district with a larger high school district area under the opt-out provisions of law. However, this would decrease K -12 benefits, such as improved curriculum articulation and pupil transition support through the grades. Much educational and budget management work would also be needed for a very small unified school district to be successful. Again, the local school district communities must show strong support for a successful reorganization, which this study found lacking.

Executive Summary, Cont'd

Current Status of School District Unification in West Sonoma County

There is no petition to unify West Sonoma County Union High School District and feeder elementary school districts. This study aims to assess whether complete unification into two districts might meet the State Criteria and to evaluate the possible impacts.

Should a valid petition be put forth to unify two or more of the school districts in the West Sonoma County area, the proposal would need to substantially meet the criteria in Education Code Section 35753, meet other state laws, be approved by the county committee for election, and be approved by a majority of the voters in each affected school district. Even if initiated, the process could take 2-3 years or more.

This study reports the Consultant's Christy White, Inc.'s (CW) conclusions on whether the criteria are met. Others might differ in their opinions on whether the criteria can be met. Hopefully, the data gathered here and analyzed will be a helpful starting point for future discussions on West Sonoma County school district consolidation.

Enrollment is declining throughout California, including West Sonoma County. Smaller schools struggle to provide sound educational programs on smaller budgets. However, many in the West Sonoma County area benefit from community (basic aid) funding over the State's guarantee.

The West Sonoma County's community (basic aid) funding benefit has the unintended consequence of stymieing unification since West Sonoma County Union High School District (WSCUHSD) is currently State aid funded. Adding more pupils to a fixed pot of funds dilutes the per-pupil funding unless the pot expands proportionately to the number of students, which it does not currently. That leaves little unification incentive other than to reopen El Molino High. As of today, this study found that reopening and creating new districts as a means to reopen El Molino High is risky both financially and educationally.

A more realistic and achievable consolidation solution would be to merge smaller elementary school districts over time and with local school boards and community support. Scenario #3, in the first financial study released in October 2022, studied this option financially for the Russian River area elementary school districts. However, this would not address the underlying motivation of those requesting the study to unify the region to reopen El Molino High.

WCSUSD is working on reusing and building educational programs at El Molino, such as developing a community-based school model. Since unification is a long and uncertain path, a wait-and-see approach, open community engagement, and strong district cooperation might be necessary.

Executive Summary, Cont'd

The State's Criteria and Study Conclusions

The State's criteria in EC Section 35753 have been analyzed separately in this study, and a conclusion has been drawn on each. To summarize:

1. The reorganized districts will be adequate in terms of number of pupils enrolled.

Study Conclusion: Met

2. The districts are each organized basis of a substantial community identity.

Study Conclusion: Met with concern (*the Harmony district area probably splits community identity between the Russian River and Sebastopol communities based on geography*).

3. The proposal will result in an equitable division of property and facilities of the original district or districts.

Study Conclusion: Met

4. The reorganization of the districts will preserve each affected district's ability to educate students in an integrated environment and will not promote racial or ethnic discrimination or segregation.

Study Conclusion: Met

5. Any increase in costs to the state as a result of the proposed reorganization will be insignificant and otherwise incidental to the reorganization.

Study Conclusion: Met

6. The proposed reorganization will continue to promote sound education performance and will not significantly disrupt the educational programs in the districts affected by the proposed reorganization.

Study Conclusion: Not Met

7. Any increase in school facilities costs as a result of the proposed reorganization will be insignificant and otherwise incidental to the reorganization.

Study Conclusion: Met

8. The proposed reorganization is primarily designed for purposes other than to significantly increase property values.

Study Conclusion: Met

9. The proposed reorganization will continue to promote sound fiscal management and not cause a substantial negative effect on the fiscal status of the proposed district or any existing district affected by the proposed reorganization.

Study Conclusion: Not Met

Note: The California Department of Education (CDE)'s School District Organization (SDO) Handbook outlines the laws and regulations for SDO and provides practical considerations. The Sonoma County Committee on School District Organization and the State Board of Education have the discretion to accept or not this report's conclusions. And conditions might change that will affect the conclusions.

Study Methodology

Christy White (CW) met with each affected school district in person except for Montgomery (via Zoom). CW toured the area and met with individuals of each district's choosing, typically the superintendent, cabinet members, and board member representatives.

CW also used data from the districts, their websites, the California Department of Education, the Ed Data Partnership, and the Sonoma County Office of Education.

Process and Timelines for Unification: The California School District Reorganization Handbook (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/do/sdohandbook.asp>) sets forth the laws and regulations for initiating a petition to unify, public hearings, roles of the county committee and state board, and areas of election. Once a petition has been validated, strict timelines are established for each step in the process. It could take at least two to three years from petition validation until the first year of the new unified district's operations, assuming success at an area-wide election.

Unification and territory transfers (including unionization) can be accomplished through processes laid out in law. Education Code Section 35700 allows for several types of petitions that would apply to WSCUHSD and the elementary districts:

1. A petition signed by a majority of the members of the governing boards of all affected districts; or,
2. A government entity petitions to unify (e.g., city council, board of supervisors, or any special district); or,
3. A petition signed by at least 25 percent of the registered voters in the inhabited territory proposed to be reorganized (if the territory proposed for reorganization is located within two or more school districts, the signatures of at least 25 percent of the registered voters from that territory in each school district are required); or,
4. The County committee formulates a plan and recommendation under EC Section 35720, which is then submitted for approval by the State Board of Education.

Following the submission of a petition, the county superintendent would:

- a) Determine the sufficiency within 30 days of receipt (EC Section 35704),
- b) Hold public hearings within 60 days of receipt of a valid petition (EC Section 35705 and 35705.5), and,
- c) Conduct a study on the impact and make a county committee recommendation within 120 days of the first public hearing (EC Section 35753).

Opt-Out Option for Elementary School Districts: One or more elementary school districts may opt-out of a unification action and remain independent under the Thompson provisions of law (EC Sections 35542(b) and 35710). The local elementary school district board can approve this exclusion from a reorganization action. If the unification election is successful (and the ballot language reflects the opt-out), the opt-out district will continue to operate as before and send secondary students to the unified district instead of a high school district. Like today, the unified district would have no governance over the opt-out district.

Study Methodology, Cont'd

All study school districts asked CW questions about the unification process. Some of the questions were legal in nature and not entirely answerable by CW, such as questions on the petition process, opt-out provisions, the election area, employee rights, and timing.

CW shared materials from the California Department of Education's *Reorganization Handbook*. CW advised them to seek their legal counsel. Legal questions included, for example:

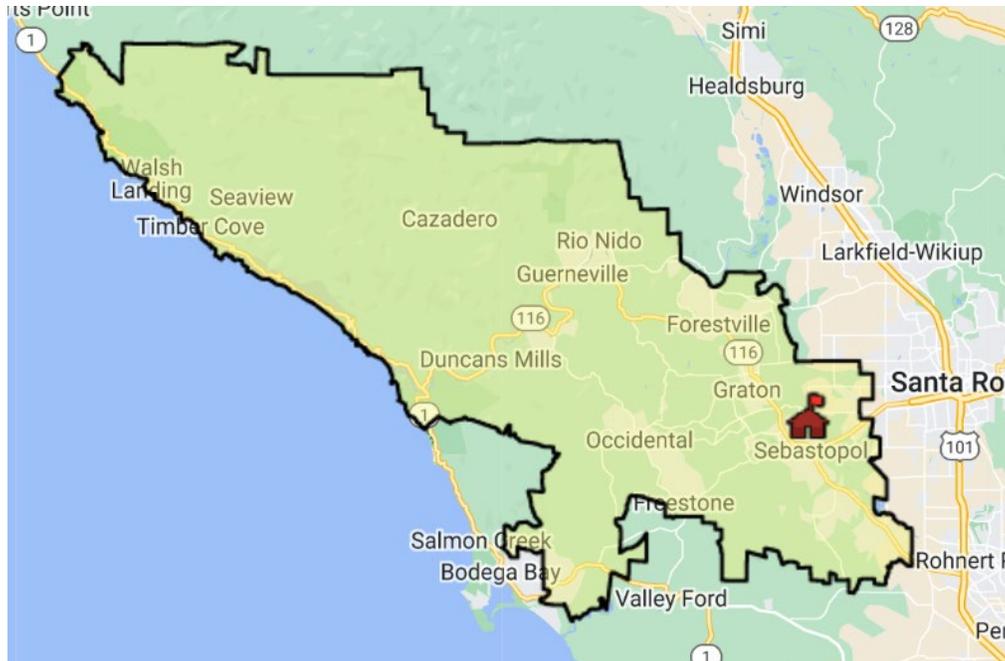
1. Can a citizen's petition stipulate that no schools will be closed by the new district (perhaps with a time restriction)? And, can election language bind a new district's board from taking certain actions, such as school closure?
2. What rights do teachers have to a continuing job? Could the new district only hire who it wants, or must it first hire all from the existing staffing and then go through layoff proceedings?
3. After unification, do teachers have rights to longevity step pay (even if a new salary schedule is negotiated)?
4. Can a district pass an opt-out resolution if the petition is a citizen's petition? And if so, would it just be symbolic?
5. What is the timing of the opt-out resolution? Can a district say they support the unification and wish to be included for secondary school but opt out and remain independent for elementary school?
6. CW received many questions regarding the "area of election." For example, if a Russian River petition to unify went forward without a companion West Sonoma (Sebastopol area) petition, would Sebastopol voters vote on the Russian River unification question?

CW Observation: Should any petition come forward, interested parties should seek legal advice from attorneys specializing in school consolidation and possibly a consultant to help further study differing configurations than the one analyzed in this study, or to update with current data.

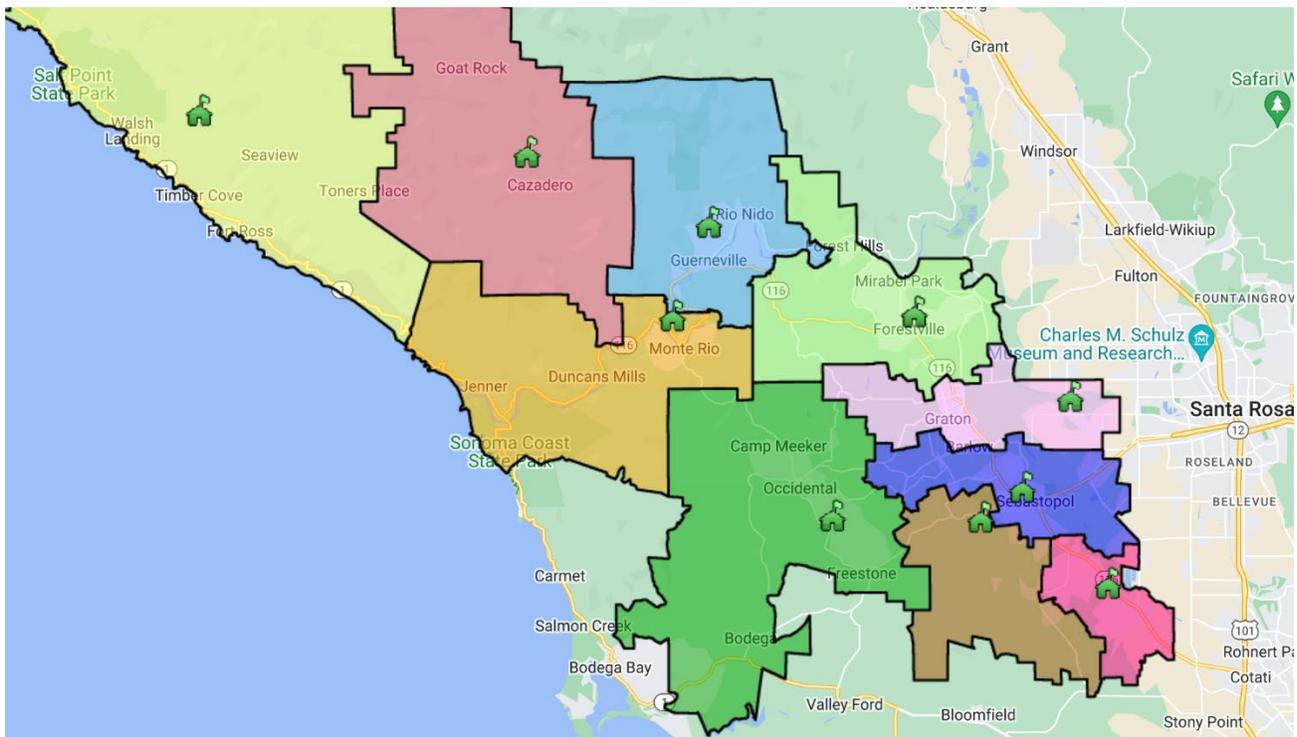
Note on Names Used for Possible New Districts: The names used for the possible district combinations in this report are illustrative only. For simplicity, the consultant used West Sonoma (Sebastopol) Unified and Russian River Unified to represent the areas. Should a petition to reorganize be put forth, the name of the new district(s) would be determined by the new governing school board(s).

Maps of the Area Districts

The first map represents the entire WSCUHSD area. The second map represents the ten school districts within the high school district's boundaries. School houses represent the school sites in each district area.



The ten elementary school districts (West to East, top to bottom) are Fort Ross (lime green), Montgomery (rose), Guerneville (blue), Monte Rio (orange), Forestville (light green), Harmony (dark green), Oak Grove (pink), Sebastopol (purple), Twin Hills (brown) and Gravenstein (dark pink).



Criterion #1: Number of Pupils

Statutory Requirement: The reorganized districts will be adequate in terms of number of pupils enrolled.

Regulations: This condition is governed by CCR, Title 5, Section 18573(a), which states that each affected school district shall have the following projected enrollment on the date that the proposal becomes effective:

Elementary District 901
 High School District 301
 Unified District 1,501

Analysis: Two unified school districts in the West Sonoma County area would each have about the same number of pupils, at 3.2K pupils each. There has been a steady decline in student enrollment county-wide and within the area. See the table below:

	Enrollment - 2023-24	Enrollment 2017-18	7-Year Change	% Change
Russian River Unified Enrollment				
Fort Ross Elementary School District	15	19	(4)	-21%
Montgomery Elementary School District	22	35	(13)	-37%
Monte Rio Elementary School District	67	89	(22)	-25%
Guerneville Elementary School District	361	278	83	30%
Forestville Elementary School District	222	406	(184)	-45%
Harmony Elementary School District	573	652	(79)	-12%
Oak Grove Elementary School District	1,242	1235	7	1%
Total K-8 Population	2,502	2714	(212)	-8%
Grades 9-12 Population (Proportionate to K-8)	785			
Total Estimated K-12 Enrollment	3,287			
	Enrollment - 2023-24	Enrollment 2017-18	7-Year Change	% Change
West Sonoma County Unified Enrollment				
Sebastopol Elementary School District	731	905	(174)	-19%
Gravenstein Elementary School District	810	724	86	12%
Twin Hills Elementary School District	957	1206	(249)	-21%
Total K-8 Population	2,498	2835	(337)	-12%
Grades 9-12 Population (Proportionate to K-8)	783			
Total Estimated K-12 Enrollment	3,281			
	Enrollment	% of High School		
Proportional Enrollment Computation				
Russian River K-8 Population	2,502	50.04%		
West Sonoma 9-12 Population	2,498	49.96%		
Total K-8	5,000			
Russian River Area Proportionate 9-12 Population	785			
West Sonoma Area Proportionate 9-12 Population	783			
Total 9-12	1,568			

Criterion #1: Number of Pupils, Cont'd

Oak Grove and Harmony comprise 1,815 of the elementary-age population. If they opted out of unification and all attended Analy High, even if on an interdistrict transfer, they would take away about 570 high school students from El Molino, leaving a very small high school of 216 pupils. Because both districts are about equal distance from each high school, there is a risk that El Molino's program might be strained by low enrollment. At present, Analy High is more comprehensive, but that could change post-reorganization. El Molino High might also attract pupils looking for a smaller high school experience.

- **Russian River Area:** The table on the prior page shows that enrollment in the Russian River area has declined by 8% overall and by far more in Montgomery, Monte Rio, Fort Ross, Harmony, and Forestville. Only Guerneville has grown in the school-age population over the past seven years.
- **West Sonoma (Sebastopol) County Area:** The table shows that enrollment in the West Sonoma area has declined by 12% overall, with Sebastopol and Twin Hills at 19% and 21%, respectively. Gravenstein has grown by 12% over the past seven years.

However, overall, the reorganized district would be of a significant size and meet the criteria.

Conclusion: Met. The proposed unified district would be adequate in terms of number of pupils enrolled.

Criterion #2: Community Identity

Statutory Requirement: The districts are each organized on the basis of a substantial community identity.

Regulations: This condition is addressed by CCR, Title 5, Section 18573(a)(2), which should be reviewed together with the following guidelines.

No single factor is likely to determine that community identity exists. The county committee probably will need to examine several attributes of the population and the makeup of the territory in question to make a judgment on this condition. Some indicators that the committee might study include types of housing, parks and recreation facilities and programs, sports activities, transportation patterns, geopolitical factors, and shopping patterns.

- a. Similarity of architecture, size, and style of homes can create a sense of community identity.
- b. The usage patterns of parks and school facilities for recreation programs and sports activities for youth can be indicators of a school district's community identity.
- c. Traffic patterns and public transportation systems and routes may have an impact on community identity.
- d. Geopolitical factors such as topography and city council, county supervisor, and special district electoral districts might also create community identity in a school district. Post office names and zip code areas also could contribute.
- e. Neighborhood and regional shopping patterns are often well defined and play a part in the community identity of a school district.
- f. There is no legal necessity that school district boundaries match city boundaries.

Analysis: Some of the key characteristics that define the study areas are provided in the following pages:

Community Demographics: The demographics on the following page are from the Census Designated Places (CDP). The CDP's line up with the two-unification study as follows:

- **Russian River Unified:** CDPs of Guerneville, Forestville, Monte Rio, Cazadero, Occidental and Graton.
- **West Sonoma (Sebastopol) Unified:** CDP for the City of Sebastopol and the surrounding area.

Note: Not all the territory is covered neatly by a CDP. According to the census instructions, "a CDP name is one that is recognized and used in daily communication by the residents of the community." CDP identifies population areas and incorporated places.

Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

	Population Census Areas Within West Sonoma						
	Sebastopol	Guerneville	Forestville	Monte Rio	Cazadero	Occidental	Graton
Population	7,503	4,764	3,632	771	419	1,061	1,671
Media Age	49	53	45	61	42	60	41
Income Levels							
Per Capita Income	\$ 49,297	\$ 56,895	\$ 52,628	\$ 63,325	\$ 44,208	\$ 85,917	\$ 62,949
Median Household Income	\$ 98,185	\$ 80,159	\$ 105,536	\$ 48,906	\$ 113,000	\$ 86,042	\$ 94,436
Poverty Percentage	8%	9%	7%	10%	3%	8%	22%
Median Value of Homes	\$ 824,400	\$ 591,500	\$ 641,696	\$ 669,100	\$ 584,335	\$ 901,196	\$ 821,647
Educational Attainment							
High School Grads or Higher	97%	95%	95%	98%	*	*	*
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	48%	39%	44%	40%	*	*	*
Race & Ethnicity							
White	71%	73%	77%	90%	87%	82%	68%
Hispanic	16%	16%	6%	8%	6%	7%	29%
Asian	5%	1%	4%	<1%	<1%	2%	<1%
African American	2%	1%	5%	<1%	0%	<1%	<1%
Native American	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
Two or More	<1%	7%	0%	1%	6%	8%	<1%

Source: Census Reporter, Data USA

*Not available from cited sources

CW Observations:

- Home prices are higher in Sebastopol and areas adjacent to Occidental and Graton – over the Russian River Valley.
- The per capita and median household incomes are comparable. Monte Rio’s median household income is lower than the per capita in the census number, which might also indicate more people per household.
- Educational attainment is about the same in the reporting CDPs.
- Race/ethnicity is predominantly White throughout all areas, followed by Hispanic/Latin. Sebastopol and Graton have a higher percentage of Hispanic and Other Latin ethnic groups.

Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

About each major population center in West Sonoma County (sources include Wikipedia, city and county websites):

- **Sebastopol** is the single largest area and has been an incorporated City since 1902. According to the City's website, "it also serves a wider West County market area of about 50,000 people. Known for its apple and wine grape industry, Sebastopol has 19 churches, one public library, one weekly newspaper, one television cable system, multiple parks and playgrounds, and one public swimming pool. Community Center and Art Center, ballparks, public golf course, tennis courts, and the Veterans Memorial Building exist. Nearby resorts, campgrounds, and State Parks add to the recreation facilities. There are also service clubs, fraternal and social organizations, trade associations, and youth and sports groups. Art, gardening, and music clubs are popular throughout West Sonoma County."

To the southeast of Sebastopol, numerous communities along Hwy 116 are within Sebastopol's sphere of influence, including Alten, Fredericks, Cunningham, Knowles Corner, Cadwell, and Hessel. These communities are also within easy driving distance of Cotati and Rohnert Park, outside the study area. Sebastopol UESD services the K-8 student population, and Analy High School, operated by WSCUHSD, is in Sebastopol.

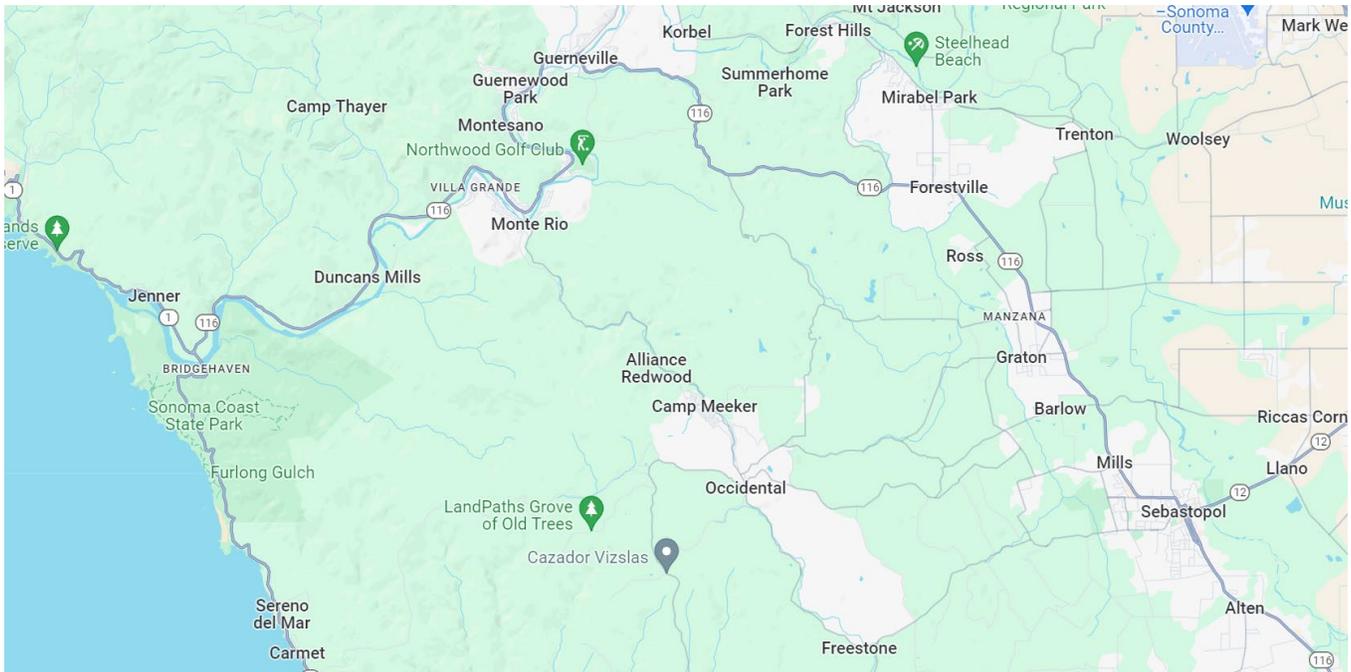
- **Guerneville** is the second largest unincorporated population area in the Russian River Valley. The town was a logging community, and today, just north of Guerneville, is Armstrong Woods Park. Tourism is a significant part of the economy, including vacationers from San Francisco, LGBTQ+ charity events, and the Russian River Jazz and Blues Festival. Guerneville School serves the K-8 students in the area.
- **Forestville** has a comparatively growing population. According to Wikipedia: "Today businesses in the town consist of one gas station, one bar, one hardware store, a grocery store, two convenience markets, a pharmacy, several churches, a number of restaurants, a post office, an assortment of small businesses, a fire station operated by a volunteer fire department, a volunteer-run Youth Park, and three ATMs. The annual Forestville Youth Park Parade is held each June as a fund-raising event. It is associated with two days of music, bingo, and carnival rides in the Youth Park. Food and handicrafts booths are staffed by local vendors and non-profit organizations. A number of bed and breakfast inns and wineries have been developed along the Russian River and to the east." Forestville School services the K-8 students, and El Molino High (owned by WSCUHSD) is in Forestville.
- **Cazadero** (Spanish for "hunting ground") is an unincorporated community in north-western Sonoma County. The downtown of Cazadero consists of two churches, a general store, a post office, a hardware store, an auto repair garage, private office space, and the Cazadero Volunteer Fire Department. Cazadero was the northern terminus of the North Pacific Coast Railroad, originally laid as a narrow-gauge track in the 1870s. This railhead was fed by several smaller-gauge systems dedicated to logging and networks of logging roads and trails, which brought trees to Duncans Mill for processing and shipment south to San Francisco. Montgomery School serves the Cazadero area for K-8 education.

Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

- **Monte Rio** (Spanish: *Monte Río*, meaning "River Mountain") is located along the Russian River near the Pacific Ocean. The town of Guerneville lies northeast of Monte Rio, and Jenner is to the west. Bohemian Grove, a private gentlemen's club, is in Monte Rio. The Sonoma Lumber Company preserved a 160-acre grove of old-growth redwood trees sold to San Francisco's Bohemian Club in 1899. The club purchased dozens of other parcels in the area and now owns 2,712 acres used for its summer retreats. Monte Rio School serves the K-8 population of students.
- **Occidental** was founded in 1876 as a stop on the North Pacific Coast Railroad connecting Cazadero to the Sausalito ferry. In return for donating right-of-way to the railroad, a local landowner named "Dutch Bill" Howards received a lifetime railway pass, and the station was named after him. The railway caused a rapid expansion of the timber industry, and by 1877, there were six sawmills in the Occidental area. Trains also brought vacationers from San Francisco. Howard's Station Cafe is a restaurant at the old narrow-gauge railroad stop in downtown Occidental. Harmony School primarily serves the Occidental area for K-8 education.
- **Graton** is an unincorporated town in west Sonoma County. Two restaurants in the area have earned the town a culinary reputation. Graton is roughly 20 miles from the California coastline. Graton's agriculture was historically concentrated on apple farming, but like most of rural Sonoma County, it now focuses on wine production. Oak Grove School primarily serves the Graton community for K-8 education.
- **Freestone** is on the south border of Harmony School, is unincorporated, and is not a CDP. A former sandstone quarry and logging town, Freestone is the entryway to the Bohemian Highway. In 1974, Freestone became the first historic district named by Sonoma County. The downtown comprises a handful of historic buildings with a selection of local businesses, including a cheese shop, winery, bakery, and a day spa. Freestone has a population of 32. Freestone is in Harmony School District for grades K-8.

Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Transportation



The main transportation route in West Sonoma is Hwy 116, which starts in the southeast corner at Hwy 101 near Cotati. From Cotati, 116 runs northwest to Forestville and then turns due west to the coast, connecting with Hwy 1 at Jenner. Fort Ross, the farthest school northwest, is about 15 miles north of Jenner off Coastal Highway 1.

Sonoma County Transit provides transportation within the West Sonoma area, connecting to Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, and Cotati. Sonoma County Airport in Santa Rosa has passenger and freight services.

State Highways 12 and 116 connect Sebastopol to Highway U.S. 101. Sonoma County Transit provides bus service within the County of Sonoma. Local buses also charge a fee to the San Francisco and Oakland Airports.

Forestville's main road is California State Route 116, known locally as the Pocket Canyon Highway, Front Street, and the Gravenstein Highway. To the north of downtown is River Road, which connects the northern part of Forestville to the coastal community of Jenner in the west and access roads to U.S. Route 101.

Cazadero is located along Austin Creek, emptying into the Russian River at the intersection of California State Route 116 and Cazadero Highway. The town is approximately 6 miles (9.7 km) from Route 116.

Occidental is at the crossroads of Bohemian Highway (running north to Monte Rio, south to Bodega Highway, and east to Sebastopol). Occidental and Graton Roads run west to east to Santa Rosa.

Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Distances Between Schools

A primary consideration for parents is the distance between schools, especially the high schools in the Russian River area. With the closure of El Molino as a comprehensive high school, students in the Russian River area now have longer commutes. This cuts into study time and after-school activities. CW has computed the differences in miles and minutes between El Molino and Analy High in the following. Presumably, if a Russian River Unified were created, the district would reopen El Molino as a comprehensive high school. Note: Bus stop times were not included in the time calculations.

As shown in the following maps on the following pages, if the Russian River students were to attend El Molino High instead of Analy High, their commute (not accounting for bus stops and using the distance from the elementary schools' address) would change as follows:

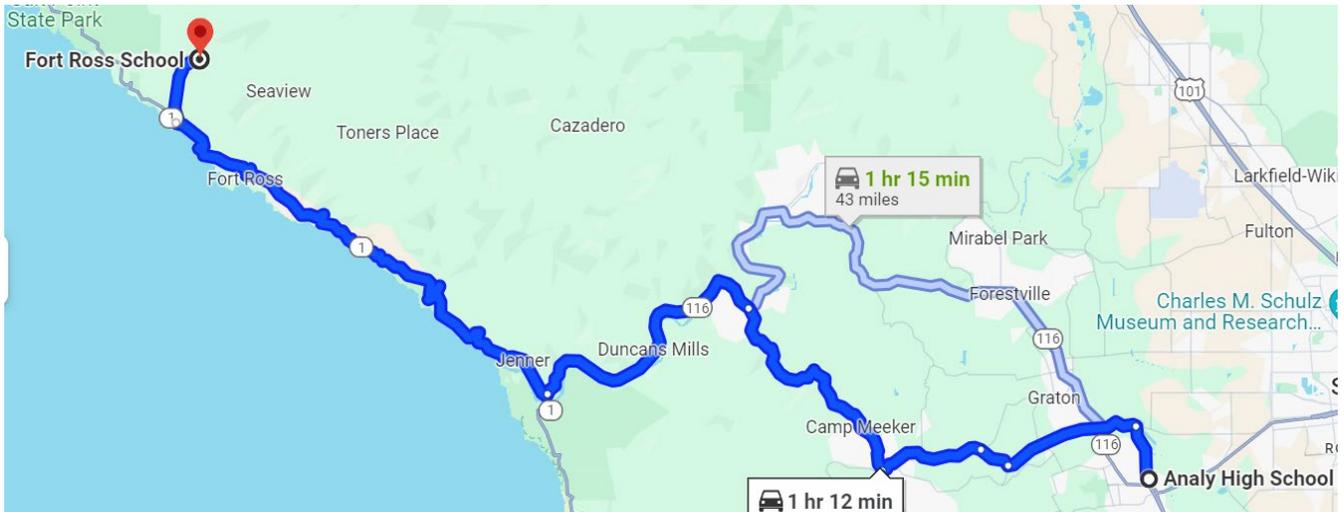
- Fort Ross high school pupils – would save 8 miles or 14 minutes total per day
- Montgomery high school pupils – would save 6 miles or 14 minutes total per day
- Monte Rio high school pupils – would save 6 miles or 14 minutes total per day
- Guerneville high school pupils – would save 13 miles or 22 minutes total per day
- Forestville high school pupils – would save 10 miles or 18 minutes total per day (and some students could walk to El Molino High School)
- Oak Grove and Harmony are about equal distance between El Molino and Analy High Schools. If the boundaries included these two districts, some interdistrict transfers could be expected depending on where the pupils lived in proximity to the high schools.

Note on Source of Maps: used Google and used the elementary schools as the starting point but the commute for individual students could be more or less depending on their proximity to the local elementary school.

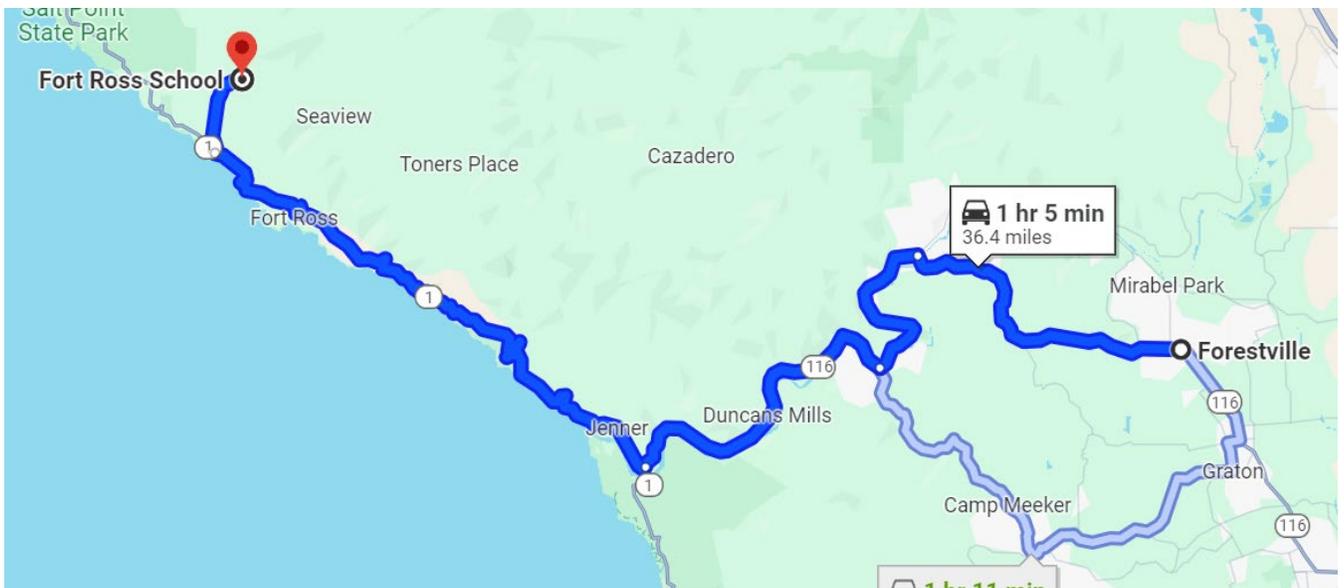
Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Distances Between Schools, Cont'd

Fort Ross School is 40 miles (1.2 hours) from Analy High School, without accounting for time at bus stops.



Fort Ross School is 36 miles from El Molino High School (just over an hour and 7 minutes further each way than Analy High School, but this is without accounting for time at bus stops).

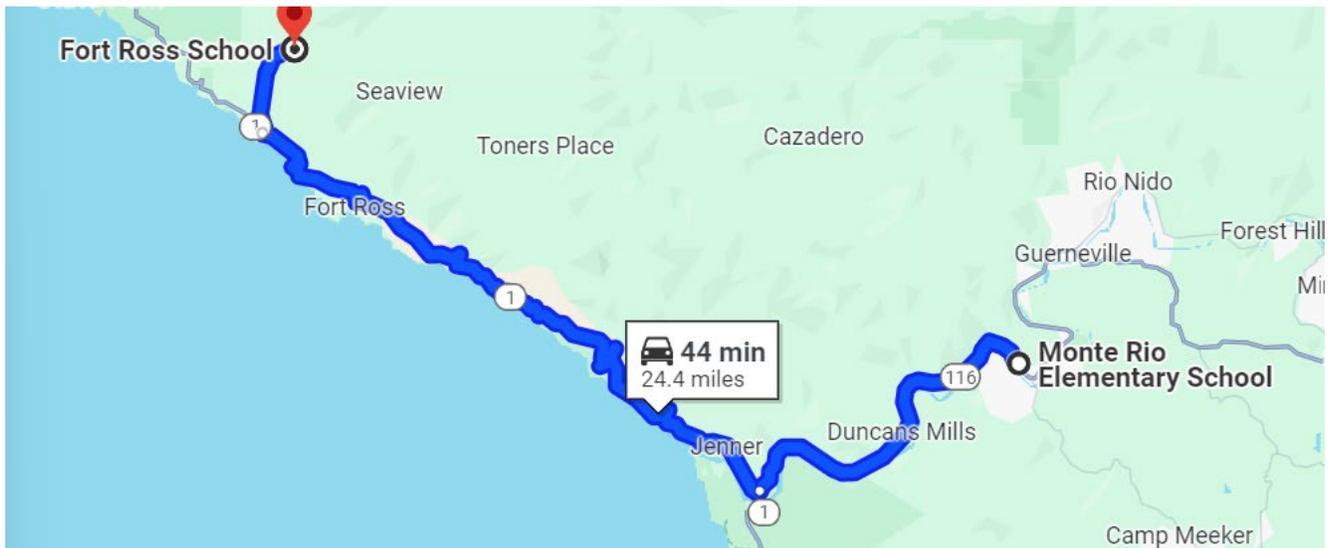


Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

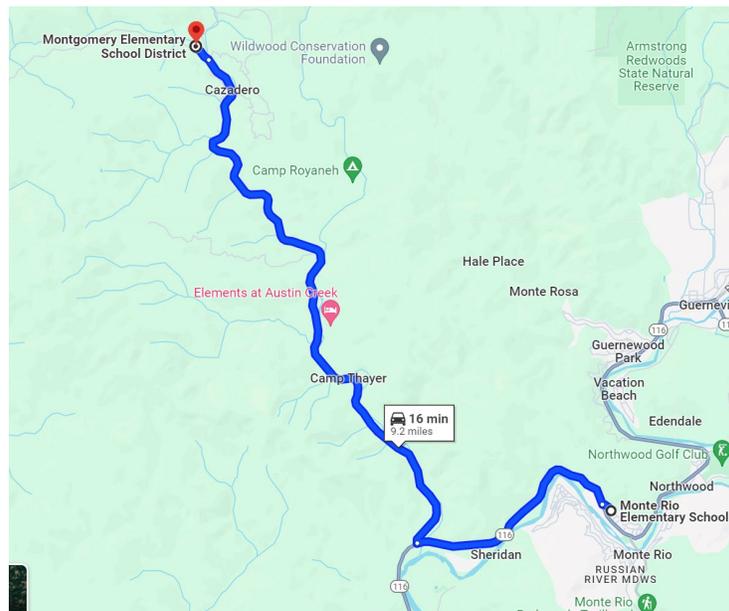
Distances Between Schools, Cont'd

Note on Elementary School Consolidation in Northwest Area:

Fort Ross School is 24 miles (44 minutes) from the next closest elementary school in Monte Rio. The distance and time from Fort Ross to Monte Rio is significant for young kids and the road can be treacherous during bad weather. There appear to be both good educational and transportation safety reasons to keep the Fort Ross School open after any reorganization. While not technically a “necessary small school” by current legal definition, it is, in CW’s opinion, necessary in all practical ways.



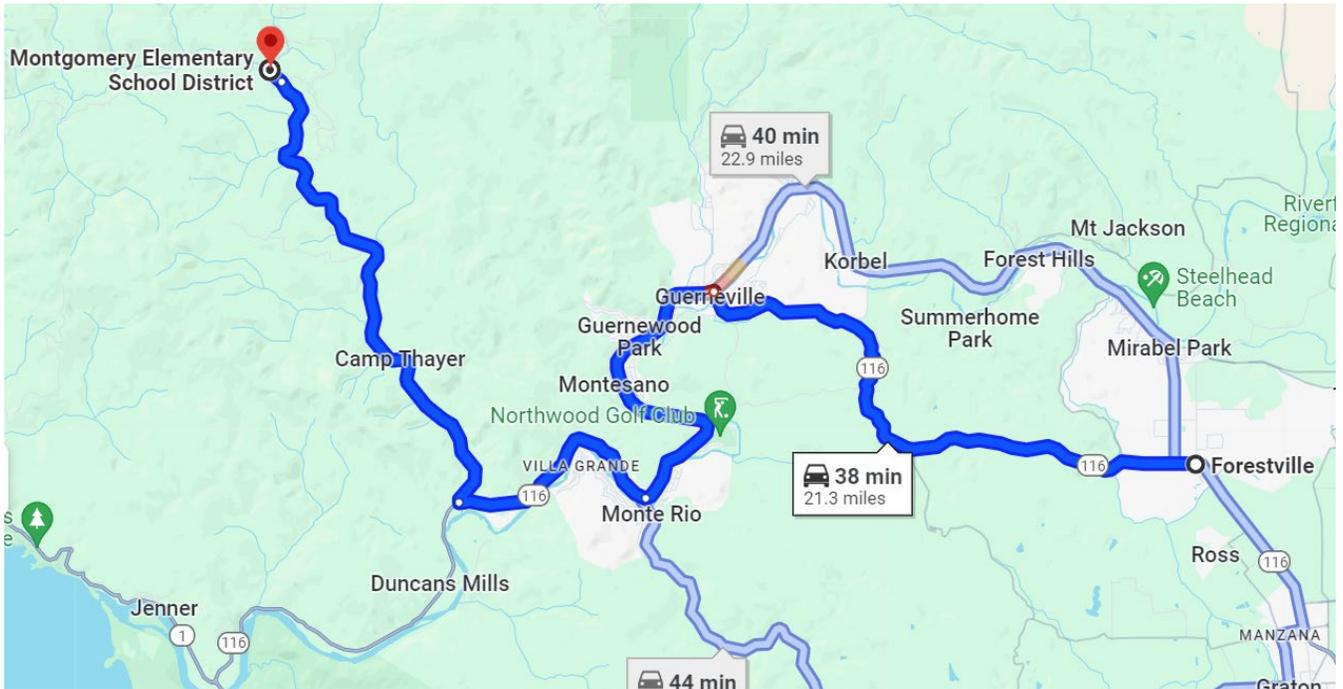
Montgomery Elementary School is 9.2 miles (16 minutes) to Monte Rio Elementary School. If necessary, it is more geographically feasible to transport students to Monte Rio Elementary should enrollment drop too low in the future. Or perhaps reconfigure to a K-3 program at Montgomery.



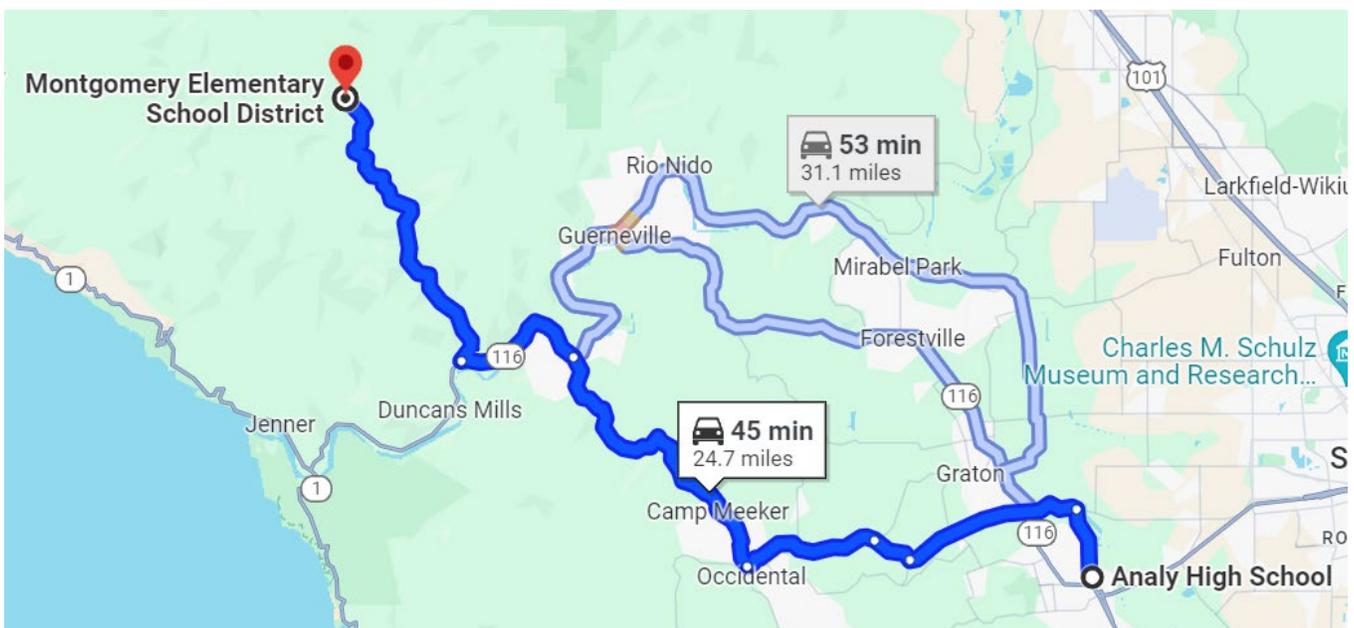
Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Distances Between Schools, Cont'd

Montgomery Elementary School is 22 miles from El Molino High School or 38 minutes (without allowing time for bus stops).



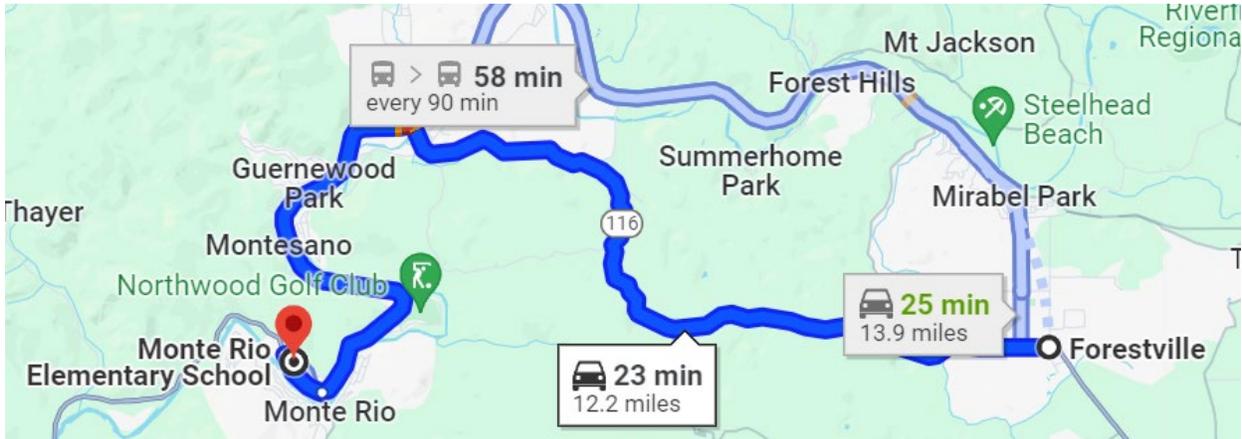
Montgomery Elementary School is 25 miles from Analy High School or 45 minutes, without allowing time for bus stops.



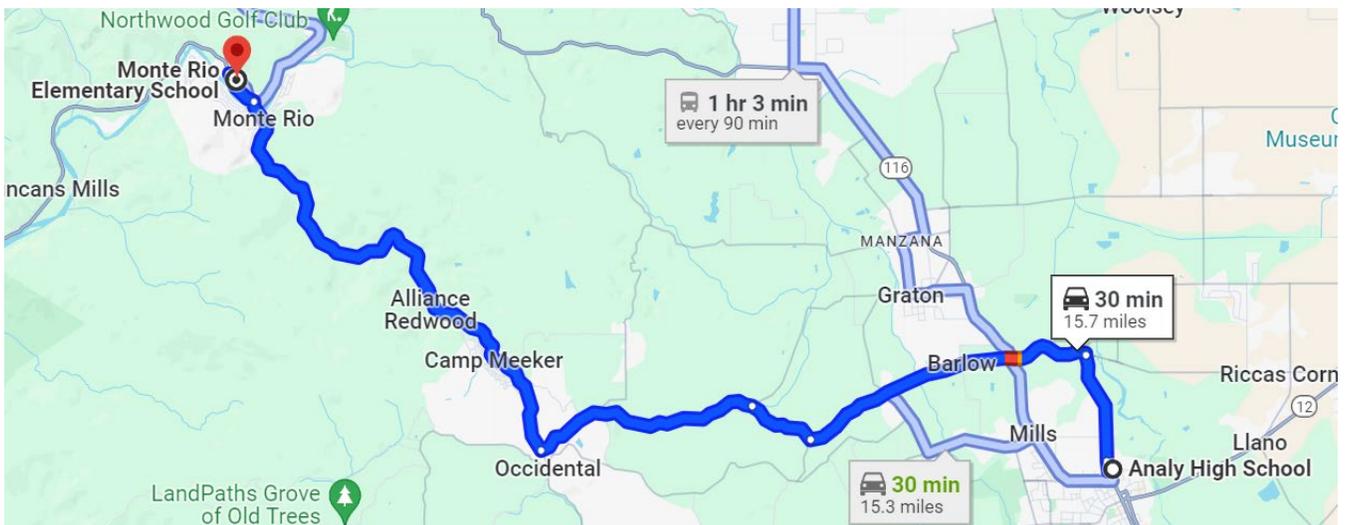
Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Distances Between Schools, Cont'd

Monte Rio Elementary to El Molino in Forestville is 12 miles or 23 minutes without bus stops.



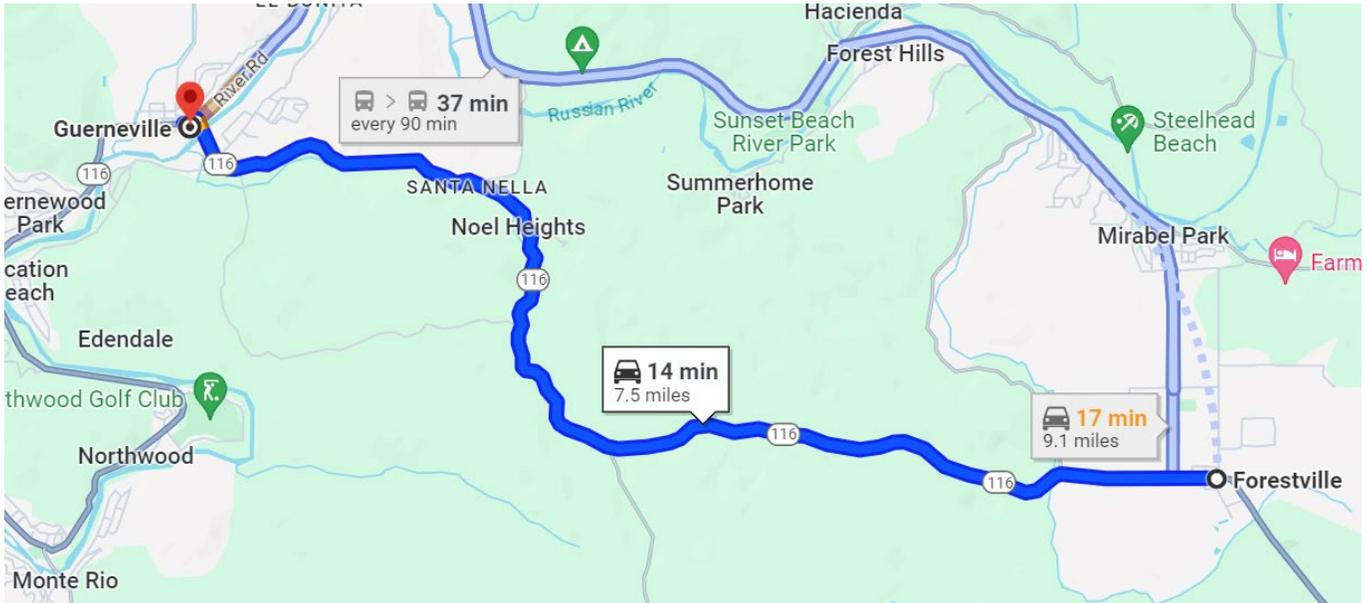
Monte Rio Elementary to Analy High School is over 15 miles and 30 minutes without time allowed for bus stops.



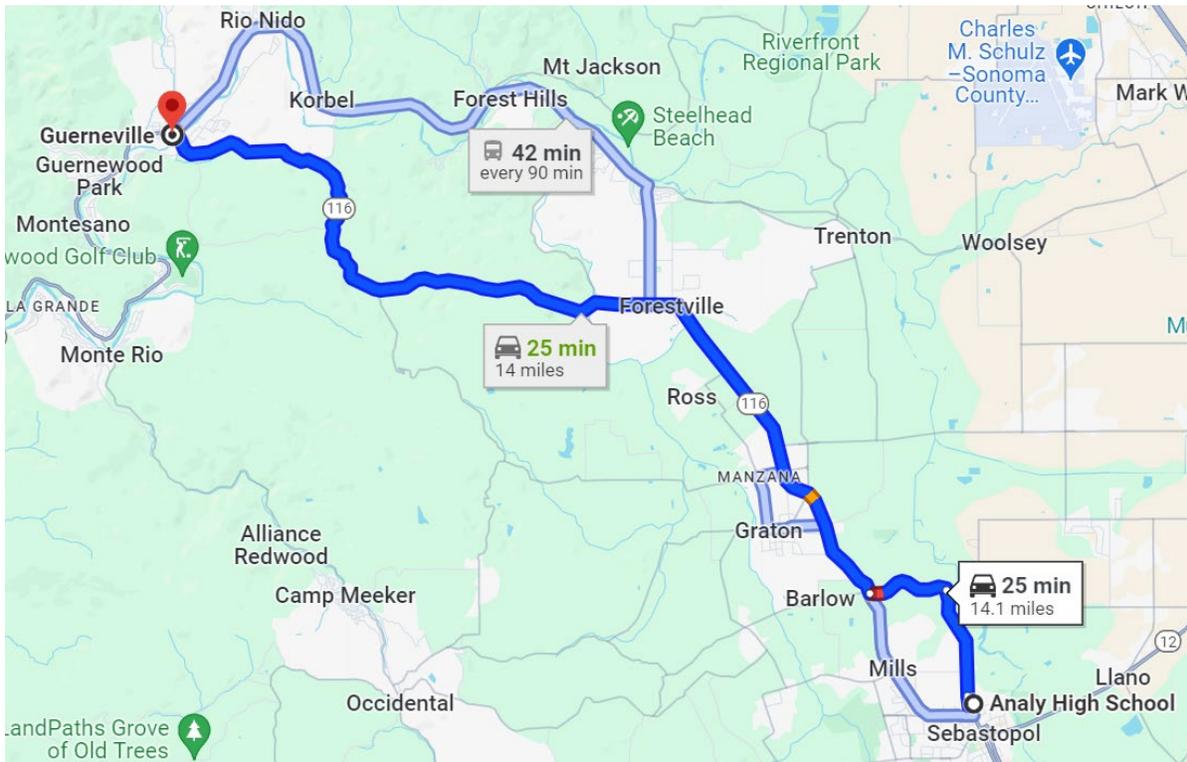
Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Distances Between Schools, Cont'd

Guerneville Elementary School to El Molino High School is 7.5 miles or 14 minutes without added bus stop time.



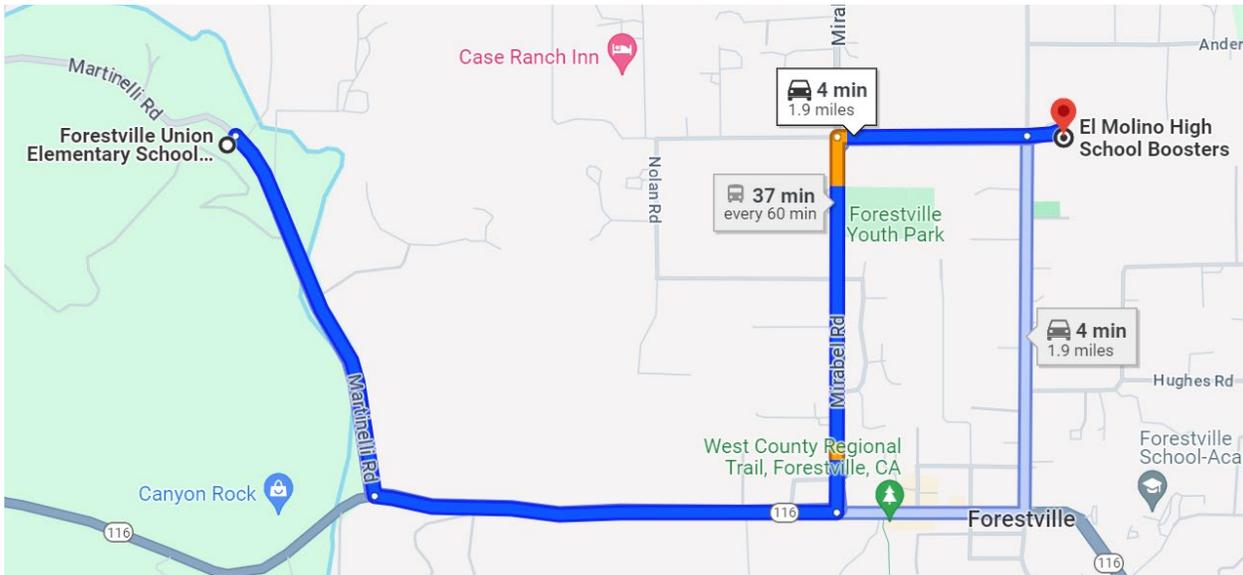
Guerneville Elementary School to Anly High School is 14 miles or 25 minutes without added bus stop time.



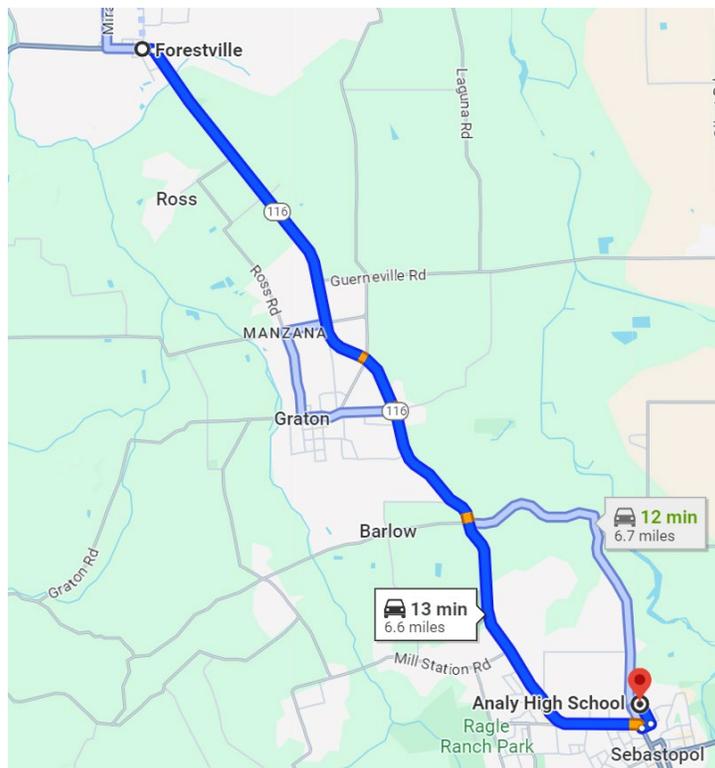
Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Distances Between Schools, Cont'd

Forestville Elementary School is less than 2 miles from El Molino High School and a 4-minute drive.



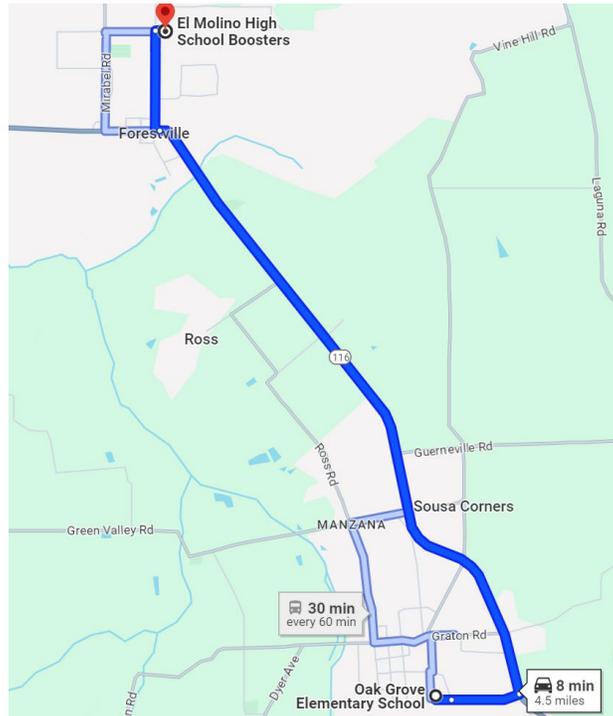
Forestville Elementary School is almost 7 miles and 12 minutes from Analy High School



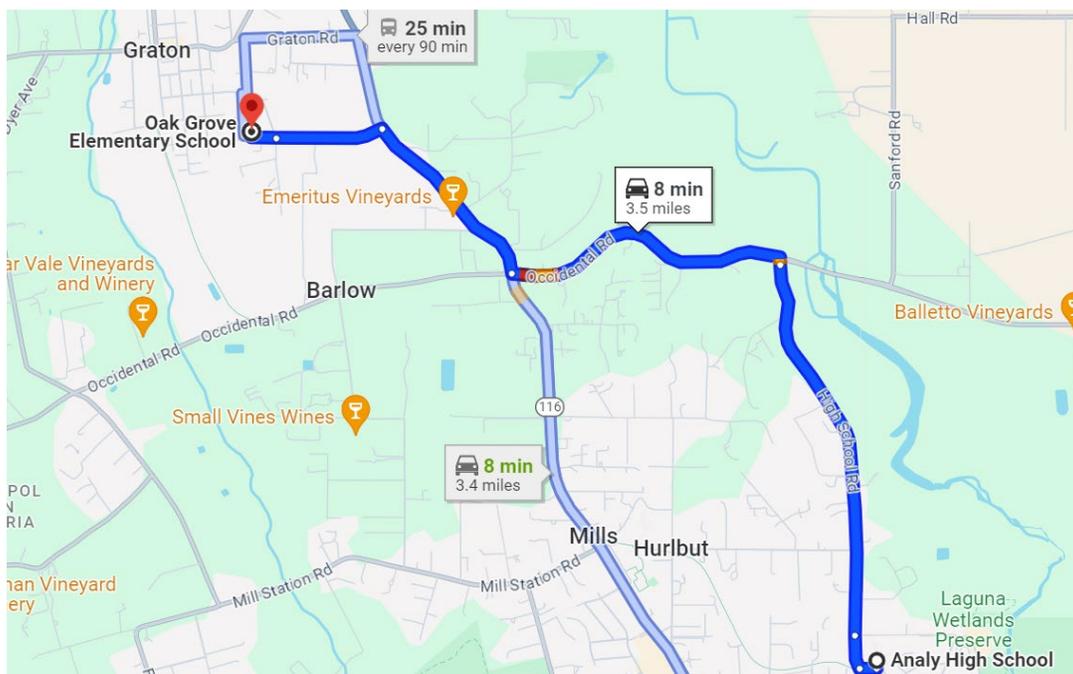
Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Distances Between Schools, Cont'd

Oak Grove Elementary School is 4.5 miles to El Molino High in Forestville or 8 minutes without bus stop time.



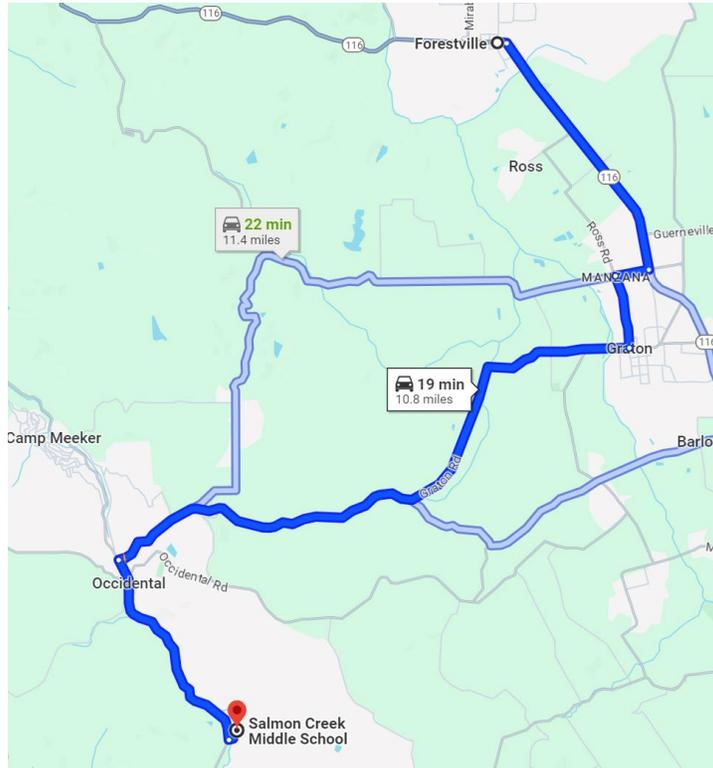
Oak Grove Elementary School is 3.5 miles from Analy High School or 8 minutes without bus stop time.



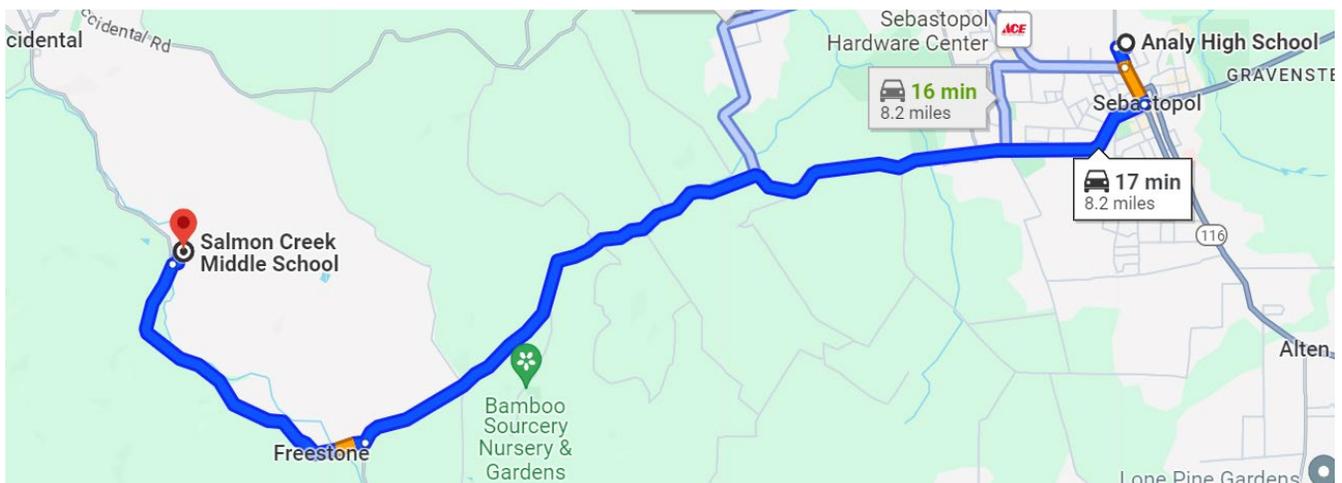
Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Distances Between Schools, Cont'd

Harmony Elementary School is 11 miles to El Molino High School or 19 minutes without bus stop time.



Harmony Elementary School is 8 miles or 17 minutes without bus stops to Analy High School.



Note: The community center of Occidental is 10 miles to Analy High School or 18 minutes; and, 9 miles and 15 minutes to El Molino High School.

Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Architecture

- **Russian River Area:** The architectural style in the Russian River area of Sonoma County is quite diverse and has evolved from the Eastern Seaboard styles to Greek Revival and even Tudor in the Rio Nido Lodge.
- **Sebastopol Area:** The Sebastopol area has a diversity of housing types, ranging from 100-year-old Craftsman bungalows and farmhouses to modern subdivisions, apartments, and condominiums.

In the countryside surrounding both areas, properties with vineyards, apple orchards, redwoods, streams, and other natural features are not uncommon.

Climate

The weather between the Russian River Valley and Sebastopol can vary due to their distinct microclimates. Here are some general differences:

Russian River Valley:

- Known for its cool climate influenced by coastal fog and “fog drip” caused by condensation on the redwood trees, ferns, and other forest vegetation.
- Cooler temperatures, especially in the evenings.
- Foggy mornings followed by sunny afternoons.

Sebastopol Area:

- Slightly warmer and less fog-prone than the Russian River Valley.
- Sits inland, away from the direct coastal influence.
- More consistent temperatures throughout the day.
- Slightly drier conditions.

Government

The entire West Sonoma County area is under the 5th Supervisorial District, represented by Lynda Hopkins. At the local level:

Russian River Valley: The county government has a regional office in Guerneville to provide better access to county services. The West County Community Services is a nonprofit providing human services to residents through government and local funding. There was a consolidation of fire districts in 2019 into the Sonoma County Fire District.

Sebastopol Area: a City form of government with its own police, fire, and public works departments. Aside from Sebastopol School District, school district areas surrounding the city are in unincorporated Sonoma County.

Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

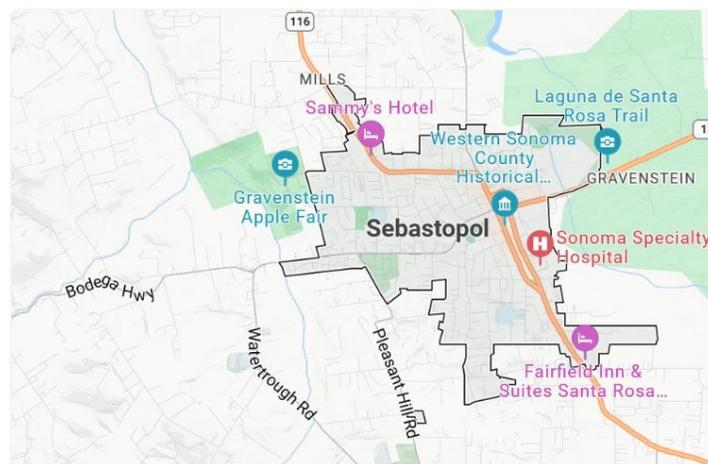
Community Identity Characteristics

The Russian River Valley – There is a separate Russian River Valley community identity when looking at:

- The native American heritage along the river with the Pomo, Miwok, and Wappo tribes.
- The wine region specializes in Pinot Noir due to cooler coastal influences. The region is represented by the Russian River Valley Winegrowers Association.
- The parks and redwood forests along the river with areas to hike, swim and vacation. There are wine and eco-tours.
- There is a Russian River Chamber of Commerce, community service and fire protection districts, libraries, a historical society, community groups, art centers, organic farms and co-ops, the Wildlands Conservancy, health centers and diverse businesses.
- All the school districts located physically along the Russian River identify with this Russian River regional identity.
- The Russian River Valley can be accessed from Santa Rosa from a couple of different routes about 12 miles east.

School Districts Not Directly Located on the Russian River but Included in the Russian River Unified Group of Districts – Harmony, Oak Grove and Fort Ross are not directly on the Russian River and, as such, may not as closely identify with a hypothetical Russian River Unified School District. The Harmony school district does not border the Russian River, although students living more north might opt to go to El Molino High while others would more likely go to Analy High. Fort Ross is connected more to the Coast environment, but residents do need to traverse the river valley for shopping and other services. Oak Grove is in between the River Area and Santa Rosa and Sebastopol in its proximity.

The Sebastopol Sphere of Influence – the map below shows the City of Sebastopol's boundaries (black lines) and the sphere of influence extends out to Occidental and Freestone, Graton and south to Twin Hills and Gravenstein school districts. Note: Graton is 4 miles from both Sebastopol (south) and Forestville (north). Santa Rosa is about 10 miles east.



Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

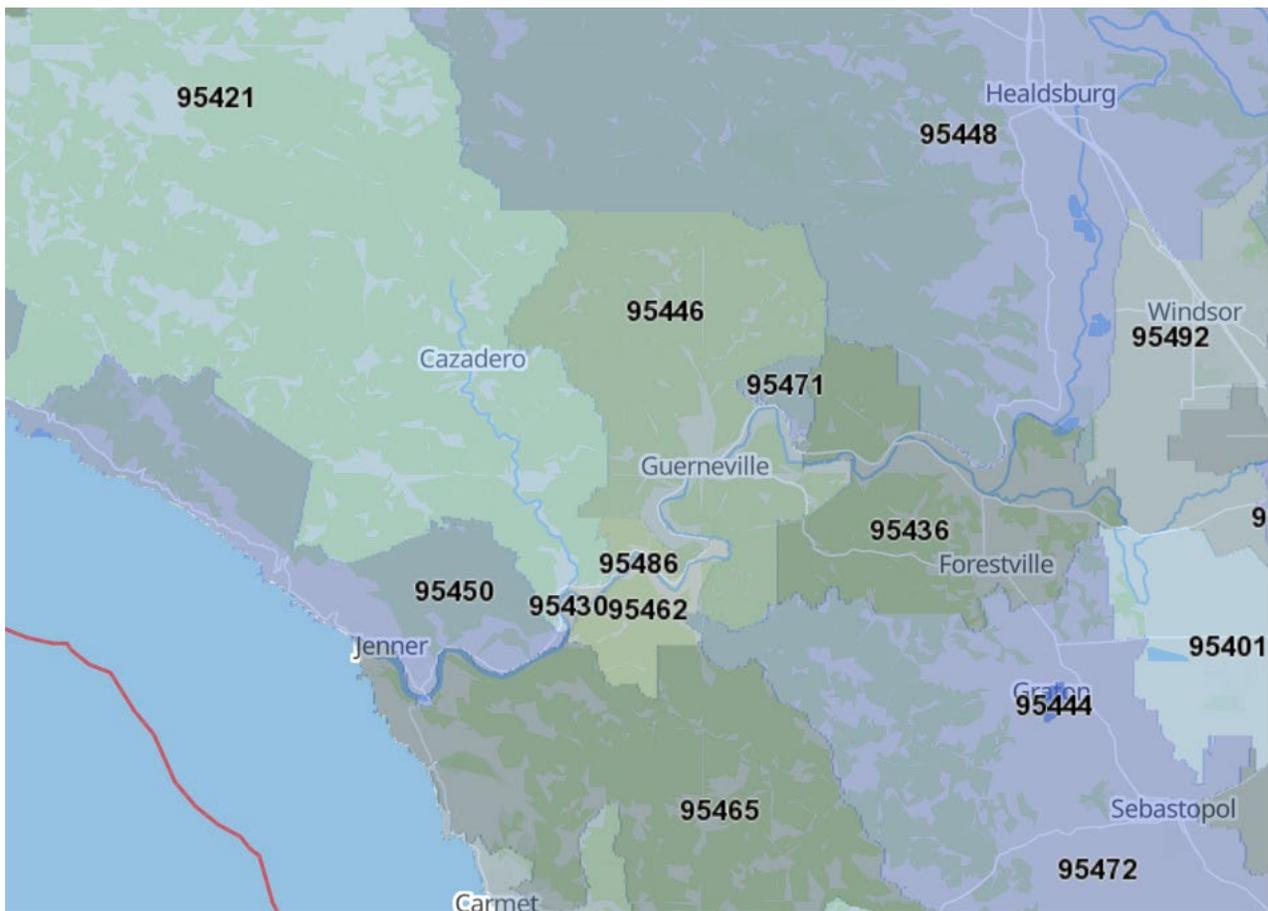
Postal Addresses and Zip Codes:

The following zip code map shows several codes along the Russian River and predominately 95472 in Sebastopol.

Graton, where Oak Grove School is located, has a separate zip code for the immediate central town area, but mostly shares Sebastopol's zip code.

Occidental, where Harmony School is located, has its own zip code but also shares to the south Sebastopol's zip code. North of Occidental and not on the map is Camp Meeker with a 95419 zip code.

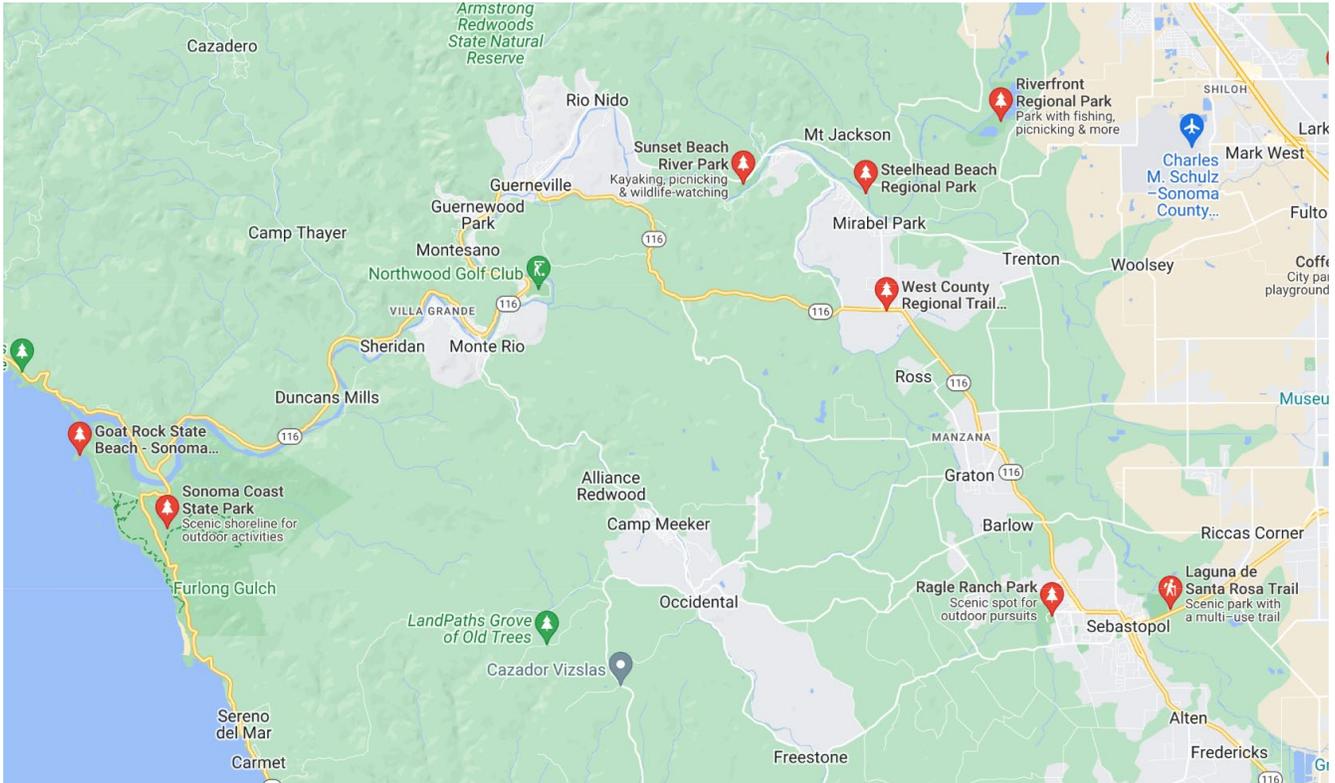
Sebastopol's zip code extends up north on Green Valley Rd (before Forestville) and south to just above Stony Point Rd (near Cotati).



Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Parks

West Sonoma is mostly a scenic rural area with regional and state parks for recreational activities. Many of these parks dot the Russian River and the coastline. Sebastopol has local parks and trails.



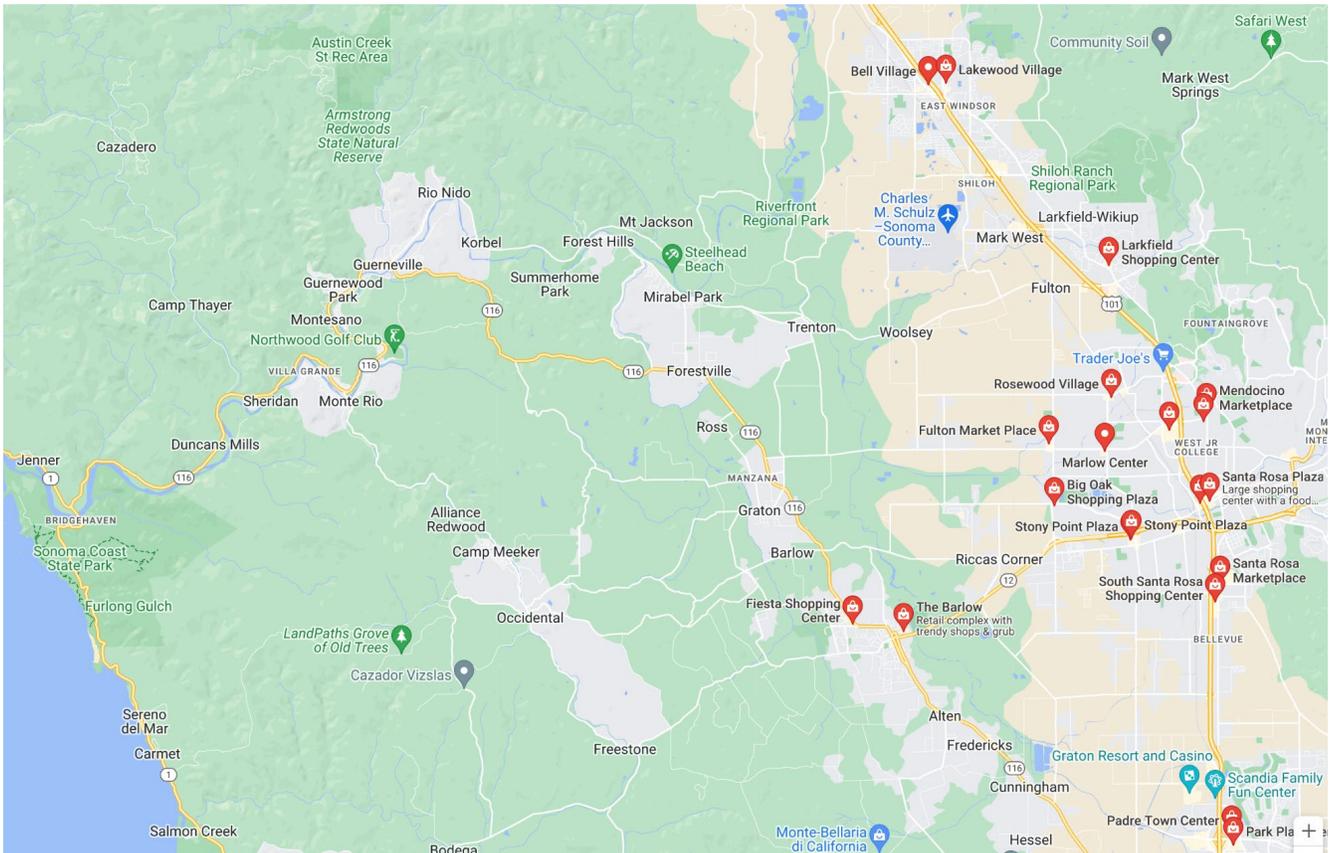
Local News Sources

The Press Democrat is the largest daily newspaper covering the entire Sonoma region. The local online newspaper is the Sebastopol Times, <https://www.sebastopoltimes.com/>. Other news sources include the major networks out of San Francisco, plus local radio.

Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

Shopping

Local general stores and small shopping plazas can be found in the West Sonoma population centers, with Sebastopol offering the most shopping. But the significant malls are found in the Santa Rosa area, East Windsor, and south in Cotati, as shown by the map below (red markers):



Criterion #2: Community Identity, Cont'd

School District Site Visits

During CW's visits to each school district, all told the consultant about their uniqueness. Most want to remain autonomous from unification; with little exception, the boards plan to opt-out. The driving motivation for unifying the Russian River districts, especially Forestville, is to reopen El Molino as a comprehensive high school.

Below is a sampling of comments about community identity, paraphrased here:

- Fort Ross – the school is the heart of the community; without it the community would diffuse. The school is used for community recreation, classes, the library, a Sunday market, health clinics, a food bank and emergencies.
- Guerneville is the community hub for the Russian River Valley, over the other communities.
- Analy was the cross-town rival to El Molino and the distance is too far, it is hard, for example, for kids to participate in after-school sports.
- “There is a different culture on the river.” Perceived differences in income levels.
- Harmony is more closely identified with Sebastopol, but some in Camp Meeker might identify more with the river area. There is only one road to El Molino, so there were many interdistrict transfers to Analy before the closure of El Molino. But some families loved the smaller school feel of El Molino.
- Oak Grove School was a feeder to El Molino, and most families were unhappy when it closed.

Conclusion: There is substantial community identity with the Russian River districts that is separate from the Sebastopol area districts with one exception, Harmony School. Should a unification result that would include Harmony within the Russian River Unified area, it is expected many interdistrict attendance requests to Analy High would result. This should be considered when evaluating the potential size of an El Molino high school.

Criterion #3: Division of Property and Facilities

Statutory Requirement: The proposal will result in an equitable division of property and facilities of the original districts.

Regulations: This condition is addressed by State Board of Education regulations in CCR, Title 5, Section 18573(a)(3):

To determine whether an equitable division of property and facilities will occur, the California Department of Education will determine which of the criteria authorized in Education Code Section 35736 shall be applied. It shall also ascertain that the affected districts and the county office of education are prepared to appoint the committee described in Education Code section 35565 to settle disputes arising from such division of property.

In reviewing the aspects of proposals dealing with school facilities, county committees may request long-range facilities plans from the affected school districts. There are related *Education Code* provisions for the division of funds, property, and obligations. Refer to *EC* sections 35560, 35564, and 35570 through 35579. If a dispute arises concerning the division of funds, property, or obligations, *EC* Section 35565 provides for binding arbitration of the dispute.

Analysis: Division of property and facilities is largely governed by the Education Code (EC) and allows for negotiation of the terms between the former and new district(s) to achieve an equitable division. EC Sections 35560 and 35736 specifies the basic allocation methods for the hypothetical Russian River and West Sonoma Unified School Districts.

EC Section 35560. When a school district is reorganized and when the allocation of funds, property, and obligations is not fixed by terms, conditions, or recommendations as provided by law, the funds, property, and obligations of a former district, except for bonded indebtedness, shall be allocated as follows:

(a) The real property and personal property and fixtures normally situated thereat shall be the property of the district in which the real property is located.

(b) All other property, funds, and obligations, except bonded indebtedness, shall be divided pro rata among the districts in which the territory of the former district is included. The basis for the division and allocation shall be the assessed valuation of the part of the former district which is included within each of the districts.

EC Section 35736. Plans and recommendations may include a proposal for dividing the property, other than real property, and obligations of any school district proposed to be divided between two or more new or acquiring districts or proposed to be partially included in one or more new or acquiring districts.

As used in this section, "property" includes funds, cash on hand, and moneys due but uncollected on the date reorganization becomes effective for all purposes, and state apportionments based on average daily attendance earned in the year immediately preceding the date reorganization becomes effective for all purposes.

Criterion #3: Division of Property and Facilities, Cont'd

EC Section 35736, cont'd. In providing for this division, the plans and recommendations may consider the assessed valuation of each portion of the school district, the local control funding formula allocation pursuant to Section 42238.02, as implemented by Section 42238.03, in each school district, the number of children of school age residing in each portion of the school district, the value and location of the school property, and other matters that may be deemed pertinent and equitable. Any such proposal shall be an integral part of the proposal and not a separate proposition.

Practical Application of Dividing Property and Facilities: Real property goes to the district in which the property is located. All other property, funds and debt (except bonds, which are discussed separately) are typically divided based on either:

1. Proportional Assessed Valuation (AV) as per EC Section 35560 above, or;
2. Proportional Average Daily Attendance (ADA) or enrollment, as permitted in EC Section 35736 (see next page).

In this proposal, all the elementary school district real properties and other assets would go to the unified district in which the property is located. The only division of property would be that of the high school district, WSCUHSD.

Hypothetical Division of Property of WSCUHSD

If the high school district were split as described in this study, it is feasible that the property of WCUHSD could be equitably divided as follows:

- **School site properties:** Based on location, Analy High would go to the new West Sonoma County Unified School District and El Molino High to the new Russian River Unified School District. The Deferred Maintenance Fund and the Capital Projects Funds would be divided on some basis that might include site-specific maintenance and capital project needs, or be divided strictly on proportionate AV.
- **District office properties, non-movable assets:** The properties would go to the district in which the properties reside and at the fair market value. For an equitable division to occur, the new West Sonoma Unified might owe Russian River Unified compensation for a proportional value of the district office and operational facilities in Sebastopol. This is because the taxpayers in Russian River area helped originally pay for the facilities, and annual maintenance. For example, if the district office is valued at \$3M and Russian River Unified has a proportional AV or ADA of 50%, the West Sonoma County Unified might owe RRUSD \$1.5M.
- **Furniture, Equipment, and Vehicles:** Movable assets (such as vehicles, buses, school furniture and equipment, computers, cafeteria equipment, etc.) would be divided between the two new districts based on either proportional AV or ADA.
- **General and Special Revenue Fund Balances of WSCUHSD:** The General Fund balances and Special Revenue fund balances (e.g., cafeteria and deferred maintenance) are typically divided based on proportional ADA.
- **Capital Project Funds:** Bonds are governed by several EC sections and are discussed further in this section. Developer fees would likely be divided based on the location of the fees collected or some approximation. Capital facilities grant funds are provided based on a specified school site and would remain available for only that site project.

Criterion #3: Division of Property and Facilities, Cont'd

Hypothetical Division of Property of WSCUHSD, Cont'd

- **Liabilities, non-bonded indebtedness:** Liabilities are also equitably divided, including other post-employment benefits, accrued employee benefits and leases.
 - Post-employment benefits may follow the employee. A legal analysis would need to determine whether post-employment benefits vest with the employee and are portable when a school district no longer exists. If it is determined there are no agreements to continue the benefits or no vesting, the benefits would dissolve.
 - Lease liabilities follow the assets acquired with the lease financing. For example, a bus lease liability would follow the transfer of the bus asset.
 - Accrued vacation benefits would be paid out when the original districts cease to exist.
 - Other liabilities, such as structured early retirement benefits and legal settlements, would be divided based on proportionate ADA or FTEs.
- **Division of Student Body Funds** The high school level associated student body funds, now all at Analy High, would be split based on proportional high school enrollment, expected to leave Analy and attend El Molino High. There is a specific law on the division of student funds:

EC Section 35564. If the reorganization of a school district under this chapter results in the relocation of district boundaries so that a portion of the pupils will not be residents of the district thereafter maintaining a school previously attended by the pupils, and if there is in the school an organized student body, the property, funds, and obligations of the student body shall be divided as determined by the county committee, except that the share shall not exceed an amount equal to the ratio which the number of pupils leaving the school bears to the total number of pupils enrolled. The ownership of the property, funds, and obligations, which is the proportionate share of each segment of the student body, shall be transferred to the student body of the school or schools in which the pupils are enrolled after the reorganization. Funds from devises, bequests, or gifts made to the organized student body of a school shall remain the property of the organized student body of that school and shall not be divided.

Criterion #3: Division of Property and Facilities, Cont'd

Methods of Division of Assets and Debt: There are two major and commonly used methods to divide assets and debt; proportionate AV and ADA

Proportional Assessed Valuation (AV)

As shown in the table below, the proportionate AV is 56% Russian River Unified and 44% West Sonoma Unified as of the 2024 tax year.

Assessed Valuation By Original and Hypothetical Unified School Districts			
ADA by Original and Hypothetical Unified School Districts			
School Districts	Assessed Valuation (Tax Year 2024, County of Sonoma)	Russian River Unified	West Sonoma Unified
Forestville Union Elementary	\$ 1,726,184,662	\$ 1,726,184,662	
Fort Ross Elementary	\$ 302,036,476	\$ 302,036,476	
Gravenstein Union Elementary	\$ 1,215,678,746		\$ 1,215,678,746
Guerneville Elementary	\$ 1,299,511,419	\$ 1,299,511,419	
Harmony Union Elementary	\$ 1,526,292,451	\$ 1,526,292,451	
Monte Rio Elementary	\$ 596,010,130	\$ 596,010,130	
Montgomery Elementary	\$ 325,837,529	\$ 325,837,529	
Oak Grove Elementary	\$ 1,395,607,398	\$ 1,395,607,398	
Sebastopol Union Elementary	\$ 2,895,941,029		\$ 2,895,941,029
Twin Hills Union Elementary	\$ 1,602,315,369		\$ 1,602,315,369
Total ADA Elementary Districts	\$ 12,885,415,209	\$ 7,171,480,065	\$ 5,713,935,144
Proportionate AV		56%	44%
West Sonoma County Union High	\$ 12,885,415,209	\$ 7,171,480,065	\$ 5,713,935,144

As of P2 2023-24, the proportional ADA is 49% Russian River Unified and 51% West Sonoma Unified.

ADA by Original and Hypothetical Unified School Districts			
School Districts	Average Daily Attendance, 2023-24, P2 (includes charters)	Russian River Unified	West Sonoma Unified
Forestville Union Elementary	209	209	
Fort Ross Elementary	14	14	
Gravenstein Union Elementary	766		766
Guerneville Elementary	340	340	
Harmony Union Elementary	530	530	
Monte Rio Elementary	62	62	
Montgomery Elementary	19	19	
Oak Grove Elementary	1,117	1,117	
Sebastopol Union Elementary	689		689
Twin Hills Union Elementary	953		953
Total ADA Elementary Districts	4,699	2,291	2,408
Proportionate ADA		49%	51%
West Sonoma County Union High	1,551	756	795
Total ADA All Districts	6,250	3,048	3,203

Criterion #3: Division of Property and Facilities, Cont'd

Division of Bonded Indebtedness in a School District Reorganization

All the districts in WSCUHSD have authorized bonded indebtedness except for Montgomery. The table below recaps assessed valuation (AV), bond measures authorized (whether issued or not), bonded indebtedness as a percentage of AV, and the bonded indebtedness of the newly organized unified school districts in this study. As discussed on the following page, the bonded indebtedness as a percentage of AV is an important statistic as it must be below legal caps for a unified school district, which is 2.5%. The studied unification would be well within the limits if divided based on proportionate AV.

School Districts	Assessed Valuation (Tax Year 2024, County of Sonoma)	Authorized Bonds	Bonded Indebtedness as a % of AV	Russian River Unified - Bonds	West Sonoma Unified - Bonds
Forestville Union Elementary	\$ 1,726,184,662				
2001 Bonds		\$ 5,100,000	0.295%	\$ 5,100,000	
2010 Bonds		\$ 5,100,000	0.295%	\$ 5,100,000	
2022 Bonds		\$ 6,500,000	0.377%	\$ 6,500,000	
Fort Ross Elementary	\$ 302,036,476				
2024 Bonds		\$ 2,100,000	0.695%	\$ 2,100,000	
Gravenstein Union Elementary	\$ 1,215,678,746				
2012 Bonds		\$ 6,000,000	0.494%		\$ 6,000,000
Guerneville Elementary	\$ 1,299,511,419				
2012 Bonds		\$ 6,000,000	0.462%	\$ 6,000,000	
2016 Bonds		\$ 7,000,000	0.539%	\$ 7,000,000	
Harmony Union Elementary	\$ 1,526,292,451				
2018 Bonds		\$ 9,600,000	0.629%	\$ 9,600,000	
2024 Bonds		\$ 13,500,000	0.884%	\$ 13,500,000	
Monte Rio Elementary	\$ 596,010,130				
2018 Bonds		\$ 3,300,000	0.554%	\$ 3,300,000	
Montgomery Elementary	\$ 325,837,529	none		none	
Oak Grove Elementary	\$ 1,395,607,398				
2014 Bonds		\$ 6,000,000	0.430%	\$ 6,000,000	
2018 Bonds		\$ 9,500,000	0.681%	\$ 9,500,000	
Sebastopol Union Elementary	\$ 2,895,941,029				
2001 Bonds		\$ 3,200,000	0.110%		\$ 3,200,000
2012 Bonds		\$ 9,000,000	0.311%		\$ 9,000,000
2020 Bonds		\$ 17,500,000	0.604%		\$ 17,500,000
Twin Hills Union Elementary	\$ 1,602,315,369				
1999 Bonds		\$ 4,000,000	0.250%		\$ 4,000,000
2010 Bonds (& CREB)		\$ 11,000,000	0.687%		\$ 11,000,000
Total Elementary Districts	\$ 12,885,415,209	\$ 124,400,000	0.965%	\$ 73,700,000	\$ 50,700,000
Proportional % of Elem AV				56%	44%
West Sonoma County Union High					
2010 Bonds (& CREB)		\$ 23,800,000	0.185%	\$ 13,246,079	\$ 10,553,921
2018 Bonds		\$ 91,000,000	0.706%	\$ 50,646,772	\$ 40,353,228
Totals	\$ 12,885,415,209	\$ 239,200,000	1.856%	\$ 137,592,851	\$ 101,607,149
		Bonded Indebtedness as a % of AV		1.919%	1.778%

Criterion #3: Division of Property and Facilities, Cont'd

Division of Bonded Indebtedness in a School District Reorganization, Cont'd

There are several applicable Education Code Sections related to the treatment of bond funds and the related liabilities after a reorganization, including unification:

EC 35572 (Bonding Capacity Cap in a Reorganization): No territory shall be taken from any school district having any outstanding bonded indebtedness and made a part of another district where the action, if taken, would so reduce the last equalized assessed valuation of a district from which the territory was taken so that the outstanding bonded indebtedness of the district would exceed 5% of the assessed valuation (AV) remaining in the district for each level maintained, on the date the reorganization is effective.

Practical Application: As shown in the table on the preceding page, neither the current districts nor the proposed unified districts would come close to reaching the 5% cap. At present, the average rate of bonded indebtedness to AV is 1%.

EC 15106 (Bonding Capacity of a Unified District): A unified school district may issue bonds that, in aggregation with outstanding bonds issued, shall not exceed 2.5% of the taxable property (i.e., AV) of the school district as shown by the last equalized assessment of the county in which the district is located.

Practical Application: Once unified, all outstanding bonded indebtedness of the prior elementary and high school districts would be included in determining that the 2.5% bonding capacity limit is not exceeded. As shown by the table below, it would be slightly over 2.5% in West Sonoma Unified, should 100% of the 2018 bonds be allocated to match the expenditures at Analy High (refer to discussion on page 39). However, EC 35572 would permit this, but future bond issuance would need additional AV to support the measure.

	Bonded Indebtedness	Bonded Indebtedness as a % of AV
West Sonoma County Unified		
Elementary Bonds	\$ 50,700,000	
Proportionate % of 2010 Bonds	\$ 10,553,921	
2018 Bonds, 100% assumed allocated as mostly spent on Analy High, see page 39 Discussion	\$ 91,000,000	
	\$ 152,253,921	
Russian River Valley Unified		
Elementary Bonds	\$ 73,700,000	
Proportionate % of 2010 Bonds	\$ 13,246,079	
2018 Bonds, none as spent at Analy High		
	\$ 86,946,079	1.21%

Criterion #3: Division of Property and Facilities, Cont'd

Division of Bonded Indebtedness in a School District Reorganization, Cont'd

EC 35561 (Use of Pre-Existing Bond Funds): Funds from the sale of previously issued school bonds may be used for the acquisition, construction, or improvement of only the school property that was a part of the original district or for such use in that same district. However, if the new or acquiring district accepts and assumes the original district's bonded indebtedness, the funds may be used anywhere in the new or acquiring district and for the same voted purpose. (EC 35561)

Practical Application—Elementary School District Bonded Indebtedness: After unification, the original elementary school districts' unspent bond funds, any authorized but unissued bonds, and repayment of outstanding bonded indebtedness would, by default, remain unchanged.

- To reapportion the existing debt throughout the unified territory (and beyond the boundaries of the original elementary school district), the new unified district board would need to call for a district-wide vote. This is unlikely to happen or pass the election. Again, by default the property tax roll assessments would be unaffected by the unification. In other words, no impact on taxpayers due to preexisting bond debt.

Practical Application – High School District Bonded Indebtedness: WSCUHSD has \$239M in authorized bonds and, as of June 30, 2023, \$86M outstanding. Older bonds that are fully spent and paid down amount to \$24.5M. The most recent Measure 2018 bonds have been issued in series A – C, for a total of \$68M, with \$23M in authorization remaining.

As of June 30, 2023, in the Building Fund, which is used for bond-financed construction projects, there was \$48M in cash awaiting expenditures. When added to the remaining authorization of \$23M, there is a total of \$71M available for capital improvements.

According to the WSCUHSD website, current projects to be paid for by the bond funds include:

- Analy High: HVAC, Roofing, Door Lock Upgrades, New CTE classroom, portables, pedestrian improvement, stadium and bleachers, gym modernization, classroom modernizations, kitchen upgrades.
- Laguna High: HVAC and roof replacement
- El Molino High: no projects are listed.

Past completed projects included:

- El Molino High: Performing arts center, greenhouse project, library roof replacement, weight room
- Analy High: clock bell and public address upgrade, roofing
- Laguna High: carpeting
- Districtwide: phone upgrades, security cameras, furniture upgrades, and technology infrastructure projects.

Criterion #3: Division of Property and Facilities, Cont'd

Division of Bonded Indebtedness in a School District Reorganization, Cont'd

EC 35561 (Use of Pre-Existing Bond Funds), cont'd:

Division of Remaining Measure A 2018 Bond Funds: Since El Molino closed June 30, 2021, all but about \$3.5M in 2018 bond funds have been used for Analy High School site improvements and by a lesser degree for Laguna High and the districtwide projects. The current “active design project estimates” for Analy High School total \$52M, with another \$25M in completed or near-completed construction projects. By comparison, \$3.5M was spent at El Molino for HVAC and roofing. The possible future projects list estimates additional needs amounting to \$41.5M for Analy High, \$4M for the district office, and \$18.3M for Laguna High. No needs are identified on the website for El Molino.

Since about \$87.5M of Measure A funds were spent on Analy High and Sebastopol properties, CW recommends that if the district is split by unification, the **Measure A bond funds be reapportioned over the remaining Sebastopol area only**. In other words, the bonded indebtedness follows the asset.

Reapportioning Measure A over the smaller Sebastopol area would increase the tax rates for Sebastopol City and surrounding unincorporated area taxpayers. According to Ballotpedia, taxpayers throughout the WSCUHSD area are charged \$30 per \$100,000 in AV.

- Since the Sebastopol area is about 44% of the AV compared to the total area, the tax rate could go up to about \$76 per \$100,000 in AV. For a \$500,000 value home, this is \$380 compared to \$150 today.
- For Russian River Unified, the taxpayers would save \$30 per \$100,000 in AV through Measure A debt relief. This would create a more favorable situation for asking the voters to pass a new bond measure for El Molino High reopening capital improvement costs.

Note on Measure B, Parcel Tax: CW believes the parcel tax would need to be reauthorized in each new district after the split of WSCUHSD. The tax is currently \$79 per parcel and expires in 2028.

Criterion #3: Division of Property and Facilities, Cont'd

Division of Bonded Indebtedness in a School District Reorganization, Cont'd

EC 35573 (Liability of Outstanding Bonded Indebtedness): In case of a merger, the single resulting school district becomes liable for all outstanding bonded indebtedness of those districts merged.

Practical Application: The unified school district would assume responsibility for all outstanding bonded indebtedness of the former school districts. However, the payment derived from the former elementary bond debt would be collected in the same manner and formulas as before unification, without affecting the taxpayers. However, the Measure A bond funds would likely go with the properties in Sebastopol and be reapportioned over the West Sonoma Unified area. Russian River Unified would have a tax decrease as taxpayers would be relieved of the Measure A debt.

EC 35576 (Computation of Annual Tax Rate): The county board of supervisors shall compute the appropriate annual tax rate for bond interest and redemption. The county board of supervisors shall also compute tax rates for both the annual charge and the use charge for county school service fund programs.

Practical Application: This responsibility exists today. The new district bond tax rates, which include a combination of pre-unified bond debt and any post-unified bond debt, must raise sufficient funds to redeem the outstanding bonded indebtedness.

Conclusion: The proposal will result in an equitable division of property and facilities of the original districts.

Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation

Statutory Requirement: The reorganization of the districts will preserve each affected district's ability to educate students in an integrated environment and will not promote racial or ethnic discrimination or segregation.

Regulations: Pursuant to state law, local educational agencies have a constitutional obligation to prevent racial and ethnic segregation and to alleviate the harmful effects of segregation. (CCR Title 5 18573[a][4]) To determine whether the new districts will promote racial or ethnic discrimination or segregation, the effects of the following factors will be considered:

- a. The current number and percentage of pupils in each racial and ethnic group in the affected districts and schools in the affected districts, compared with the number and percentage of pupils in each racial and ethnic group in the affected districts and schools in the affected districts if the proposal or petition were approved.
- b. The trends and rates of present and possible future growth or change in the total population in the districts affected, in each racial and ethnic group within the entire district, and in each school of the affected districts.
- c. The school board policies regarding methods of preventing racial and ethnic segregation in the affected districts and the effect of the proposal or petition on any desegregation plan or program of the affected districts, whether voluntary or court ordered, designed to prevent or alleviate racial or ethnic discrimination or segregation.
- d. The effect of factors such as distance between schools and attendance centers, terrain, and geographic features that may involve safety hazards to pupils, capacity of schools, and related conditions or circumstances that may have an effect on the feasibility of integration of the affected schools.
- e. The effect of the proposal on the duty of the governing board of each of the affected districts to take steps, insofar as reasonably feasible, to alleviate segregation of minority pupils in schools regardless of its cause.

Analysis: State law requires the reorganization of the districts to preserve each affected district's ability to educate students in an integrated environment and not promote racial or ethnic discrimination or segregation. Isolating a particular race or ethnicity through school district reorganization would be detrimental to the passage of any petition.

CW observed that each school board has policies to prevent racial and ethnic segregation in their districts. Like most school districts, schools are centered in neighborhoods, each with a demographic profile. The high school demographics draw on larger geographical areas and are influenced by proximity to feeder school sites, facility capacity, and transportation routes.

Unification by consolidating the districts from 11 to 2 would further the ability of the new districts to promote integration and remove any barriers that segregate the current elementary school district structures. However, splitting the high school population in two would result in a loss of integration opportunities at the secondary level.

Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Russian River Unified Demographics: If the Russian River area districts all unified, the new district would have about 3,288 pupils, 32% Hispanic or Latino, 54% White, 8% Two or More Races, and less than 2% in all other categories. The elementary schools would remain the same, barring interdistrict transfers, and the high school would reflect the K-8-wide averages presented here. White remains the majority, with Hispanic or Latino a strong second and trending more Hispanic or Latino area-wide (see the historical trend tables that follow in this section). There would be no significant changes to the racial-ethnic mix or barriers to integration.

Change in Race and Ethnicity, if Russian River Area Unified										
Russian River Unified Enrollment	African America	American Indian	Asian	Filipino	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races	Note Reported	Total
Fort Ross Elementary School District										
Number of Pupils	1	0	0	0	3	0	8	3	0	15
% of Pupils	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	53.3%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Montgomery Elementary School										
Number of Pupils	0	0	0	0	6	0	15	1	0	22
% of Pupils	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	27.30%	0.00%	68.20%	4.50%	0.00%	100.0%
Monte Rio Elementary School District										
Number of Pupils	0	0	0	0	12	0	41	12	2	67
% of Pupils	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	17.90%	0.00%	61.20%	17.90%	3.00%	100.0%
Guerneville Elementary School										
Number of Pupils	15	3	2	4	124	0	173	36	4	361
% of Pupils	4.20%	0.80%	0.60%	1.10%	34.30%	0.00%	47.90%	10.00%	1.10%	100.0%
Forestville Elementary School District										
Number of Pupils	1	0	1	0	64	1	134	9	13	223
% of Pupils	0.50%	0.00%	0.50%	0.00%	28.80%	0.00%	60.40%	4.10%	5.70%	100.00%
Harmony Elementary School District										
Number of Pupils	9	1	9	5	162	3	322	57	5	573
% of Pupils	1.60%	0.20%	1.60%	0.90%	28.30%	0.50%	56.20%	9.90%	0.80%	100.00%
Oak Grove Elementary School District										
Number of Pupils	17	20	18	2	437	0	652	83	13	1,242
% of Pupils	1.40%	1.60%	1.40%	0.20%	35.20%	0.00%	52.50%	6.70%	1.00%	100.00%
Total K-8 Population - Russian River Unified										
Number of Pupils	43	24	30	11	808	4	1345	201	37	2503
% of Pupils	1.72%	0.96%	1.20%	0.44%	32.28%	0.16%	53.74%	8.03%	1.48%	100.00%
Grades 9-12 Population										
Number of Pupils	13	8	9	3	253	1	422	63	12	785
Total Estimated K-12 Enrollment - Russian River Unified										
Number of Pupils	56	32	39	14	1,061	5	1,767	264	49	3,288
% of Pupils	1.72%	0.96%	1.20%	0.44%	32.28%	0.16%	53.74%	8.03%	1.48%	100.00%

Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

West Sonoma Unified Demographics: If the remaining West Sonoma area districts all unified, the new district would have about 3,792 pupils, 27% Hispanic or Latino, 60% White, 8% Two or More Races, and less than 2% in all other categories. The elementary schools would remain the same, barring interdistrict transfers, and the high school would reflect the K-8-wide averages presented here. White remains the majority, with Hispanic or Latino a strong second and trending more Hispanic or Latino area-wide (see the historical trend tables that follow in this section). There would be no significant changes to the racial-ethnic mix or barriers to integration.

Change in Race and Ethnicity, if Remaining West Sonoma Area Unified										
West Sonoma County Unified Enrollment	African America	American Indian	Asian	Filipino	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races	Note Reported	Total
Sebastopol Elementary School District										
Number of Pupils	17	20	18	2	437	0	652	83	13	1,242
% of Pupils	1.10%	1.80%	1.50%	0.80%	26.90%	0.00%	57.50%	7.90%	2.50%	100.00%
Gravenstein Elementary School District										
Number of Pupils	3	2	30	1	190	4	480	81	19	810
% of Pupils	0.40%	0.20%	3.70%	0.10%	23.50%	0.50%	59.30%	10.00%	2.30%	100.00%
Twin Hills Elementary School District										
Number of Pupils	5	3	7	2	188	0	677	75	0	957
% of Pupils	0.50%	0.30%	0.70%	0.20%	19.60%	0.00%	70.70%	7.80%	0.20%	100.00%
Total K-8 Population - West Sonoma Unified	25	25	55	5	815	4	1809	239	32	3,009
Grades 9-12 Population (Proportionate to K-8)	7	7	14	1	212	1	471	62	8	783
Total Estimated K-12 Enrollment - West Sonoma Unified										
Number of Pupils	32	32	69	6	1,027	5	2,280	301	40	3,792
% of Pupils	0.83%	0.83%	1.83%	0.17%	27.09%	0.13%	60.12%	7.94%	1.06%	100.00%

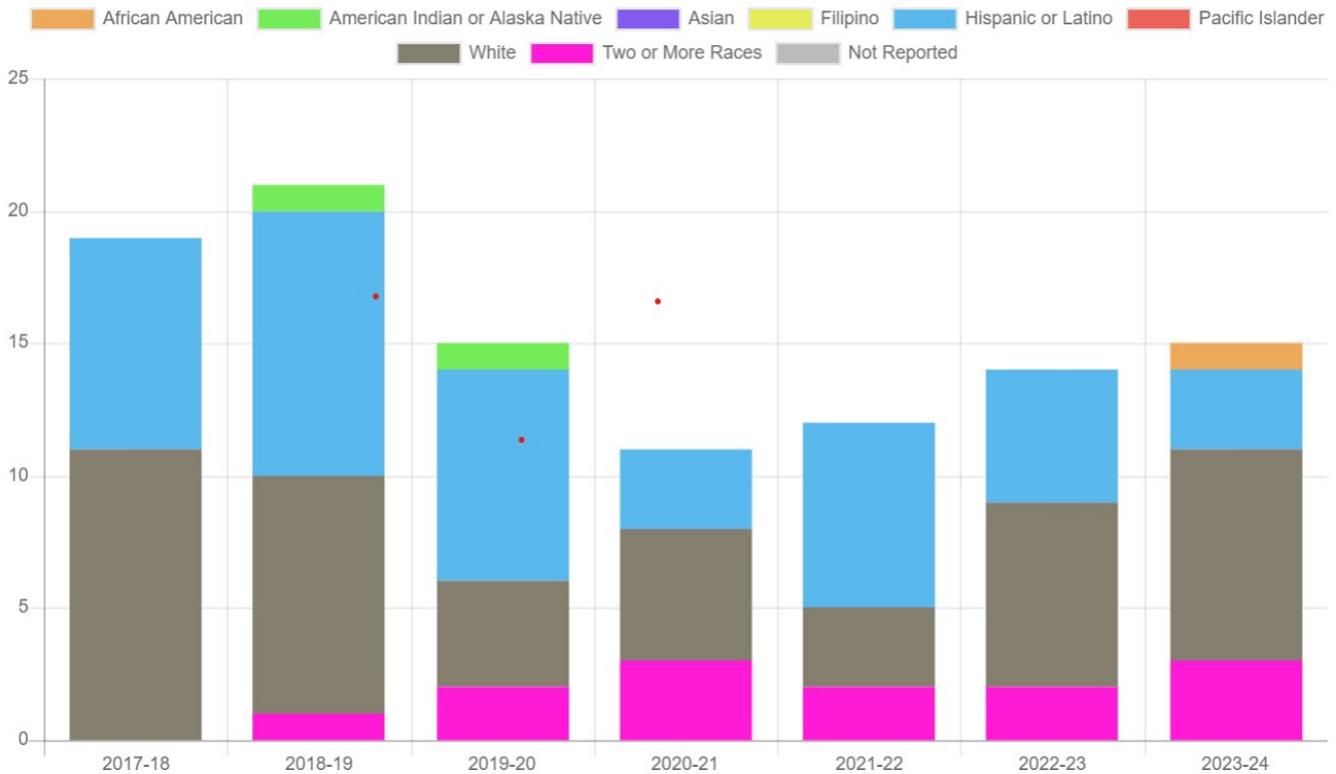
As shown on the following pages, by existing school districts, enrollment has been declining overall and is becoming increasingly more Hispanic or Latino and less predominately White. Asian is a distant third largest group. Other ethnic groups and races are minor by comparison, e.g., American Indian, African American, Filipino, and Pacific Islander.

Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

Fort Ross School District: The district has experienced uneven enrollment through 2023-24 but has increased in the past four years to 15. In this remote area, enrollment highly depends on families with young children moving in and out of the area. In 2023-24, 53% are White, 20% Hispanic or Latino, 20% Two or More Races, and 7% African American. The racial/ethnic mix depends on the families that move in and out in any given year.

Enrollment by Ethnicity

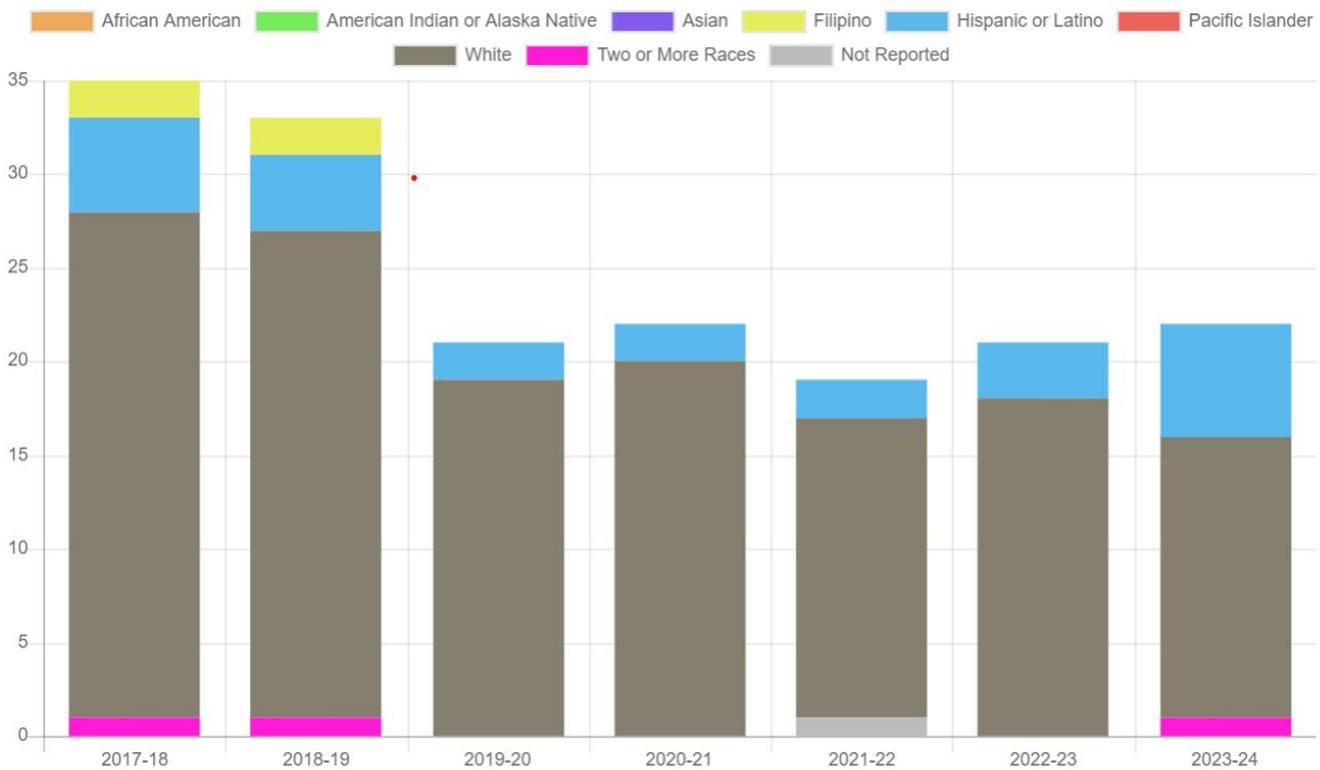


Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

Montgomery Elementary School District: The district has experienced uneven enrollment through 2023-24 but has increased slightly in the past three years to 22. In this area, enrollment is highly dependent on families with young children moving in and out of the area. In 2023-24, 68% are White, 27% Hispanic or Latino, and 5% Two or More Races. The racial/ethnic mix depends on the families that move in and out in any given year.

Enrollment by Ethnicity

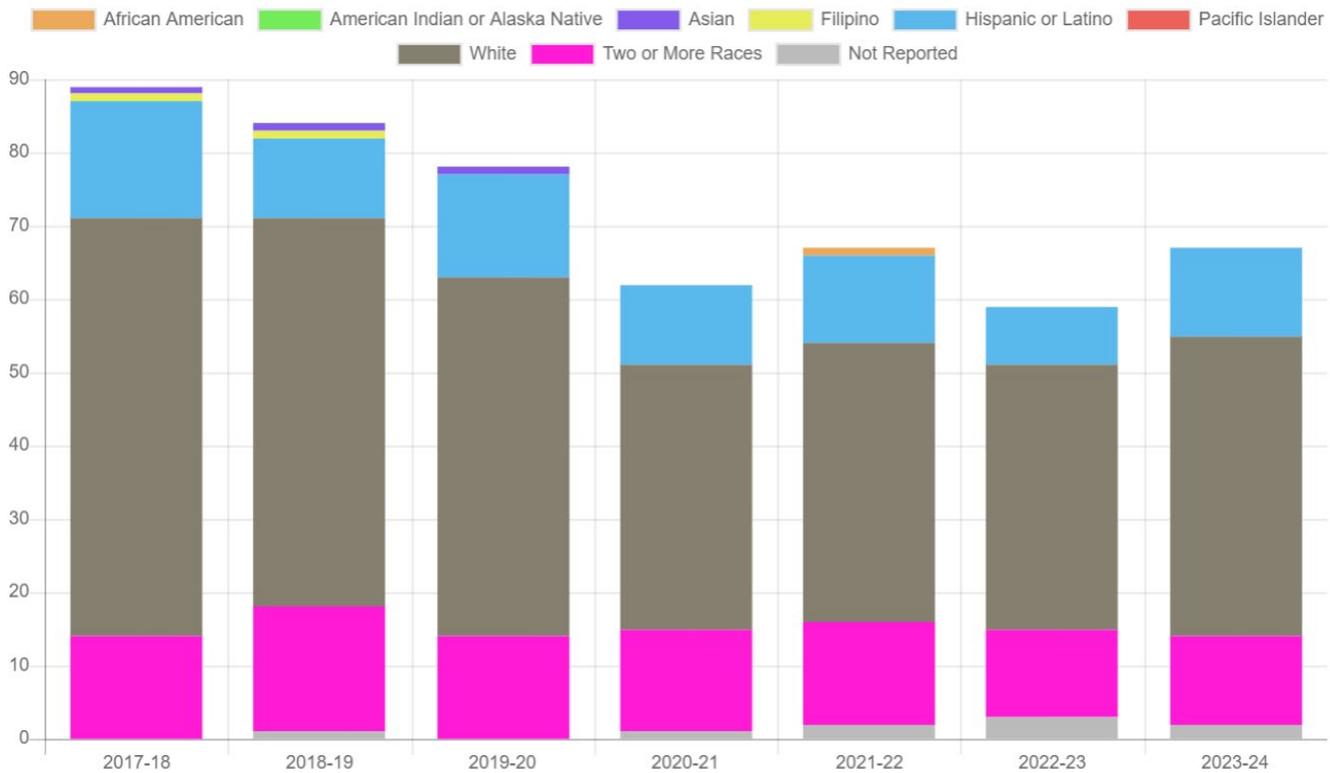


Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

Monte Rio Union Elementary School District: The district has experienced generally declining enrollment through 2023-24 but has increased slightly in the past year to 67. In this area, enrollment is highly dependent on families with young children moving in and out of the area. In 2023-24, 61% are White, 18% Hispanic or Latino, and 19% Two or More Races. The racial/ethnic mix depends on the families that move in and out in any given year.

Enrollment by Ethnicity

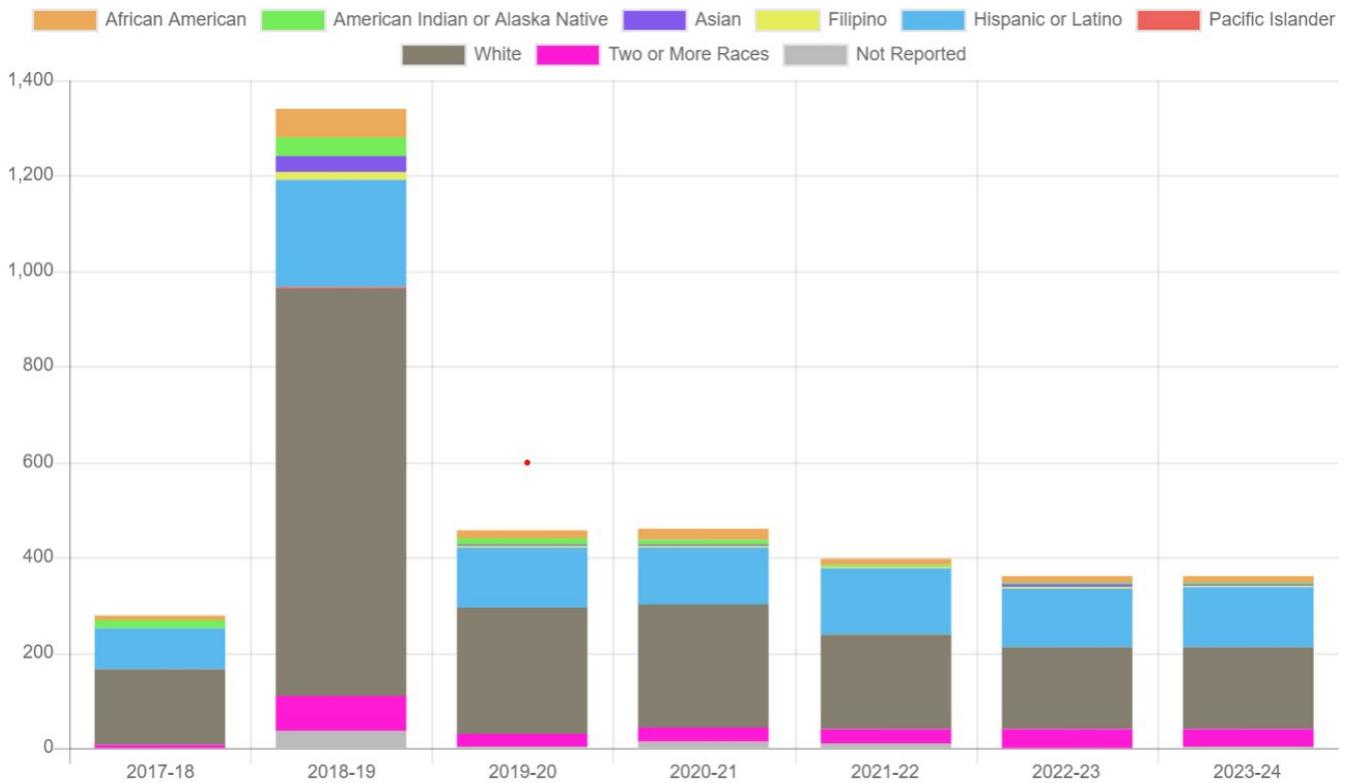


Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

Guerneville Elementary School District: The district has experienced declining and now flat enrollment (excluding 2018-19, which was an anomaly with the one-time addition of one of the charter school's enrollment). Guerneville is the largest community in the Russian River area. In 2023-24, 48% are White, 34% Hispanic or Latino, 10% Two or More Races, and 4% African American. The racial/ethnic mix has been relatively consistent over the past seven years.

Enrollment by Ethnicity

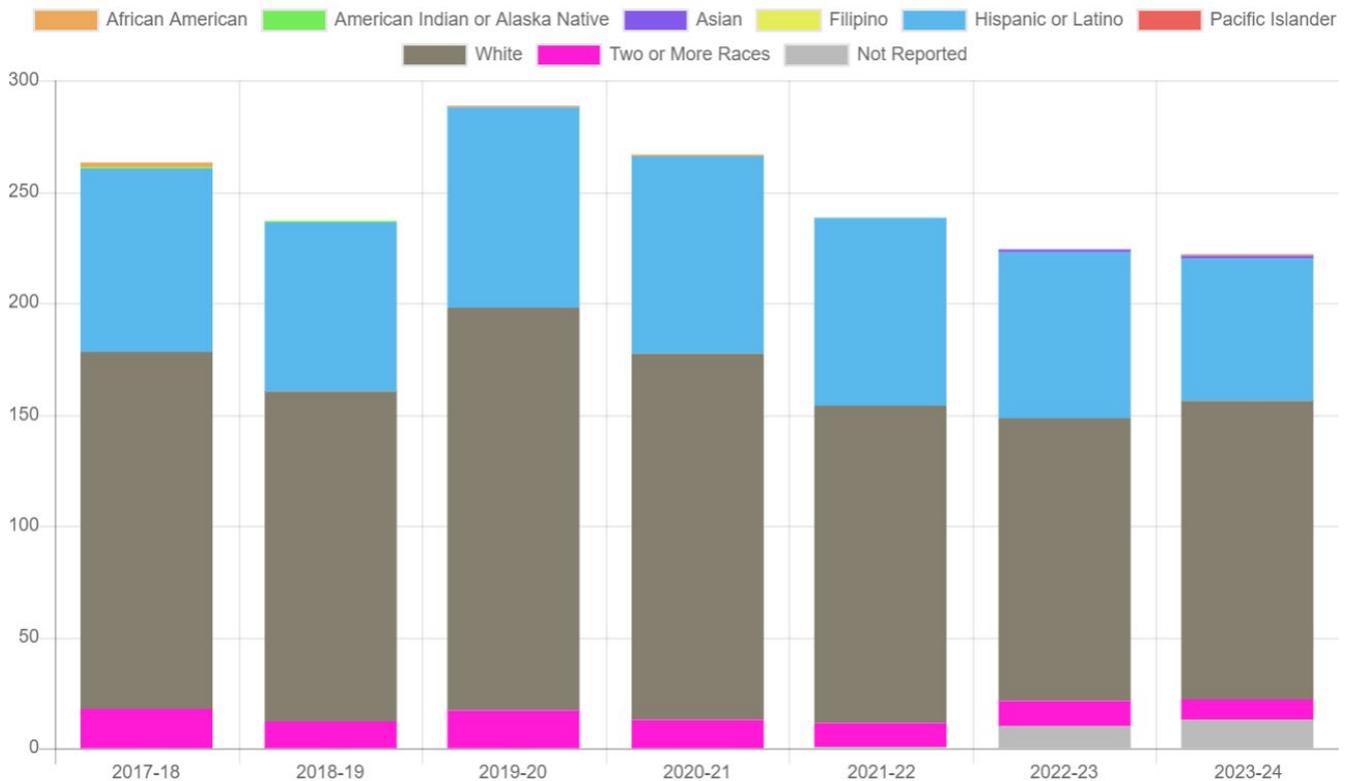


Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

Forestville Union Elementary School District: The district has experienced modest declining enrollment. Forestville is the second largest community in the Russian River area, where El Molino High is located. In 2023-24, 60% are White, 29% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Two or More Races, and 7% not reported or less than 1% each. The racial/ethnic mix has been relatively consistent over the past seven years.

Enrollment by Ethnicity

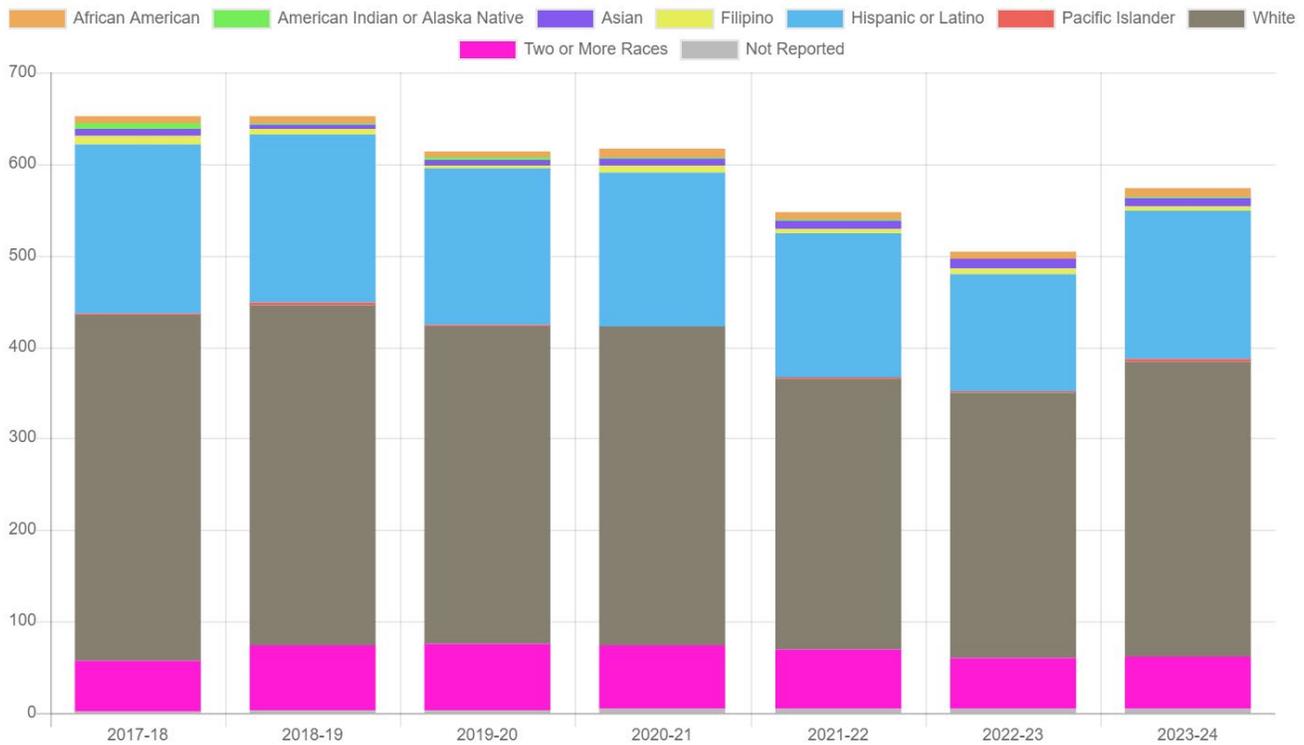


Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

Harmony Union Elementary School District: The district has experienced modest declining enrollment, but it increased to 573 pupils in 2023-24. The district draws students from a large geographical area. In 2023-24, 56% are White, 28% Hispanic or Latino, 10% Two or More Races, and less than 2% Asian and African American. The racial/ethnic mix has been relatively consistent over the past seven years.

Enrollment by Ethnicity

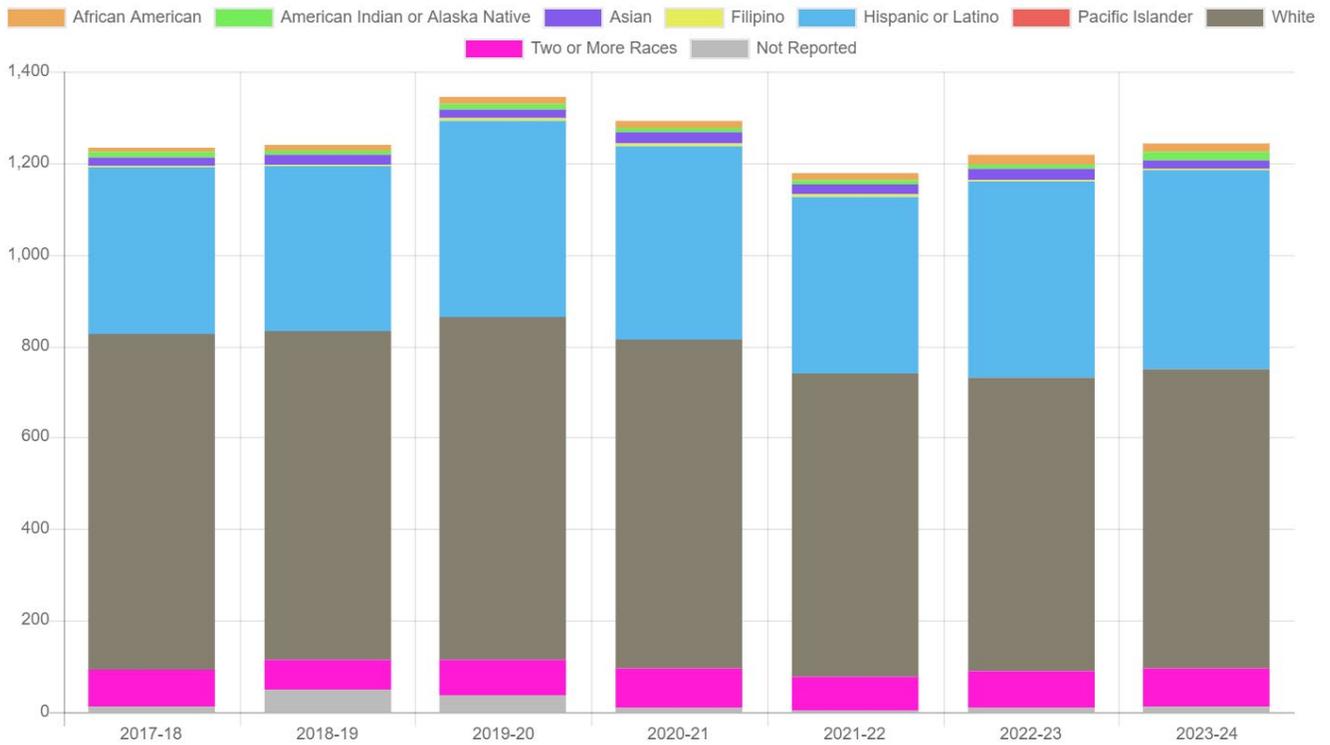


Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

Oak Grove Union Elementary School District: The district has experienced steady enrollment and draws students from a large geographical area. In 2023-24, 53% are White, 35% Hispanic or Latino, 7% Two or More Races, and less than 2% Asian and African American. The racial/ethnic mix has been trending slightly more Hispanic/Latino over the past seven years.

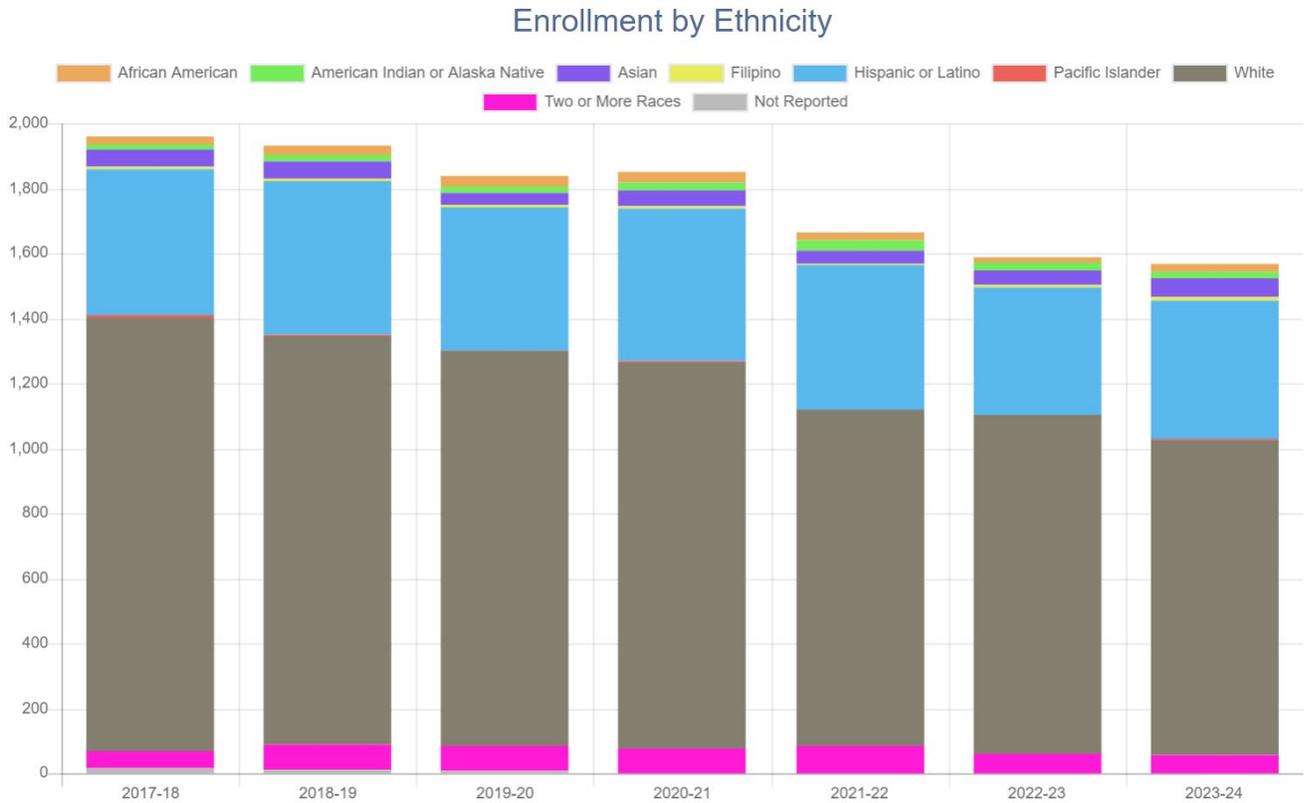
Enrollment by Ethnicity



Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

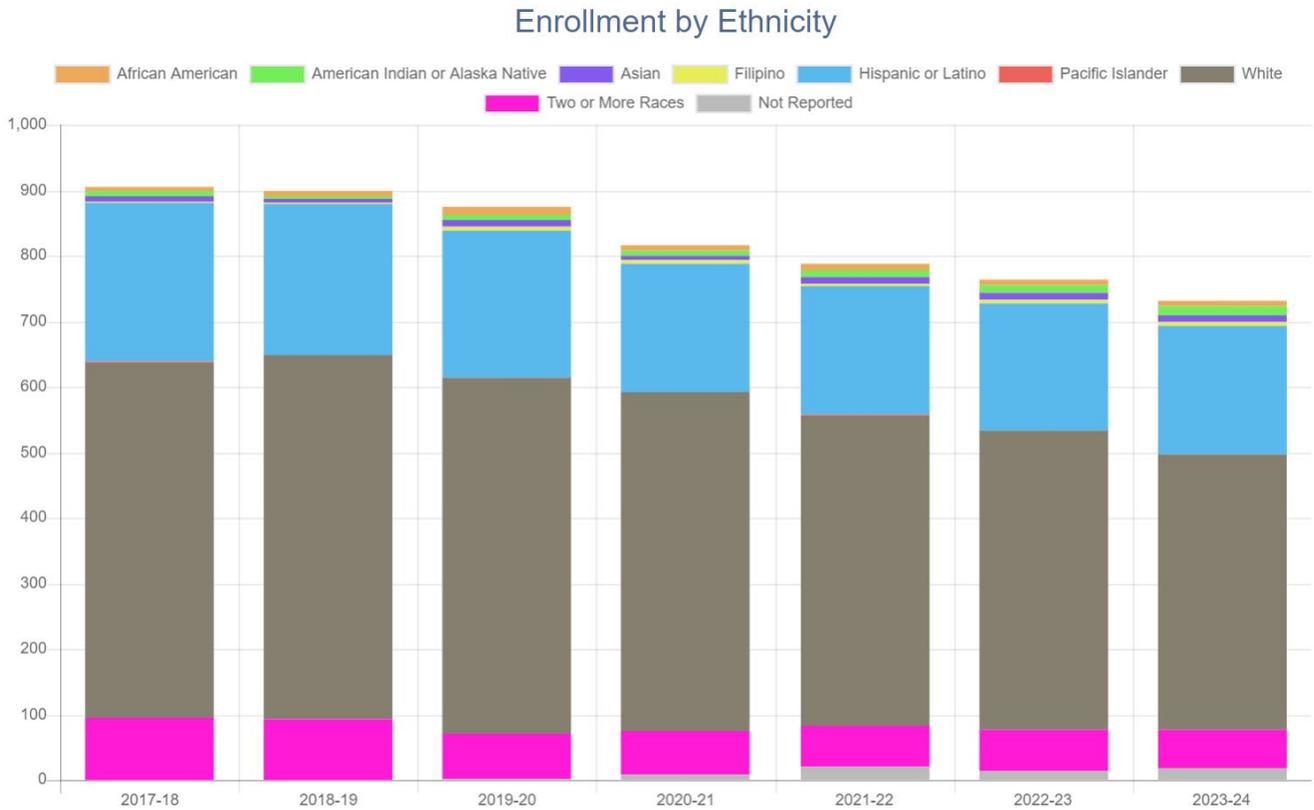
West Sonoma Union High School District: The district has experienced declining enrollment of nearly 400 pupils or 20% over the past seven years. In 2023-24, 62% are White, 27% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Asian, 3% Two or More Races, and less than 2% African American, Filipino, and Pacific Islander. The racial/ethnic mix has been trending slightly more Hispanic/Latino over the past seven years.



Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

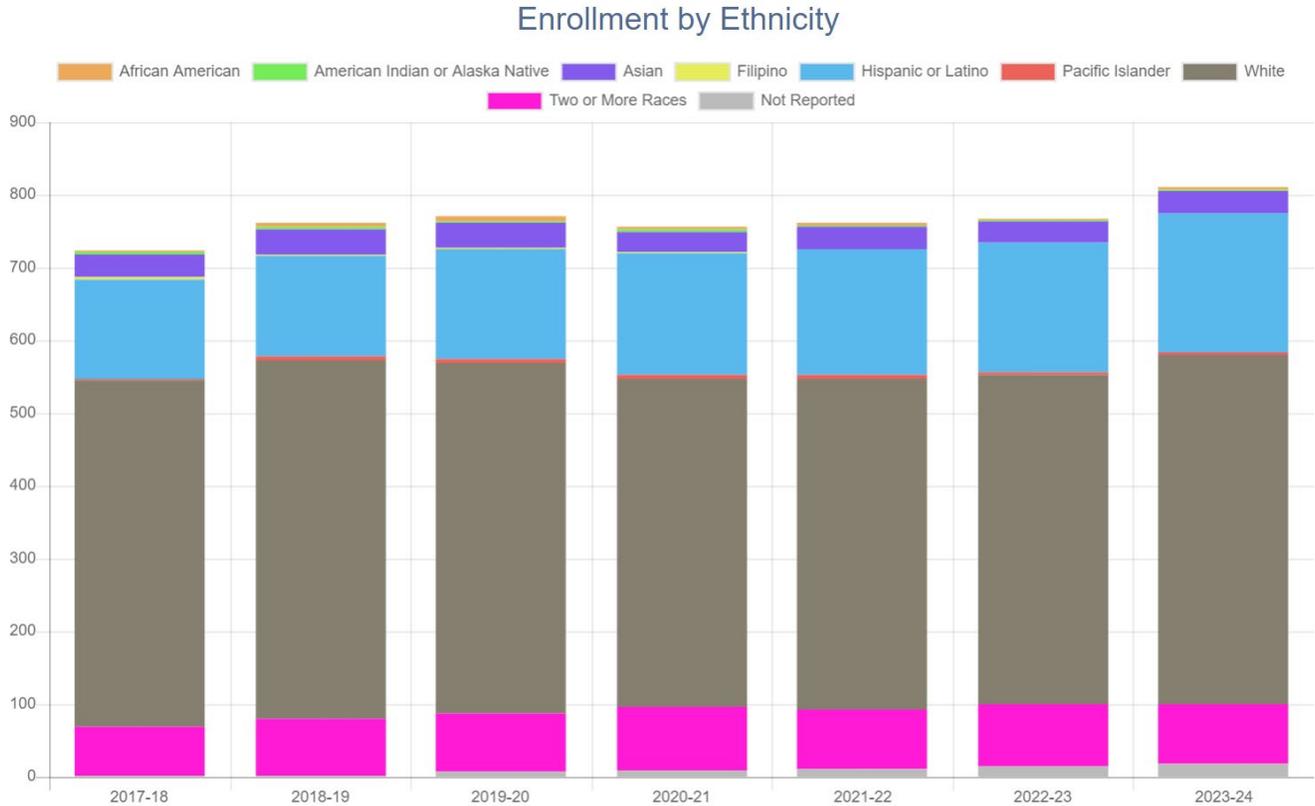
Sebastopol Elementary School District: The district has experienced a declining enrollment of 174 pupils or 19% over the past seven years. In 2023-24, 58% are White, 27% Hispanic or Latino, 8% Two or More Races, and less than 2% African American, Asian, and Filipino. The racial/ethnic mix has been stable over the past seven years.



Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

Gravenstein Union Elementary School District: The district has experienced an increase in enrollment of 86 pupils, or 12%, over the past seven years. In 2023-24, 59% are White, 24% Hispanic or Latino, 10% Two or More Races, 3% Asian, and less than 1% African American, Pacific Islander, and Filipino. The racial/ethnic mix has trended more Hispanic or Latino over the past seven years.

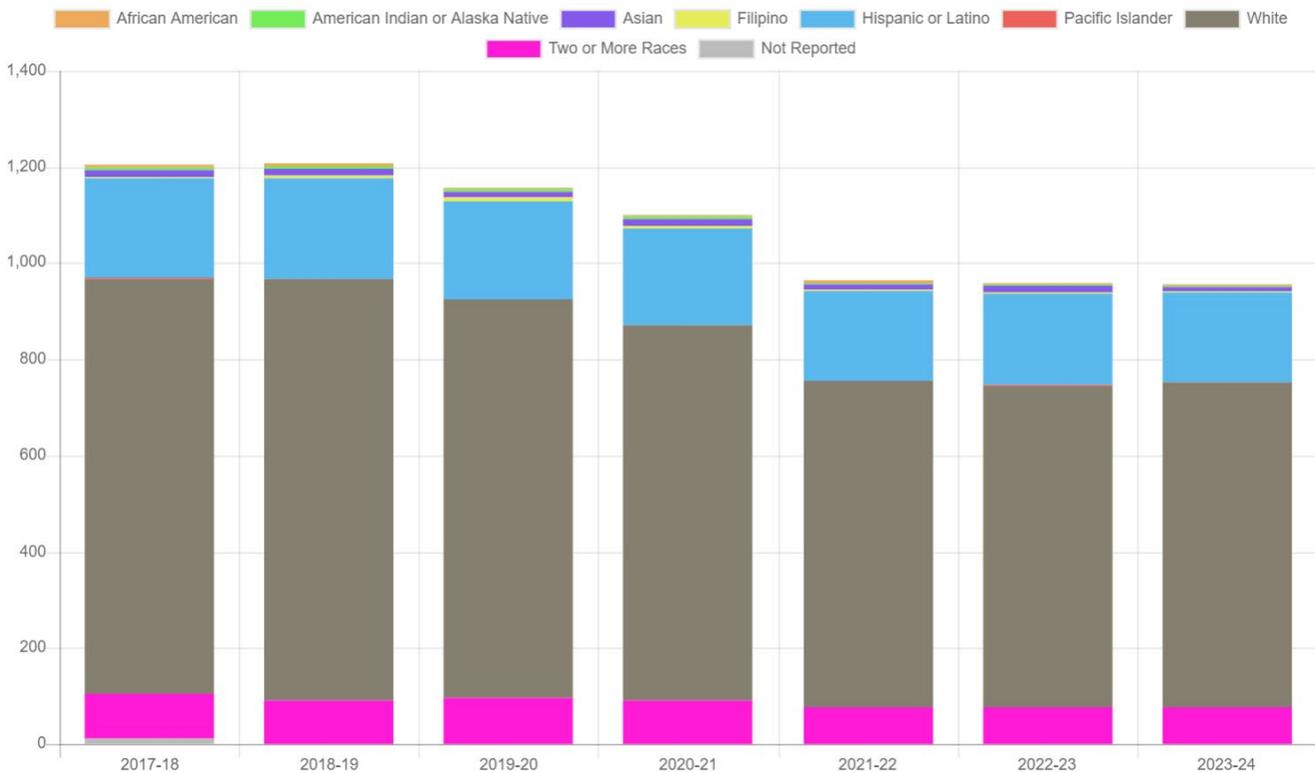


Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trends in Enrollment by Ethnicity (Source: CDE's DataQuest, CALPADS data)

Twin Hills Union Elementary School District: The district has experienced a decrease in enrollment of 249 pupils, or 21%, over the past seven years. In 2023-24, 71% are White, 20% Hispanic or Latino, 8% Two or More Races, and less than 1% Asian, American Indian, African American, Pacific Islander, and Filipino. The racial/ethnic mix has trended more Hispanic or Latino over the past seven years.

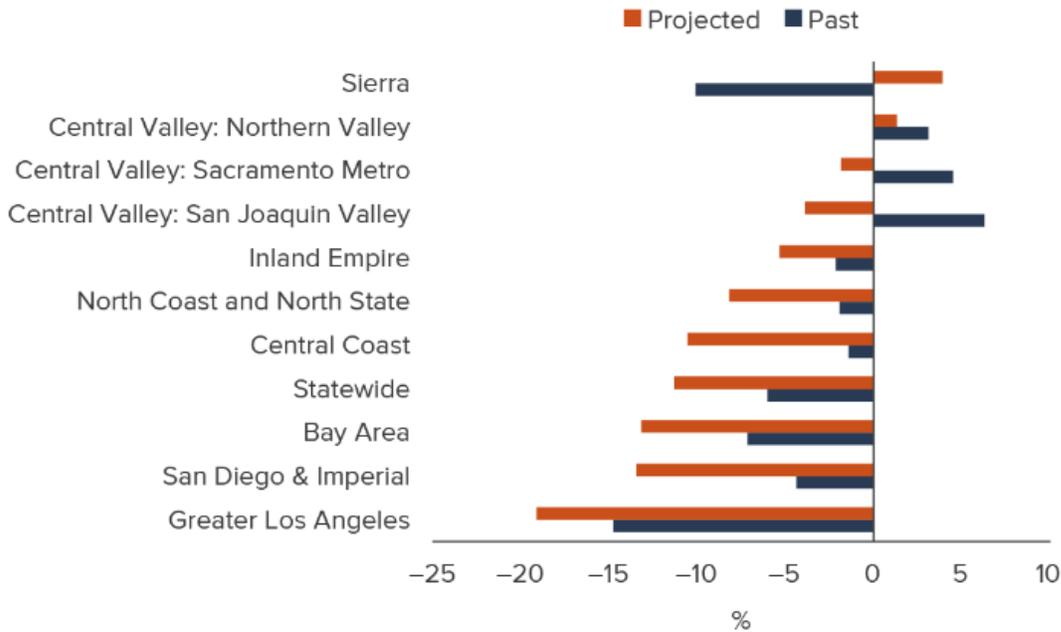
Enrollment by Ethnicity



Criterion #4: Discrimination or Segregation, Cont'd

Trend in Enrollment: The North Coast and Bay Areas are projected to decline in enrollment over the next decade as illustrated in this chart from the Public Policy Institute of California:

Enrollment declines are projected in all but two California regions over the next decade



SOURCES: California Department of Finance; authors' calculations.
NOTES: Past declines from 2012–13 to 2022–23. Projected declines from 2022–23 to 2032–33. Regional changes constructed using county-level data. See Technical Appendix Table A1 for regional definitions.

The Department of Finance projects Sonoma County's total K-12 enrollment to be 54,623 in 10 years (Fiscal Year 2032-33), down 14% from fiscal year 2022-23. The Hispanic or Latino ethnic group is expected to grow the most over the coming years.

Conclusion: Met. The studied unification of the districts will preserve each affected district's ability to educate students in an integrated environment and will not promote racial or ethnic discrimination or segregation.

Criterion #5: Cost to State

Statutory Requirement: Any increase in costs to the state as a result of the proposed reorganization will be insignificant and otherwise incidental to the reorganization.

Regulations: There are no current regulations on this subject; however, some guidelines are presented that may assist the county committee in its review of proposals.

The following factors should be considered in evaluating this condition:

- a. Whether implementation of the proposal would change one or more of the affected districts' basic aid status.

A change in basic aid could increase the amount of state apportionment funds required for either the proposed new district or one or more of the remaining districts.

- b. Additional state costs for school facilities.
- c. Other state special or categorical aid programs and any increased state costs if students transferring would qualify in the gaining district and not in the losing district.
- d. The additional costs to the state if costs per student for special or categorical programs are higher in the gaining district.
- e. The effect on the districts' home-to-school and special education transportation costs and state reimbursements.
- f. Increased costs resulting from additional schools becoming eligible for "necessary small school" funding pursuant to *EC* sections 42280 through 42289.

Note that any increase in state funding due to recalculation of the Local Control Funding Formula entitlements as required by *EC* sections 35735 and 35735.1 does not apply to the analysis of this condition.

Analysis: As reported in the Financial Feasibility Study, October 2022, there would be no increase in cost to the State because of unification. In fact, there would be savings to the State due to the loss of some basic aid (community aid) dollars. No additional categorical eligibility would result. Transportation reimbursements would not increase.

Conclusion: Met. The proposed reorganization will not increase the state's costs, and the state criteria will be met.

Criterion #6: Education Programs

Statutory Authority: EC Section 35753(a)(6): The proposed reorganization will continue to promote sound education performance and will not significantly disrupt the educational programs in the districts affected by the proposed reorganization.

Regulation: The proposal or petition shall not significantly adversely affect the educational programs of districts affected by the proposal or petition. In analyzing the proposal or petition, the California Department of Education shall describe the districtwide programs and the school site programs in schools not a part of the proposal or petition that will be adversely affected by the proposal or petition.

Analysis: By creating two unified school districts, the secondary educational program would be split between the two areas: Russian River and West Sonoma (Sebastopol). The benefits and challenges of unification in the educational program are summarized here and discussed in more detail in the pages that follow:

Summary of Potential Educational Benefits and Challenges of Unification

Potential Benefits of Unification

Greater articulation with the elementary schools is the primary benefit of unification in the educational program. Any reorganization that creates a seamless TK-12 program offers better articulation opportunities in areas of curriculum and transition from lower to higher grade levels.

CW Observation: If the elementary school districts and their electorate are unwilling to join the K-12 unified district, articulation challenges continue, and the benefit of unification in these areas diminishes.

Reduced transportation time with the reopening of El Molino High. As discussed under Criterion #1, bus ride times could be reduced between 10 -24 minutes per day (not accounting for bus stop time). And with less burden on the students to get to school, it might also have ancillary benefits of better attendance and reduced dropout rates.

Challenges of Unification in the Two District Scenario:

Analy High is a high-performing school compared to the State's standardized testing results for other high schools in Sonoma County and California. The high school received a "very high" performance in English Language Arts and a "high" performance in Mathematics and has a high graduation rate. Replicating the academic results at a reopened El Molino would be a significant challenge.

The larger Analy High offers greater diversity and opportunity. At 1,470 students, the campus population is about average in size statewide. Plus, the enrollment projections show a further expected decline. Repurposing El Molino High could address communicated desires for smaller programs for students who perform better in that setting, as opposed to trying to duplicate a comprehensive program and losing economies of scale with negative fiscal impacts.

Demographic enrollment projections show declining enrollment in the secondary school population due to lower birth rates and less available and affordable family housing. This means the two high schools in each unified area could decrease from about 780 today to 500 pupils over time, hurting course offerings and program options.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Summary of Potential Educational Benefits and Challenges of Unification, Cont'd

A Russian River Unified would need to develop a secondary program for the reopened El Molino High. The estimated grades 9-12 population would be about equally divided between the two districts at 785 pupils. Could a new district with less funding, see Criterion #9 for discussion, build an equally academically successful program to WSCUHSD? Maybe, but there are financial and programmatic risks.

Analy High could be negatively impacted by the loss of pupils, resulting in possible:

- Loss of specialized staff at the secondary level with less economies of scale and funding.
- The reopening of El Molino under a separate unified school district might diminish teacher recruitment
- Fewer opportunities with a smaller student population for alternative schools and “schools within the school system.”
- Partnerships with colleges, universities, and private and vocational training programs that WSCUHSD has fostered over the years could be lost, and they would need to be established at El Molino.
- Less affordability of professional development opportunities with fewer secondary teaching staff.

In the continuing analysis on the following pages, CW discusses the academic programs and standardized test results for all districts in more detail.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Current Educational Offerings

Below is a general overview of the current educational offerings and how unification might affect these offerings. It is feasible that the “best of” elementary programs could be kept after unification with good educational leadership and financial resources. Any elementary school district that opts out of the unification could continue to provide its current services without interruption and make its own program decisions. However, one of the benefits of unification is the economies of scale that allow for more specialized programs and broader offerings. The fewer elementary districts that join in, the less the benefit.

Every school district in California must implement the state-board-adopted *Content Standards and Curriculum Frameworks* so that teaching core subjects is more consistent from district to district. Also, the use of instructional materials must align with state standards.

It appears all current school districts offer:

- Transitional kindergarten as required under State law.
- Multi-tiered systems of support and intervention
- English Language Learner (ELL) programs.
- And options include independent study, after-school enrichment, and arts and music.

There is **career technical education**, college and career centers, world languages, visual and performing arts, and continuation and long-term independent study programs at the high school level.

Several districts have **educational foundations** to supplement district-paid programs. If a single district were formed, more students might benefit from these resources.

Early childhood education, including preschool, special education, and supplemental programs, all exist and would be coordinated district-wide post-consolidation.

Accelerated programs may be more accessible if they have a larger student population from which to build a course schedule.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

High School Educational Programs

Analy High is a comprehensive high school with about 1,450 pupils. It offers all required academic courses to meet graduation requirements and UC and CSU admission requirements. A wide range of athletic team opportunities, performing and fine arts, career tech education, career and college readiness, English language development, and academic support are offered. In discussion with WSCUHSD:

- Their comprehensive program offers students a “well-rounded and dynamic educational program” through a seven-period day block schedule with the option to take 0 or 8th periods, respectively. (This offering would not likely be feasible in two small comprehensive high schools as contemplated by the study).
- College connections include offering dual enrollment at Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) on their campus, which is taught by WSCUHSD teachers who are adjunct instructors at SRJC concurrently. This program is known as *College and Careers Access Pathways (CCAP)*. Also being researched is an articulated model with Sonoma State University (SSU) in which Advanced Placement (AP) students could earn SSU units by completing specific Analy courses within our master schedule. There are many AP options offered today for high-achieving students.
- The district is also piloting a “cohorted instructional model” with general education and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses aligned with a common cohort of students designed to create integrated learning experiences through Core subject instruction and CTE collaboration.

Laguna High School operates a CDE-designated Model Continuation High School at El Molino. Individual plans are collaboratively developed with students and their parents to meet graduation and post-graduation goals. According to the school’s website and meetings with WSCUHSD:

- Laguna High collaborates with West County Health to enhance the school's services by providing medical, mental health, and harm reduction support. Laguna High School supports students transitioning between continuation high school, traditional high schools, job opportunities, and junior college and considering various post-high school options. A dedicated Work-Based Learning (WBL) specialist collaborates with staff weekly to integrate WBL into the curriculum and provide 1:1 student support.
- Laguna High currently serves up to 80 continuation students and up to 90 full-time independent study students through **West County iAcademy**. WC iAcademy offers students the opportunity to earn an Analy High or Laguna High diploma.
- Laguna also has three community lease agreements fitting under the community school pillar of community partnerships (SoCo Regional Parks, Sonoma County Library) and, most recently, a lease agreement with Maker Initiative.
- WSCUHSD is bringing new educational opportunities to the Laguna campus (the **El Molino Academy**). Future offerings to the students and broader community will include a maker space, future extended learning programs, and a community "tool" library. Robotics camps/programs, AI classes, and a variety of other "maker" STEM programs for adults and children are also envisioned.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

High School Educational Programs, Cont'd

Further **new plans to use the El Molino campus** were presented by WSCUSH at a community school vision presentation on August 22, plus at four informational sessions. Then, in November of 2022, the Board authorized the district to form a design team and begin creating the vision for a new innovative program on the Laguna Campus. Since then, WSCUHSD has been working and prototyping the program. They also acquired the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) planning grant. In progress is writing the RFA for the CCSPP implementation grant (that would result in \$3.5 million in funding over five years).

The WSCUHSD also operates the **West County Consortium**, which offers student support services throughout the area. These services are provided by psychologists, occupational therapists, nurses, and education and behavioral specialists.

- Unification is expected to dismantle the consortium as two new districts and boards are formed. There is no financial gain for one District to continue managing the consortium after unification. If WSCUHSD did not continue to volunteer as the service provider and LEA, the small partner districts might see an increase in their overall special education costs.

High School Interdistrict Attendance:

WSCUHSD had 132 students transfer into Analy in the fiscal year 2023-24 and 36 transfer out for a net positive of 96 students. And fewer interdistricts going “out” over “in” for fiscal years 2022-23 (48 pupils), and 2021-22 (51 pupils).

- Most interdistrict students came in from Elsie Allen, Piner, Santa Rosa, and Cotati-Rohnert Park high schools. Of the interdistrict students who went out, 18 went to specialized programs such as art and technology.
- Withdrawals to private schools are minimal, with 3 in 2022-23 and to charters 17.
- WSCUHSD reported that interdistrict attendance accounts for a net of 87 pupils into the district or about 5% of their enrollment in 2023-24. The district reported to CW that even more net number of pupils are coming into the district in 2024-25.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Educational Assessment Results

CW looked at the California assessment results for the school districts in the two areas studied for unification.

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Comparisons

The CAASPP, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, is a standardized testing system used in California for students in grades 3-8 and 11. It measures student performance in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics based on the California State Standards. The purpose is to measure student mastery of California State Standards in ELA and Math, and to track progress over time.

CW compared the school districts in the unification areas on recent CASPP scores for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics, as shown in the tables on the next pages. The scores are tabulated by the State, and a range of Levels 1-4 is computed on a percentage basis. Level 4 is the highest score, and Level 1 is the lowest.

However, test scores alone are not a reliable indicator of educational program quality since factors such as limited English language proficiency and low income can affect student performance negatively. According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, standardized achievement tests supply evidence to make norm-referenced interpretations of students' knowledge and/or skills in relationship to those of students nationally. The California Dashboard adds more indicators, as discussed next.

California Dashboard (source: California Department of Education)

The California School Dashboard incorporates several key indicators to evaluate the performance of schools and districts. Besides the CAASPP results, the Dashboard includes the following inputs:

1. **Chronic Absenteeism Rate:** Measures the percentage of students who are frequently absent.
2. **Graduation Rate:** Tracks the percentage of students who graduate within four years.
3. **Suspension Rate:** Indicates the percentage of students who are suspended.
4. **English Learner Progress:** Assesses the progress of students learning English.
5. **College/Career Readiness:** Evaluates how well students are prepared for post-secondary education or careers.
6. **Science Test Performance:** Includes results from the California Science Test.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

California Dashboard (source CDE), Cont'd

The California Dashboard is designed “to help parents and educators identify strengths and areas for improvement” and is part of the educational accountability system in the State. School districts may use these measurements to identify student groups for additional support. The scoring system uses data from various sources, including *Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments* and *California Alternative Assessments*, plus rates of chronic absenteeism and graduation.

The State uses a color-coding system of Red for very low performance, Orange for low, Yellow for medium, Green for high, and Blue for very high. The Statewide average at the bottom of the chart below shows Low performance in English Language Arts and Math and medium performance for English Learner Progress.

The most current published date is from fiscal year 2023-24. To recap:

1. **Russian River Area Elementary School Districts:** Among the Russian River area districts, Monte Rio, Oak Grove, and Harmony ranked the highest in performance, and Guerneville and Forestville ranked among the lowest. Oak Grove had the most improvement over the prior reporting period.
2. **Sebastopol Area Elementary School Districts:** Each district had high-performing schools, with some exceptions in Twin Hills.
3. **West Sonoma County Union High School District’s Analy High** has a “Very High” graduation rate and Career and College readiness. The school met English Language Arts standards but was low on Mathematics. However, when comparing the CAASPP scores, Analy High was second highest to Maria Carillo in a sample of five neighboring high schools.

The table on the next page shows the performance results for school districts in the West Sonoma area.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

California Dashboard (source CDE), Cont'd:

California School DASHBOARD 2024 (Source: CDE)				
School Districts	English Language Arts		Mathematics	
	Performance	Points Change	Performance	Points Change
Russian River Unified (K-8 Districts)				
Fort Ross Elementary School District	<i>No performance color due to small testing population</i>			
Montgomery Elementary School District	<i>No performance color due to small testing population</i>			
Monte Rio Elementary School District	High	-7.8%	Low	-43.4%
Guerneville Elementary School District	Low	-2.6	Low	-1.1
Forestville Elementary School District (Academy)	Low	-5.5	Low	-7.1
Harmony Elementary School District	High	-18.8	Low	-30.1
Oak Grove Elementary School District	Very High	17.4%	High	10.6%
West Sonoma County Unified (K-8 Districts)				
Sebastopol Elementary School District	High	6.1	Medium	6.3
Gravenstein Elementary School District	Very High	2	High	-1.1
Hillcrest Middle School	High	-17.4	High	3
Twin Hills Elementary School District				24
Twin Hills Charter Middle	High	-7.4	High	-4.1
Orchard View	Low	-16.6	Medium	3
Sunrise Charter	High	-12.9	Medium	-2.4
Apple Blossom	Low	-22.6	Medium	-12.5
West Sonoma County High School District				
Analy High	Medium	-52.9	Low	-44.3
Statewide Average	<i>Low</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>1.5</i>

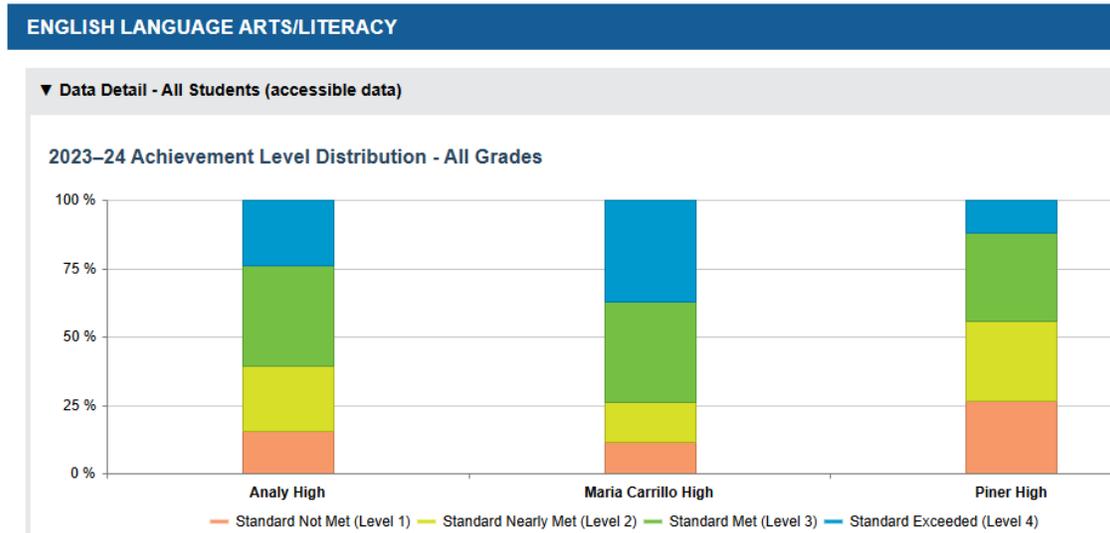
Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

CAASPP English Language Arts/Literacy Test Scores Comparisons for Analy High, WSCUHSD

Below are comparisons of Analy High in WSCUHSD to a sample of neighboring high schools. The sum of the blue bar (exceeded standards) and green bar (met standards) for Analy is 60.82% in English Language Arts, compared to 73.73% at Maria Carrillo High and 44.27% at Piner High.

2023–24 Overall Achievement - All Grades
Results for All Students

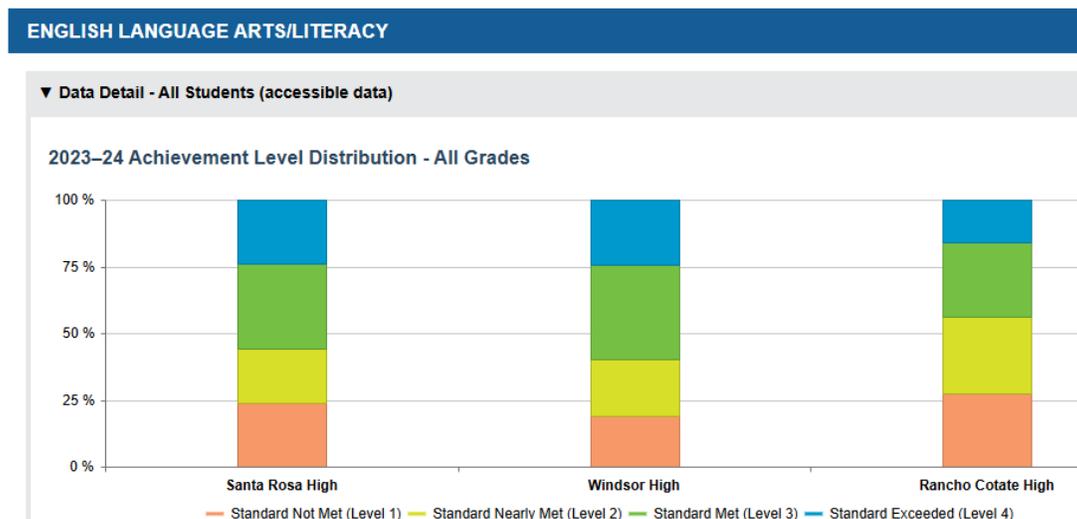
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Pi



At Santa Rosa High, 55.59% met or exceeded the standards, 59.57% at Winsor High, and 43.78% at Rancho Cotate High. **Analy High was second to Maria Carrillo High in performance in these comparisons among the five sampled high schools.**

2023–24 Overall Achievement - All Grades
Results for All Students

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Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

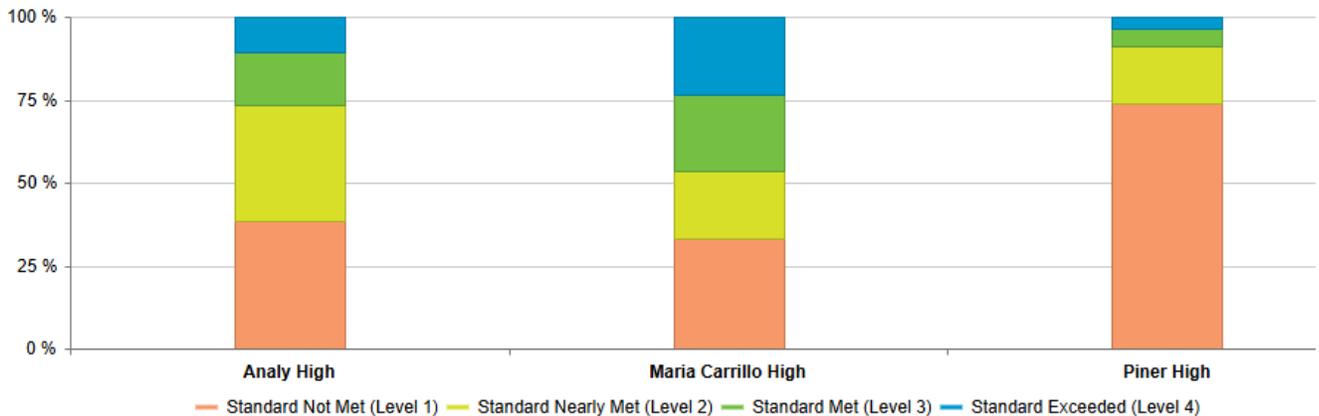
CAASPP Mathematics Test Scores Comparisons for Analy High, WSCUHSD

Below are comparisons of Analy High in WSCUHSD to a sample of neighboring high schools. The sum of the blue bar (exceeded standards) and green bar (met standards) for Analy is 26.72% in Mathematics, compared to 46.26% at Maria Carrillo High and 8.65% at Piner High.

MATHEMATICS

▼ Data Detail - All Students (accessible data)

2023–24 Achievement Level Distribution - All Grades

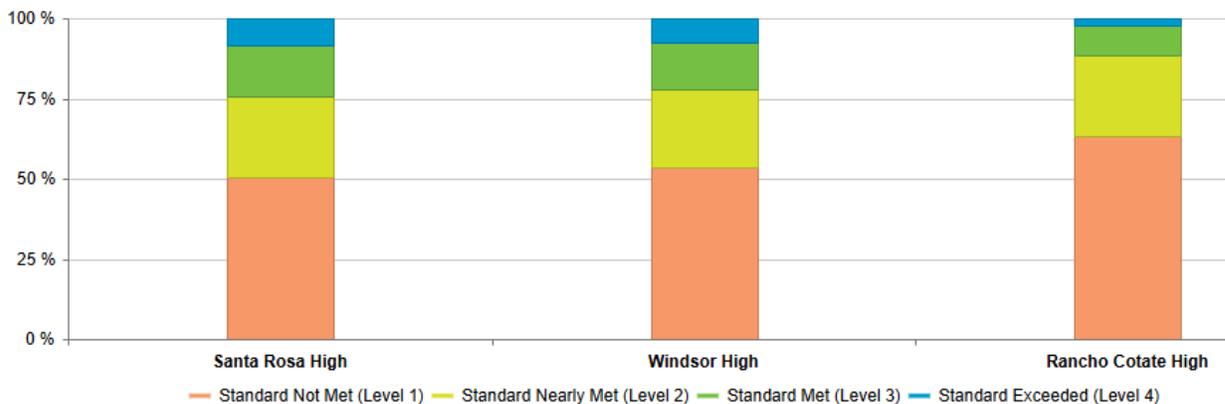


At Santa Rosa High, 24.14% met or exceeded the standards, 22.17% at Winsor High, and 11.51% at Rancho Cotate High. **Analy High was second to Maria Carrillo High in performance in these comparisons among the five sampled high schools.**

MATHEMATICS

▼ Data Detail - All Students (accessible data)

2023–24 Achievement Level Distribution - All Grades



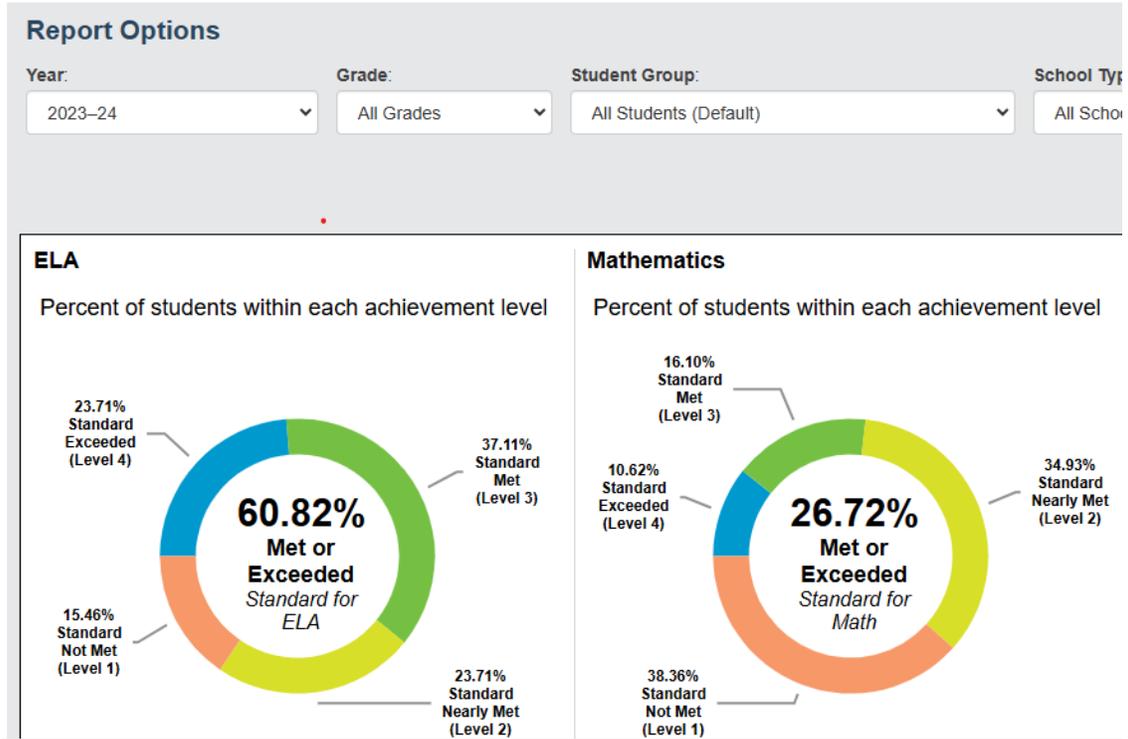
Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Individual scores in the study area are shown in the following pages:

CASPP Score Analy High

School: Analy High

CDS Code: 49-70607-4930400 | County: Sonoma | District: West Sonoma County Union High



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

CAASPP Test Scores by Elementary Schools

Further details on each school district's CAASPP testing results are shown in the following pages.

Note: Fort Ross and Montgomery schools tested eleven or fewer students, and therefore, the California Department of Education does not publish the results to protect individual student privacy.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Monte Rio Elementary

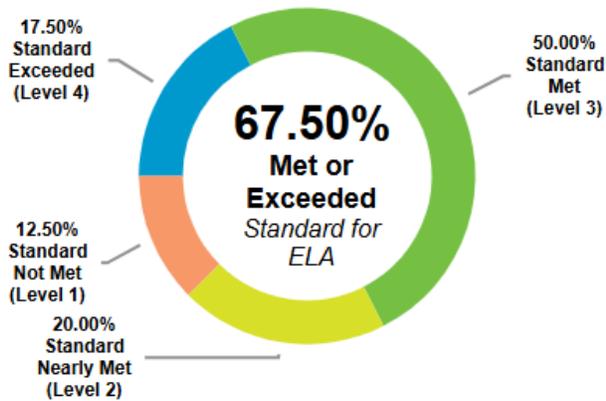
CDS Code: 49-70813-6051866 | County: Sonoma | District: Monte Rio Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School Type:

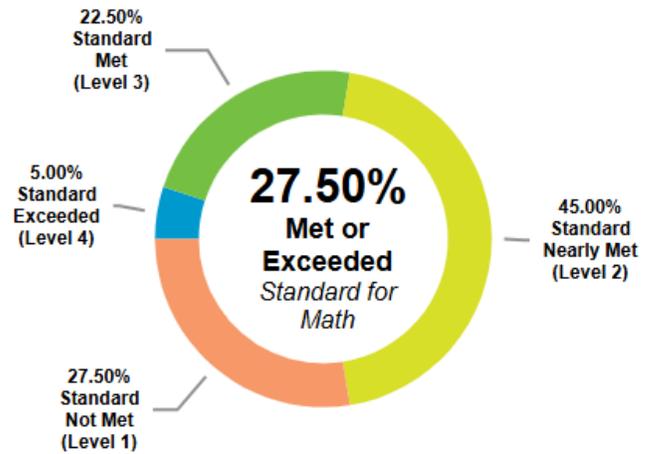
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Note: Guerneville's pupils are primarily in the charter and the approximately 23 that are not is reported due to less than 11 pupils taking the assessment.

School: Guerneville Elementary (Charter)

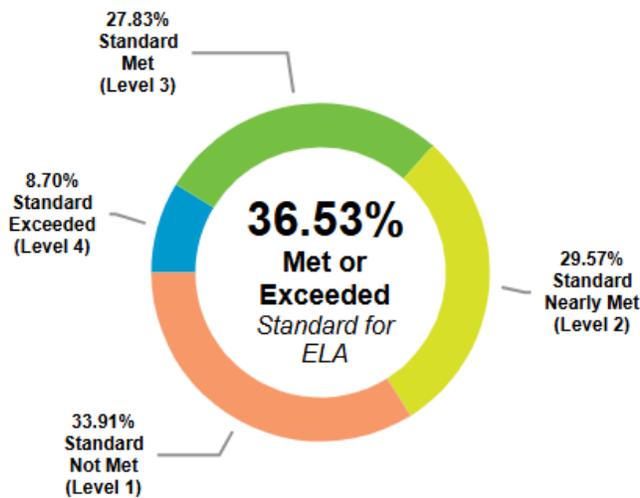
CDS Code: 49-70722-6051767 | County: Sonoma | District: Guerneville Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School T:

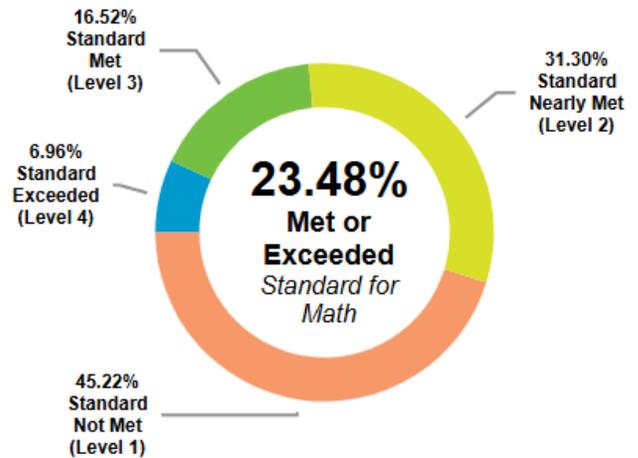
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Forestville Academy

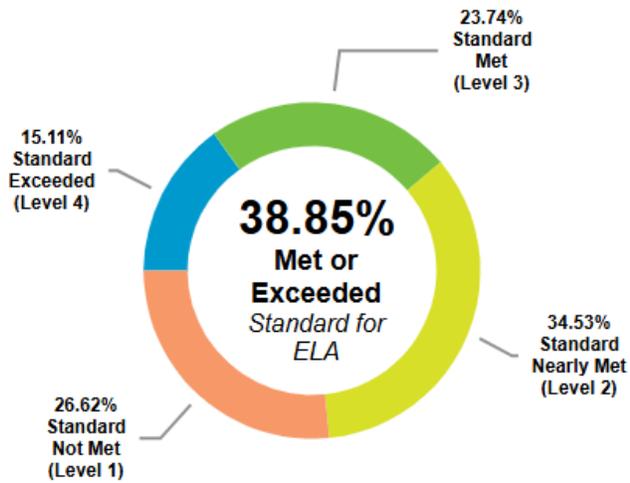
CDS Code: 49-70680-0112987 | County: Sonoma | District: Forestville Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School Ty:

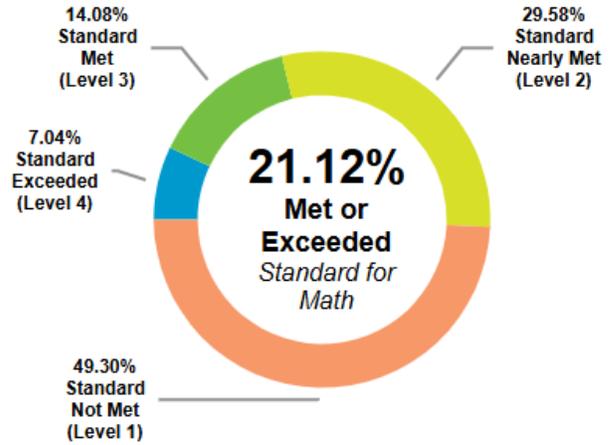
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Note: Harmony's pupils are primarily in the charter and the approximately 59 in the district level program were not reported as less than 11 pupils taking the assessment.

School: Salmon Creek School - A Charter

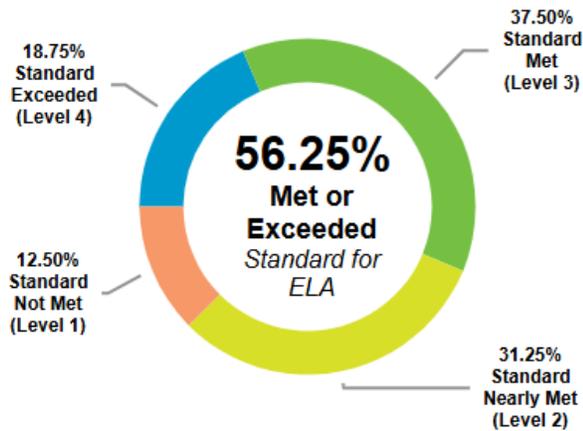
CDS Code: 49-70730-6110639 | County: Sonoma | District: Harmony Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: |
 Grade: |
 Student Group: |
 School Ty:

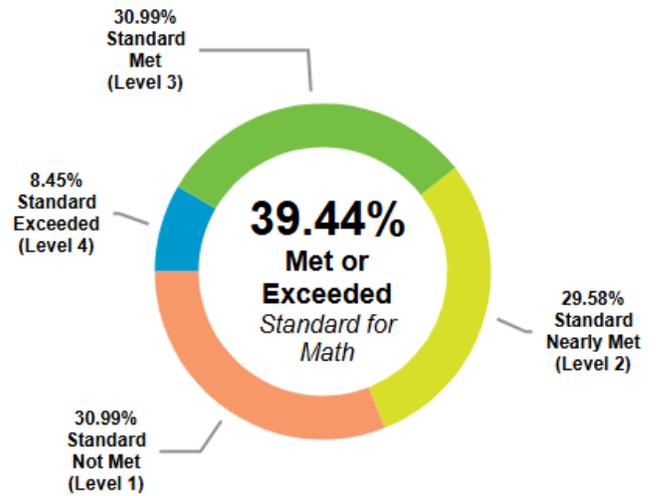
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Oak Grove Elementary/Willowside Middle

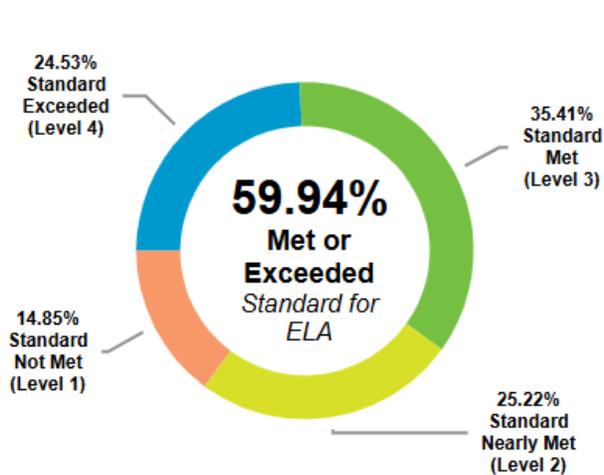
CDS Code: 49-70839-6051890 | County: Sonoma | District: Oak Grove Union Elementary

Report Options

Year:
 Grade:
 Student Group:
 School Type:

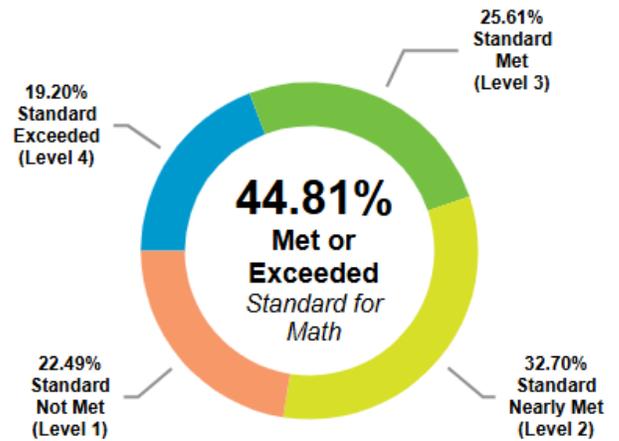
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Brook Haven Middle

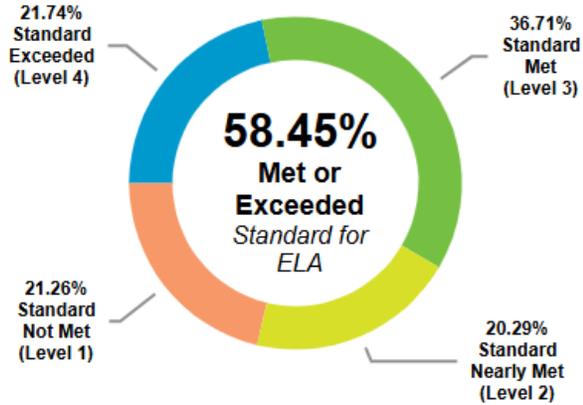
CDS Code: 49-70938-6052211 | County: Sonoma | District: Sebastopol Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School Type:

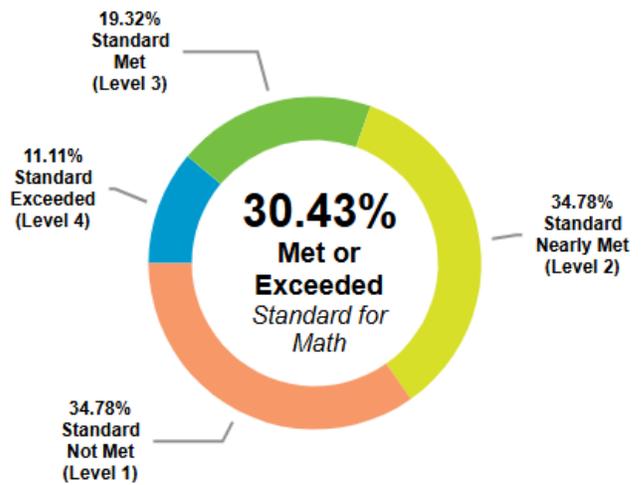
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Park Side Elementary

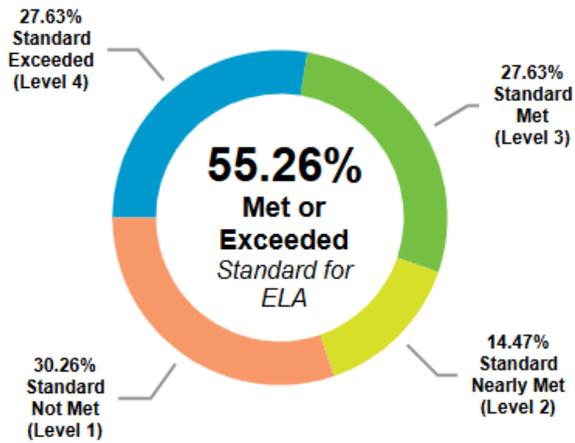
CDS Code: 49-70938-6052229 | County: Sonoma | District: Sebastopol Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School Type:

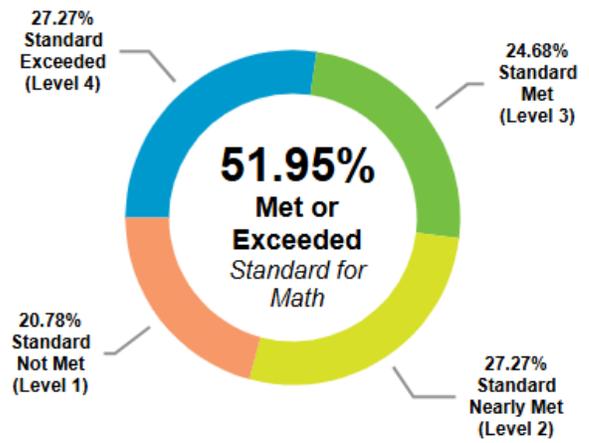
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Gravenstein Elementary

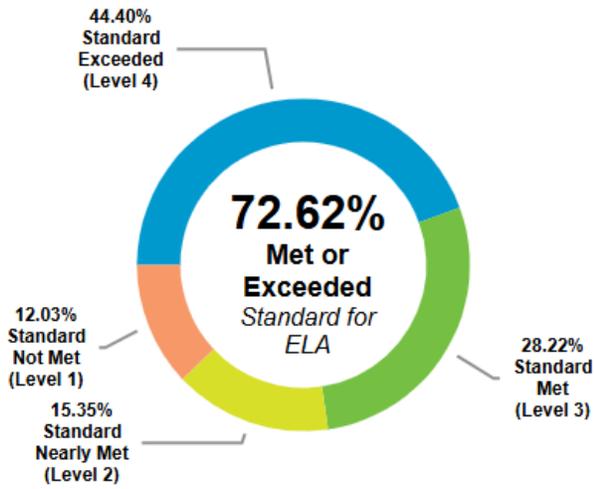
CDS Code: 49-70714-6051742 | County: Sonoma | District: Gravenstein Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School Type:

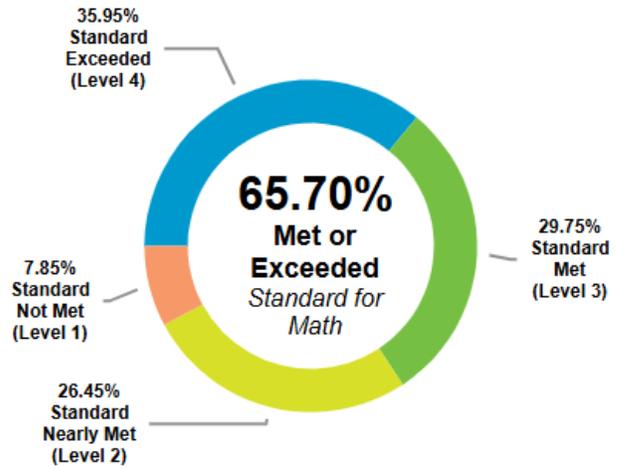
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Hillcrest Middle

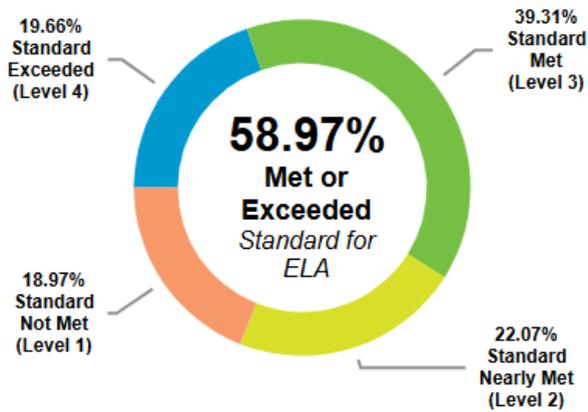
CDS Code: 49-70714-6051759 | County: Sonoma | District: Gravenstein Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School Type:

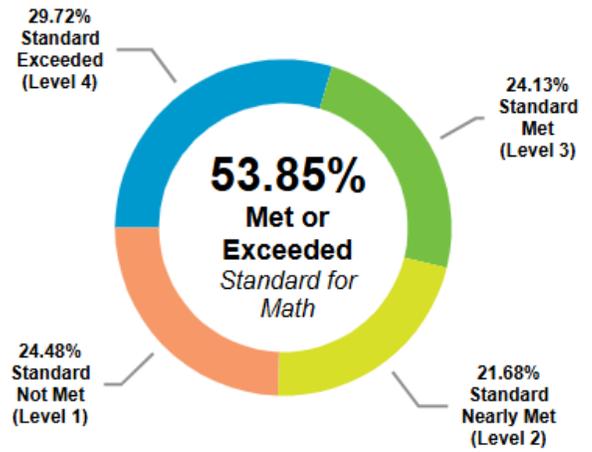
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Apple Blossom

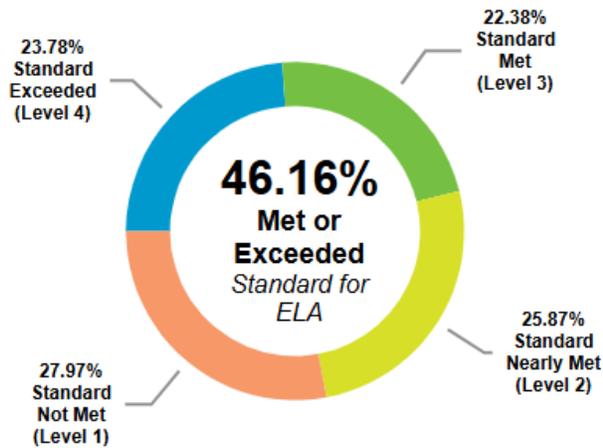
CDS Code: 49-70961-6093140 | County: Sonoma | District: Twin Hills Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School Type:

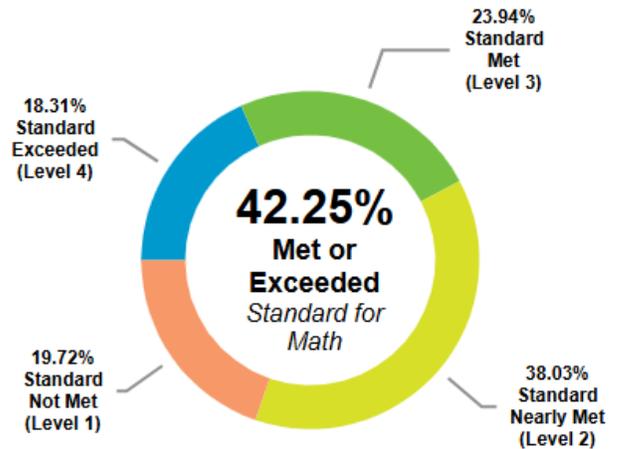
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Orchard View

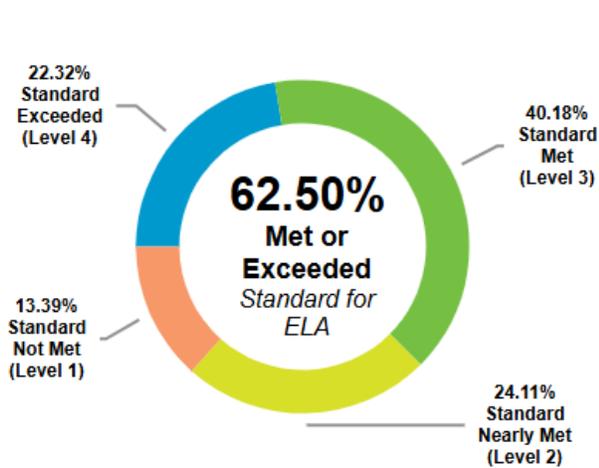
CDS Code: 49-70961-4930319 | County: Sonoma | District: Twin Hills Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School Type:

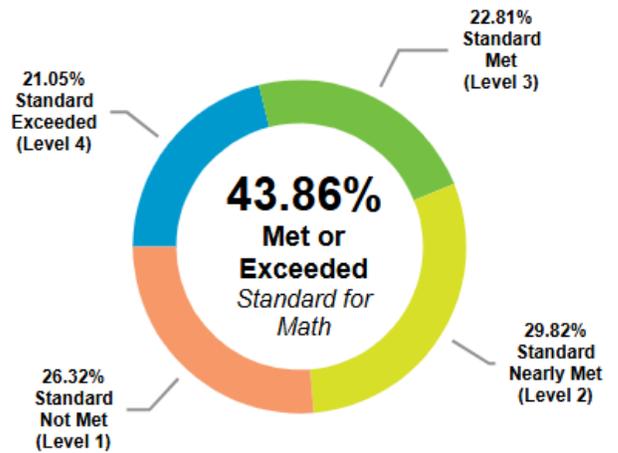
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Sunridge Charter

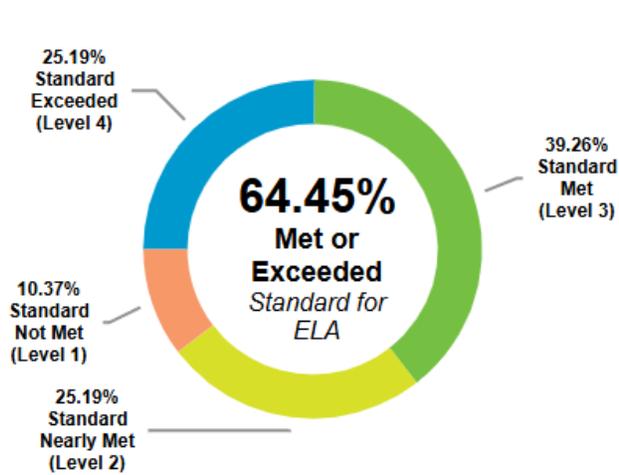
CDS Code: 49-70961-4930350 | County: Sonoma | District: Twin Hills Union Elementary

Report Options

Year: Grade: Student Group: School T:

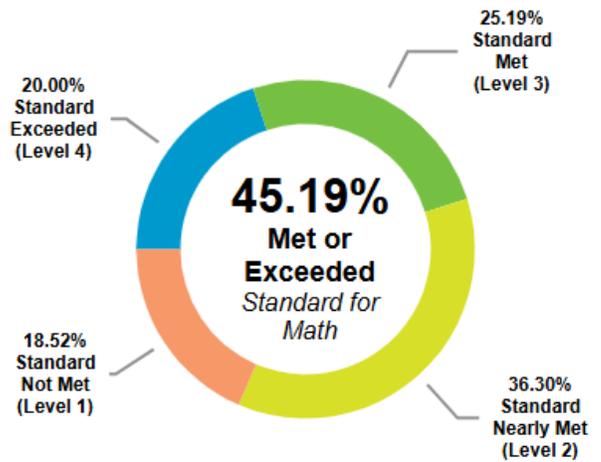
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

School: Twin Hills Charter Middle

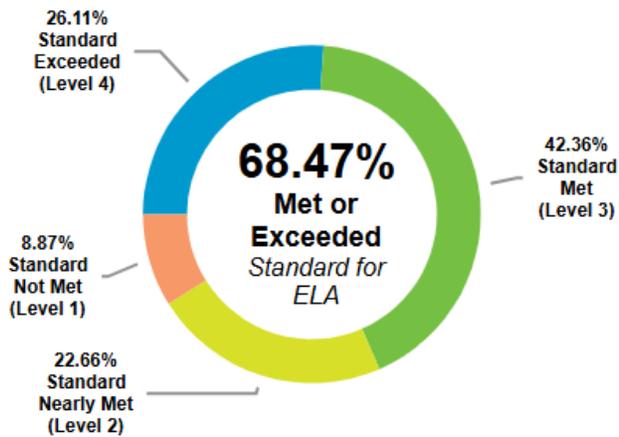
CDS Code: 49-70961-6052302 | County: Sonoma | District: Twin Hills Union Elementary

Report Options

Year:
 Grade:
 Student Group:
 School T:

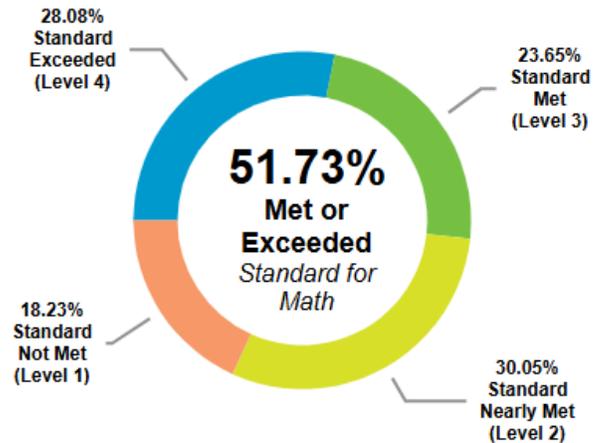
ELA

Percent of students within each achievement level



Mathematics

Percent of students within each achievement level



Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Pupil Size of the High School System

The question the community might ask is, is it better to have a high school program supporting a 1,450 or 750 pupil comprehensive school? And what would the alternative programs look like? Would a smaller high school be able to offer inclusive and differentiated instructional settings of WSCUHSD? And how important is that?

Below are some advantage and disadvantages of creating two smaller high schools from Analy High.

Advantages of a 1,450 Pupil High School:

1. **Diverse Course Offerings:** One larger school often has more resources to offer a wider variety of courses, including advanced placement (AP) classes, electives, and extracurricular activities.
2. **Extracurricular Opportunities:** With more students, there are typically more clubs, sports teams, and other extracurricular activities available. However, many interviewed in the Russian River area commented that the extra home to school transportation time inhibited participation in after school sports and activities. And that the extracurricular sports in one school (instead of two) are now more competitive to participate in with limited varsity slots.
3. **Facilities:** Larger schools may have better facilities, such as science labs, sports fields, and arts spaces. Analy High has been putting in improved facilities in all these areas, according to facilities plans. And El Molino has a newer performing arts center that could be used area-wide to some extent.

Advantages of a 750-Pupil High School:

1. **Personalized Attention:** Smaller schools often provide a more personalized learning environment where teachers can give more individual attention to students.
2. **Community Feel:** Smaller schools can foster a stronger sense of community and belonging among students and staff.
3. **Safety and Discipline:** Research suggests that smaller schools may have fewer disciplinary issues and a safer environment.

Since arguments could be made either way on high school size, the determining factors might be student needs, community values and finances. On the next page is a discussion of reopening El Molino High and the related possible impacts on Analy High.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Russian River Unified – Reopening El Molino High

On the matter of high school size, if every high school age child residing in the Russian River Unified areas were to attend El Molino High there would be about 750 pupils, which is not that small (and Analy would have a similar size). But it is unlikely high school age pupils in Harmony and Oak Grove would all attend El Molino High, due to geography and prior attendance boundaries. Many might ask for interdistrict transfers to Analy High, which could leave El Molino smaller than a divided Analy High. The fewer the number of pupils, the harder it would be to achieve the advantages of present-day Analy High.

Creating a comprehensive high school program at El Molino campus by a newly formed unified district would have its challenges. Or put another way, what might it take to create a secondary program from scratch? Certainly, educational leadership but also staff recruitment, build-out of courses and specialized programs, a student information system, instructional technology, pupil services, fiscal leadership and funding, school safety considerations, facilities management and more. And all of this would need to be planned and created within a fairly short period of time.

Operating funds could be negatively impacted as there will be cost incurred before the pupils arrive. And once the programs and systems are in place, students would likely move over from Analy to El Molino grade level by grade level over several years, since many Analy students would want to remain there through graduation. The finances necessary to create and operate the high school program in the early years following unification might take funding and Board and Supt. time away from the K-8 programs. If all districts unify there would be cost savings by eliminating duplicative administrative services, but the timing is crucial and to the extent elementary districts opt out of the unification, the fiscal savings are lessened.

Analy High is a known quantity and performs well. It has established alternative education programs and services, extracurricular programs, improved facilities and has plans for community model schools at the El Molino school site. It is not impossible to create an excellent program at El Molino under a K-12 model of education, but fiscal and secondary educational start-up challenges would need to be overcome.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

General Benefits of a Unified K-12 Education Program

The key benefits of a K-12 system of education, assuming the challenges of size, finance and startup are overcome (as discussed in the preceding pages) would include:

Articulation: Articulation is cited as one of the primary positive educational benefits of unification. Organizations such as the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, the National Association for Secondary School Principals, and the American Educational Research Association have published how strong curriculum articulation can help to ensure that students are building upon prior knowledge and skills in a logical and sequential manner. The single K-12 district model is more efficient and effective in promoting strong articulation. **However, to the extent elementary districts opt out of the unification, this benefit is diminished.**

Articulation can be viewed as:

1. **Curriculum Articulation:** This is the alignment and coherence of curriculum standards and expectations across different grade levels and subject areas within a school district. Strong articulation ensures that students build upon prior learning and progress smoothly through the educational system. It helps prevent knowledge gaps, content repetition, and confusion for students.

CW Study Observation: Ten elementary school districts need to align with the present high school district's curriculum to ensure that prior learning and progression continue when transferring to secondary grades. Today, regular meetings with all affected districts help smooth that transition, but time and resource constraints are limiting factors. Two unified districts could improve curriculum articulation.

2. **Transition Support:** For students transitioning between different levels of education (e.g., elementary to middle school and middle school to high school), articulation provides support systems and programs to ensure a smooth and successful transition. This can involve sharing student data, coordinating schedules, offering orientation programs, and providing academic and social support. Onboarding of new secondary students is more time-consuming without good transition support.

CW Study Observation: WSCUHSD may not have access to elementary student information systems but attempts to bridge the gap through meetings with feeder districts and coordination by program directors, such as over Special Education. Still, without access to a single Student Information System (SIS), it can be difficult to track individual student progress when a pupil moves from elementary to secondary levels.

Educational gaps can result from teachers not being aware of past resources/outcomes, attendance patterns, and special needs. Other transition support considerations include identifying early on individual students with differential learning needs, such as reading or math support, or special education might be more readily accomplished in the two K-12 districts with more seamless transition support.

For example,

- In a K-12 system, educational accountability and more intervention opportunities “before the dropout occurs.”
- Good attendance is fixed in the early grades, and a unified attendance support system is beneficial to keep pupils on track for graduation.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

General Benefits of a Unified K-12 Education Program, Cont'd

Articulation. Cont'd:

- 3. College and Career Articulation:** Articulation relates to partnerships and agreements between school districts, colleges, universities, or vocational training programs. These partnerships align curriculum standards and learning experiences with future education and career pathways. This can benefit students by making their transition to further education or employment smoother and more successful.

CW Study Observation: WSCUHSD already partners with local higher educational institutions and job training and exploration programs. A unified school district structure can more readily allow for career counseling to start at earlier grades.

Specialized Staffing

K-12 school districts can often create or expand department specialties to better serve diverse educational needs. With that specialization, they can recruit employees who are attracted to an opportunity to use their skills. For example, specialization areas such as student wellness and health, counseling, cultural responsiveness training, and reading or math interventions.

The West County Consortium operated by WSCUHSD already serves many of the objectives listed above. As such, unification, in this instance, that divides WSCUHSD might have a negative effect, especially if the Consortium is not offered across the current West County area.

Parent Support in One Common Unified District

In a single-school system, parents with more than one school-age child might keep the sibling connection better. If positive, sibling connections can provide more social support, a sense of belonging, confidence, and reduce bullying.

Each unified district would have a single school calendar, common policies, and resources. Accessing specialized programs for their child through dedicated departments could help parents connect with resources.

School safety might benefit from a single point of contact for parent communication (e.g., text, calls, and mobile apps), safety procedure updates, drills, and threat protocols. A single K-12 district could have more dedicated law enforcement support, training, equipment, and department specialization.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Some Research Supports the K-12 Model of Education

In *Coming Together: The Pros and Cons of School Consolidation* (source: University of Dayton eCommons, Department of Educational Leadership, 2008), this article states that:

- “One of the primary benefits of school consolidation is that the school board can provide more, and more enriched, curricular offerings to students by combining resources.”
- Other positives included attracting personnel and providing more student services, more staff development, an expanded curriculum, a more diverse student enrollment, and economic efficiencies.
- “Daily interaction of students from different communities enriches the school environment, resulting in a more informed and culturally aware student body.”
- The article did acknowledge that the benefits of smaller schools might include community identity in a rural area, a positive school environment, smaller class sizes, and access to more individual attention.

CW Study Observation: Any petitioner should consider whether each new district would be of sufficient size to realize the benefits of unification should many of the elementary school districts opt-out.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Issues Important with School District:

CW visited all 11 school districts (one via Zoom) in the West Sonoma County area. Meeting with the Superintendent, other educational leaders, and representative board members, here are some comments on how the educational programs might be impacted by unification and questions asked:

Retaining the “best of” local educational programs and local grants (e.g., student behavioral health services, a \$500K literacy grant, arts programs, Title V Rural Education Initiative funds, and a baccalaureate program). Programs at each elementary school district have unique learning opportunities, which seem very independent of size. Even the smallest districts typically have field trips, technology learning, cooking, gardening, environmental sciences, performing arts, pull-out support for pupils, special education resources, online learning opportunities, and sports offerings.

CW Observation: Unique grants must be reapplied for post-unification, and eligibility requirements cannot be guaranteed. On the other hand, a unified district might have better internal resources to apply for grants and find new opportunities. Keeping the “best of” “programs would need to be a priority of the new unified school board. Absent unification, there are examples of districts coming together to offer services, such as the career exploration program coordinated with several Russian River area elementary schools. And some of these examples might already exist.

The reopening of El Molino is important to Russian River area communities. Many felt a loss of identity when WSCUHSD closed the high school a few years ago and were unhappy about the process. Some said that WSCUHSD promises were not kept (e.g., the renaming of the Analy High mascot). Some elementary school districts felt shut out of tracking how their students are now performing at Analy High.

The reopening of El Molino would reduce students' travel time, provide more after-school and preschool opportunities, and offer a smaller high school setting, which many parents and students desire. A newer performing arts center on campus could be better utilized. Reopening might also draw interdistrict students from Santa Rosa.

CW Observation: WSCUHSD has plans to reuse the campus at El Molino, which might appeal to Russian River communities as an educational option. Under exploration is a community-based school at El Molino, a small school alternative to Analy High that some families might be looking for. The school has not been opened, but there is momentum in planning by WSCUHSD. Students looking for a broader curriculum could continue to attend Analy High. Some Forestville resident high school students who left for Piner or Winsor High might return to El Molino.

Any unification proposal will take years to wind through the process, and success is not guaranteed. Many elementary school districts might opt out altogether. Having a community-based school in the interim or long term could be an option for many families in West Sonoma County.

Criterion #6: Education Programs, Cont'd

Issues Important with School District, cont'd:

The elementary schools don't want to lose their small school identity and individualized learning experiences, plus there are concerns about school closures.

CW Observation: School boards may opt out of unification unless the local voters in their district sign a valid petition to be included. Two or more elementary school district boards and communities might want to unionize to consolidate enrollment and educational programs, saving costs.

Even if unified, most small K-8 schools would continue to operate due to geographical and transportation conditions. However, a future unified school board could close one or two due to low enrollment. The trend of declining enrollment is noted throughout most of the region.

Criterion #6 Conclusion: Not Met.

While there are potential benefits to unification, the elementary schools' broad lack of support and loss of finances (see Criterion #9) make creating a K-12 district model challenging and could negatively affect the current educational programs.

- Two unified school districts studied here would struggle to continue promoting sound education performance because of the effects of reopening El Molino as a smaller comprehensive high school while downsizing Analy High's program. Both will have less funding until any cost efficiencies from consolidation are realized. The expense of reorganizing the secondary programs might negatively impact the elementary programs.
- Analy High performs well and WSCUHSD has invested in the Analy Campus and its program offerings after combining the two high schools a few years ago. While not all plans to reuse El Molino have been implemented, CW noted there is forward momentum.
- More realistically than the two fully unified districts studied, there is a scenario in which not all elementary school districts want to join a K-12 system and opt out unless their communities petition otherwise. Without broad buy-in by elementary school districts, a smaller K-12 district will experience even more fiscal distress and demands on the new boards (or remanent WSCUHD district board) to build programs as good as or better than in the past. Plus, the benefits of unification, such as articulation, are lost without broad elementary school participation.

It appears that the unification scenario studied here would significantly disrupt the educational programs in the districts affected by the proposed reorganization.

Criterion #7: School Housing Costs

Statutory Requirement: Any increase in school facilities costs as a result of the proposed reorganization will be insignificant and otherwise incidental to the reorganization.

Regulations: No regulations have been adopted on this subject; however, a good plan should provide a concise analysis of the availability of school facilities to house the pupils in the portion of the district being reorganized.

If the reorganization is creating a new school district, the school facilities must be adequate to serve all grade levels. If an elementary school district is unifying, there should be a plan for secondary school facilities. Formerly, plans have been approved in which the newly unified school districts phase in secondary school programs. When the reorganization is a territory transfer, the plan should address whether the school district receiving the new students has adequate facilities to house them. If new facilities are required in either of the above cases, the plan should address how the facilities will be funded.

Analysis: If all the districts were unified into two, the existing school facilities would be owned by the new district where the facility resides. All the elementary schools and properties would become part of the unified school district's property. If an elementary district opts out of unification (assuming there is no overriding citizen's petition in the same area), that district would be unaffected by the unification. It would continue to own and operate its facilities like today.

As discussed under Criterion #3, the WSCUHSD properties would be divided. Essentially, the El Molino campus would be owned by a new Russian River Unified and Analy High by a new West Sonoma (Sebastopol) Unified. An asset division plan would include methods of possible compensation for the district office residing in Sebastopol and for which the district receives the movable furniture, equipment, and vehicles.

This study proposal **would not create additional school facilities costs** as the current facilities are adequate. There might be some renovation costs to reopen El Molino fully, but it would not be significant, such as if a new school needed to be constructed. Sources of funding for school facilities improvements might include existing and new school bonds, State school facilities grants, and local developer fees.

Criterion #7: School Housing Costs, Cont'd

The following is a recap of each school district, the school sites in operation, the grade levels served, whether charter schools are on the sites, and whether the school district owns the property.

Listing of Facilities Used						
Name of District and Site	Location	Grades Served	Enrollment FY2020-21	Charter School?	District Property?	
Forestville Union Elementary (1)						
Forestville Academy	6321 Hwy 116 Forestville	2-8	218	Yes - locally funded	Yes	
Forestville Elementary	6321 Hwy 116 Forestville	K-1	48	No	Yes	
Nonpublic	n/a		1	n/a		
Fort Ross Elementary (1)						
Fort Ross Elementary	30600 Seaview, Cazadero	K-6	11	No	Yes	
Gravenstein Union Elementary (2)						
Gravenstein Elementary	3840 Twig Ave, Sebastopol	K-5	438	Yes - locally funded	Yes	
Gravenstein First	3840 Twig Ave, Sebastopol	1	35	No	Yes	
Hillcrest Middle	725 Bloomfield	6-8	284	Yes - locally funded	Yes	
Guerneville Elementary (1)						
California Pacific Charter - Sonoma	14630 Armstrong Woods Rd, Guerneville	K-12	216	Yes - direct funded	Yes	
Guerneville Elem Charter	14630 Armstrong Woods Rd, Guerneville	K-8	220	Yes - locally funded	Yes	
Guerneville Primary	14630 Armstrong Woods Rd, Guerneville	K	22	No	Yes	
Harmony Union Elementary (1)						
Harmony Elementary	1935 Bohemian Highway, Occidental	K-1	40	No	Yes	
Salmon Creek Elementary Charter	1935 Bohemian Highway, Occidental	2-8	160	Y - locally funded	Yes	
Pathways Charter	150 Professional Center Drive, Ste C, Rohnce	K-12	417	Y - direct funded	No	
Monte Rio Elementary (1)						
Monte Rio Elementary	20700 Foothill Dr., Monte Rio	K-8	61	No	Yes	
Montgomery Elementary (1)						
Montgomery Elementary	18620 Fort Ross Rd., Cazadero	K-8	22	No	Yes	
Oak Grove Elementary (2)						
Oak Grove Elementary	8760 Bower St., Sebastopol	K	73	No	Yes	
Oak Grove Elem/Willowside Middle	5299 Hall Rd, Santa Rosa	1-8	765	Yes - locally funded	Yes	
Pivot Charter School - North Bay	2999 Cleveland Ave., STE A-F, Santa Rosa	K-12	453	Yes - direct funded	No	
Sebastopol Union Elementary (2)						
Park Side Elementary	7450 Bodega Ave., Sebastopol	K-4	216	No	Yes	
Brook Haven Middle	7905 Valentine Ave., Sebastopol	5-8	198	No	Yes	
REACH	487 Watertrough Rd., Sebastopol	K-8	118	Yes - direct funded	No	
Sebastopol Independent Charter	1111 Gravenstein Hwy N, Sebastopol	K-8	281	Yes - direct funded	No	
Twin Hills Union Elementary (3)						
Apple Blossom Elem	700 Watertrough Rd., Sebastopol	K-5	355	No	Yes	
Orchard View	700 Watertrough Rd., Sebastopol	K-12	248	Yes - locally funded	Yes	
Sunridge Elem Charter	7285 Hayden Ave. Sebastopol	K-8	270	Yes - locally funded	Yes (Sebastopol)	
Twin Hills Charter Middle	1685 Watertrough Rd., Sebastopol	6-8	226	Yes - locally funded	Yes	
West Sonoma County Union High (4)						
Laguna Continuation High	445 Taft Street, Sebastopol	10-12	80	No	Yes	
El Molina High	7050 Covey Rd., Forestville	9-12 (closed 2020-21)	562	No	Yes	
West County High (Analy)	6950 Analy Ave, Sebastopol	9-12	1,158	No	Yes	
West Sonoma County Consortium - Special Education	462 Johnson Street, Sebastopol	K-12	38	No	Yes	
Nonpublic	n/a		13	No	n/a	

Criterion #7: School Housing Costs, Cont'd

Developer Fees

Education Code Section 17620 states "... the governing board of any school district is authorized to levy a fee, charge, dedication or other form of requirement against any development project for the construction or reconstruction of school facilities." The fees authorized by Education Code 17620 are currently \$4.79 per square foot of residential construction and \$0.78 per square foot of commercial or industrial construction.

A new developer justification study would need to be conducted upon the formation of a new unified district. It is likely that the fees collected would be at the same level as if not unified. It is reasonable to assume that even with a decline in enrollment, new development will continue in some areas, and fees justified based on continual modernization needs plus the recent expansion of the transitional kindergarten program.

Enrollment Trends and Facilities Capacity

According to the *Enrollment Projection and Student Mapping Update* (Jan. 24, 2024, King Consulting) provided by WSCUHSD, student enrollment at all West Sonoma County area grade levels has declined.

- The WSCUHSD high school district's pupil population has declined from 2,002 to 1,521 over 10 years and is projected to be 1,396 in the fiscal year 2030-31. (Note: should the district be split in half, this would create even smaller high schools in each area.)
- The sum of the elementary feeder districts' enrollment has declined from 4,606 to 3,990 over 10 years.
- The West Sonoma County community population is aging and has remained fairly constant over the past 20 years, just over 40,000, but the school-age population is down 34%. Local birth rates have also been down 25% over the past 18 years.

Given the demographic trends, unification would not create additional school capacity needs. Depending on location, transportation routes, and available facilities, elementary school closures might be necessary for financial reason in years to come.

State School Facilities Grants: These programs would not be affected by unification. A new unified district would need to determine its eligibility for future funding through the application process.

Conclusion: Any increase in costs to the state as a result of the proposed reorganization would be insignificant and otherwise incidental to the reorganization. The criterion is substantially met.

Criterion #8: Property Values

Statutory Authority: The proposed reorganization is primarily designed for purposes other than to significantly increase property values.

Regulations: There are no regulations on this subject; however, the rationale given in the petition for the territory transfer should be analyzed. If the petitioners' rationale for the transfer appears questionable or not compelling, the county committee should at least consider whether increased property values might be the primary reason for the petition. The county tax assessor's office or local real estate firms could be consulted for advice on whether territory transfers might have an impact on property values.

Analysis: The rationale behind the study is not related to local development and the impact on property values. The study purpose is to answer the question: Would unification enhance the instructional opportunity for all students at a similar or reduced cost to the affected districts and/or taxpayers?

Conclusion: The proposed reorganization is primarily designed for purposes other than to significantly increase property values. The criterion is substantially met.

Criterion #9: Fiscal Management or Fiscal Status

Statutory Authority: The proposed reorganization will continue to promote sound fiscal management and not cause a substantial negative effect on the fiscal status of the proposed district or any existing district affected by the proposed reorganization.

Regulations: There are no regulations on this subject; however, the criteria and standards adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to *EC* Section 33127 (Chapter 1462, Statutes of 1988) and published in *CCR*, Title 5, sections 15440–15466, are recommended for evaluation of the financial condition of school districts affected by any proposed reorganization.

Analysis:

In the *Financial Feasibility Study*, dated October 2022, there would be an estimated loss of funding through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) calculation of \$ \$5.9M for Scenario 2 (the two unified districts option). Still, there would be an opportunity to save costs by consolidating administration and building economies of scale at the K-8 program levels.

In theory, using comparative-size unified districts, the new unified district could have a net positive fiscal gain that well exceeds the revenue loss. However, this would take much planning since the LCFF loss would be immediate in year one of unification. Workforce reductions and elementary school closures might be required to balance the budgets.

Unlike the first Scenario 2, Harmony School District is added to the Russian River Unified in this study. By doing this, more elementary-age pupils, estimated at 573 as of 23-24 enrollment, would be included, plus proportionately more high school pupils, about 180 pupils. Approximately 23% of Russian River Unified’s student population would be from the Harmony area. This helps add pupils to the secondary El Molino High educational program (assuming no interdistrict attendance). But it doesn’t help the finances, and here is why.

Harmony is basic (community) aid funded like the other elementary schools in the area. But, it also adds proportionately more high school pupils, which are more costly to serve. WSCUHSD is not community-funded; State Aid exceeded property tax revenues by \$6.6M in 23-24. When combining the high school with the elementary schools, the added property tax apportioned to a new unified district would not make up for the added cost of education, and the new district might not be community-funded.

The following is a discussion of community funding and why it is so significant to the Russian River area districts and West Sonoma County.

Community (also known as basic aid) funding is the most significant element of LCFF funding that affects the financial feasibility of school district unification in West Sonoma. The two unifications studied here groups districts that are community-funded in the Russian River and, with only minor exception, the Sebastopol area districts receive much less or no community-funds.

In both hypothetical unified school districts, there would be a loss of revenues when adding the high school pupils into a K-12 district since WSCUHSD is not a community-funded district. The table on the next page shows that WSCUHSD is not close to being community-funded, as the net state aid is \$6.5M. That means that unification would result in a loss of community aid funds area-wide. The “Additional SA for MSA Guarantee” totals \$1.75K, far short of the \$6.5M state aid to community-funded revenue gap.

Criterion #9: Fiscal Management or Fiscal Status, Cont'd

LCFF Summary Data				
2023–24 Second Principal Apportionment (source: https://www.scoed.net/2023-24-Second-Principal-Apportionment)				
Legend: LCFF = Local Control Funding Formula; ADA = Average Daily Attendance;				
Local Educational Agency	Total LCFF Entitlement	Total Local Revenue or In-Lieu of Property Taxes	Net State Aid	Additional SA for MSA Guarantee
West Sonoma County Union High	21,245,572	14,362,352	6,572,938	-
Forestville Union Elementary	804,319	2,290,051	-	439,479
Forestville Academy	1,747,499	1,595,278	121,471	-
Fort Ross Elementary	267,307	439,414	-	72,066
Gravenstein Union Elementary	859,840	211,712	587,302	45,000
Gravenstein Elementary	5,151,500	2,296,338	2,176,674	-
Hillcrest Middle	3,017,395	1,405,820	1,183,185	-
Guerneville Elementary	403,339	658,675	-	471,540
California Pacific Charter - Sonoma	1,976,884	783,332	1,163,454	-
Guerneville Elementary (Charter)	2,146,868	879,264	1,233,820	-
Harmony Union Elementary	694,344	280,478	353,173	169,950
Salmon Creek School - A Charter	1,810,823	956,553	658,196	-
Pathways Charter	3,926,437	1,824,758	1,583,128	-
Monte Rio Union Elementary	861,801	1,305,020	-	129,882
Montgomery Elementary	346,505	612,231	-	91,797
Oak Grove Union Elementary	1,075,945	256,016	695,427	256,700
Pivot Charter School - North Bay Oak Grove Elementary/Willowside Middle	4,753,840	1,090,967	3,591,009	-
Sebastopol Union Elementary	7,437,477	2,044,820	4,357,527	-
Sebastopol Independent Charter	5,132,392	4,310,003	738,679	74,362
Twin Hills Union Elementary	3,063,226	2,787,316	221,774	-
Orchard View	3,997,722	1,518,170	2,005,540	-
Sunridge Charter	2,570,392	1,039,137	1,167,942	-
Twin Hills Charter Middle	2,500,790	1,032,176	1,137,170	-
	2,105,451	922,988	879,252	-

Color coding: grey is WSCUHSD, green in West Sonoma (Sebastopol) area schools not in the Russian River area, blue is the Russian River area

Criterion #9: Fiscal Management or Fiscal Status, Cont'd

In addition to the extra community aid funding (that many of the Russian River area districts benefit from), some districts receive the **School District Basic Aid Supplement (BAS)** funding. BAS funding is to help compensate for the loss of local in-lieu property taxes due to charter schools that provide instruction to nonresident (out-of-district) students. This funding only applies to community-funded districts (or those that appear eligible in the LCFF calculations). Many districts have taken an opportunity to use charter school models to maximize the BAS funding.

According to the CDE, in the fiscal year 2023-24, the total basic aid supplemental funding for the West Sonoma districts combined amounted to \$10,164,254.

The table below shows the community and basic aid supplemental funding that would be at risk of loss if the two unifications were to occur.

Two Unified School Districts in West Sonoma County		
Russian River Unified	Additional Funding Above the State Guarantee (FY 23-24)	
	Basic (Community) Aid Funding	Basic (Community) Aid Supplemental Funding
Elementary School Districts		
Fort Ross Elementary School District	\$ 72,066	\$ -
Montgomery Elementary School District	\$ 91,797	\$ -
Monte Rio Elementary School District	\$ 129,882	\$ -
Guerneville Elementary School District	\$ 471,540	\$ 887,853
Forestville Elementary School District	\$ 439,479	\$ 68,413
Harmony Elementary School District	\$ 169,950	\$ 2,100,843
Oak Grove Elementary School District	\$ 256,700	\$ 2,575,760
West Sonoma County Union High School District (includes El Molino High campus)	No*	\$ -
Total Basic (Community) Funded Aid	\$ 1,631,414	\$ 5,632,869
West Sonoma County (Sebastopol) Unified		
Sebastopol Elementary School District	\$ 74,362	\$ 916,338
Gravenstein Elementary School District	\$ 45,000	\$ 2,452,633
Twin Hills Elementary School District	\$ -	\$ 1,162,414
West Sonoma County Union High School District (includes Analy High campus)	No*	\$ -
Total Basic (Community) Funded Aid	\$ 119,362	\$ 4,531,385
Total Area-Wide	\$ 1,750,776	\$ 10,164,254

* Local property taxes are \$14.3M and the State Guarantee is \$21.3M, until such time as the property taxes exceed the state guarantee WSCUHSD will not be in a basic (community) funded category.

Criterion #9: Fiscal Management or Fiscal Status, Cont'd

Scenario 2 did not include Harmony with the Russian River area in the prior Financial Feasibility Study. As such, the resulting unified school district would have retained the community aid status, which means that basic aid supplemental funding would be mostly preserved. But adding Harmony to the Russian River area adds more high school enrollment. It dilutes the community aid funding, likely losing community aid funding and some or all basic aid supplemental funding.

If all districts consolidated K-12, community aid and some or all basic aid supplemental funding would likely be lost in the West Sonoma County Unified.

The table below shows both hypothetical unified school districts as state aid-funded, not community aid-funded after unification. Again, this is because of the shift of high school enrollment from the Harmony area to the Russian River area.

Two Unified Districts	Total LCFF Entitlement	Total Local Revenue or In-Lieu of Property Taxes	Net State Aid	Additional SA for MSA Guarantee
Russian River Unified	\$ 19,573,111	\$ 12,101,132	\$ 8,583,068	\$ 1,631,414
WSCUHD 50% est LCFF Entitlement	10,622,786			
Property Taxes from Region		12,101,132		
Totals	\$ 30,195,897	\$ 24,202,264	\$ 5,993,633	\$ -
West Sonoma County Unified	25,335,482	12,736,344	9,875,744	119,362
WSCUHD 50% est LCFF Entitlement	10,622,786			
Property Taxes from Region		12,736,344		
Totals	\$ 35,958,268	\$ 25,472,688	\$ 10,485,580	\$ -

What Might be the Financial Effect of Districts Opting Out of Unification? Elementary school districts funded by community aid and/or receiving Basic Aid Supplemental funds will continue to receive the funding after unification. There would be no effect on those districts.

However, at least one elementary school district in each area must unify with a portion of WSCUHD to create two unified districts. If the elementary districts are community-funded today, they would lose the additional revenues they now receive, and the new unified would not be community-funded. The astute use of charter schools might help create some BAS funding, but this funding source is uncertain and unpredictable and much more difficult to obtain the larger the district. Therefore, cost savings would need to make up the difference in revenue loss through administrative and program consolidation. And if only one elementary district joins each K-12, facility consolidation would be impractical.

Criterion #9: Fiscal Management or Fiscal Status, Cont'd

Fiscal Status of the districts: All the districts filed a "positive" 2nd interim report on fiscal status in 2023-24, meaning they project to meet their obligations for the current and two subsequent fiscal years.

Conclusion: Not Met The financial criterion would be challenging to meet and there would be a substantial negative fiscal impact. To make it workable, there would need to be broad support from many elementary school districts to join K-12 from each area. And further, even with support, a demonstratable plan to compensate for the projected revenue shortfall would be needed and challenging to formulate. The plan would need to add costs for reopening El Molino High as a comprehensive high school and making up for the loss of economic efficiency at Analy High.

Revenue was lost in the first study without Harmony included in the Russian River Area. That loss appears to be more significant due to added high school enrollment in a community-funded Russian River area. Even doubling the property tax base (the combined elementary and high school tax areas) won't compensate for the revenue shortfall.

Any future petition must consider the revenue losses against the new districts' ability to generate cost savings through more efficient board, administration, support services, and school operations. The timing and ability to realize cost savings would be significant to the new unified school boards.