



Resolution in Opposition of Future School Closures and Charter Collocations by United Teachers of Richmond CTA/NEA

January 30th, 2019

WHEREAS, the UTR recognizes that tough decisions, such as school closings, may be appropriate when proven strategies to improve student academic outcomes have failed and/or the decline of enrollment has fallen too low; and

WHEREAS, "Charter Collocation and facilities requests" and budget priorities, not academic improvement, have been cited by district officials as the drivers in recent announcements of possible closure of Crespi Middle School; and

WHEREAS, Closing Crespi Middle School means students and families in the El Sobrante community will have to travel to Pinole to send their students to Pinole Middle School or another new K-8 school including possibly parents keeping students at the current Crespi facility and transferring their students to Invictus Charter School which will lead to lost resources and lay-offs; and

WHEREAS, the district needs to justify school closings, but has failed to calculate and/or disclose costs of the collocation of traditional and charter schools as well as issues with a closure of one middle school and transfer of students to a new school; and

WHEREAS, claims of inefficiency and academic failure are often a mask for a hidden political agenda to undermine public education, as seen in the contradiction of closing a school because of "under-utilization" and "prop 39 requests by Charter Schools" immediately opening a new charter school in its place; and

WHEREAS, research shows that the academic impact of charter schools is no better or worse than that of traditional public schools, and that charter schools show a troubling variability in characteristics and governance across states, districts and grade levels; and

WHEREAS, charter schools were not originally intended to replace neighborhood schools but rather were intended to be experiments in public education, offering successful strategies to be adopted by neighborhood schools, not used to justify the creation of corporate charter school chains which lead to cherry picking public school students, pushing out students with disciplinary issues, students with special needs, etc; and

WHEREAS, charter school and traditional school collocation creates an atmosphere and culture of division which is not conducive to growth, provides constant interruption to students, and use of space issues; and

WHEREAS, academic-related school-closure models rely mostly on proficiency as a measure of school performance, which is a statistical estimation based on a single point in time, susceptible to distortions and statistical error, and generally ignore a more valuable analysis of inputs and outputs—for example, school

and teacher quality, school climate, available resources, parental support, and other measures that capture a more holistic picture of the school's effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, the very prospect of a school closure creates a downward spiral, as researchers note falling reading and math scores in the year before a closing, and students report feelings of demoralization, anger and guilt because their school has "failed" and is being closed; and these destructive assessments may permeate the community of parents and leaders who will fight to save the neighborhood school; and all of this distracts from teaching and learning; and

WHEREAS, research in Chicago, New York and Philadelphia shows that most students transferred from closed schools migrate to academically similar schools where they do not improve and, in fact, may suffer deficits due to dislocation, and where improvement is seen in only a small fraction of students while some students are transferred to schools with lower math, language and adequate yearly progress (AYP) scores than their original schools; and

WHEREAS, school closures ironically deprive parents of authentic school choice by removing what, for many, would be their first choice—a high-quality neighborhood public school that is responsive to community needs and input; and

WHEREAS, policymakers fail to consider the critical issues of safety and transportation when closing neighborhood schools—that is, increased distance may be a challenge to families who must consider commuting time and costs, and the physical safety of students may be jeopardized by combining children from different neighborhoods across possible gang lines or changing neighborhood/school allegiances; and

WHEREAS, public schools are important institutions in neighborhoods—the heart of a community, offering continuity to growing children, stability to families who are vulnerable to disruption, and a trusted sanctuary within the boundaries of a neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, the UTR is committed to supporting and fully resourcing, not closing, public schools and to working with all in our communities to make every school a school where parents want to send their children and educators want to teach; and

WHEREAS, school improvement is an ongoing process that should meaningfully engage parents, community, teachers, students and other school staff throughout; and

WHEREAS, high-quality, community-based public education is the right of every child:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the United Teachers of Richmond calls for a moratorium on any school closings until the system wide impact of closures on educational outcomes can be properly assessed and or provided to the community prior to proposing any closures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, because students who live in low-income areas are universally the victims of school closures, the UTR will follow the recommendations of the Equity and Excellence Commission and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's "Equity and Quality in Education" report to bring fairness in finance and resources to school districts that systematically underfund schools with a high concentration of low-income students, through state and federal avenues; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTR calls for an examination of the civil rights issues associated with school closings; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in the future if there are any proposals to close schools, the UTR calls for various criteria to be used instead of only the overly narrow proficiency scores as the sole or predominant criteria to close schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTR calls for a comprehensive needs assessment to be conducted for any school under consideration for closure, with a report detailing actions taken by the district prior to closure consideration, to be shared with the community through a series of forums and a period of public comment toward developing a school improvement plan, in collaboration with parents and teachers through the local bargaining unit, that will detail short- and long-term goals, measures of success, practices to address needs, resources, and people responsible for leading and assessing progress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTR urges the district, before displacing large numbers of students, to examine other school improvement strategies such as those that focus on the quality of curriculum, the correct use of data, professional development, school and neighborhood culture, and parent and community partnerships; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTR urges district and city officials to respond to neighborhood needs and develop creative ways to utilize space in under-enrolled schools, including wraparound services (health and social services, family literacy classes, extended learning time) for the students and their families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTR advocates for the development of community schools that use expanded learning time to integrate academics, arts, recreational and college-readiness programs, as well as health, social and emotional services and supports, preschool and daycare opportunities, and other wraparound services, which have the potential to meet the multiple needs of students and families and to improve neighborhoods and schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTR affirms its support for charter schools as originally conceived by the late American Federation of Teachers President Al Shanker—that is, as educator-led incubators of innovations that can contribute significantly to a world-class public education for every student in our nation—and rejects all efforts to transform charter schools into chains of corporate franchises that replace district public schools and promote the privatization of public education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTR will support teachers and students at district and charter schools needing improvement to ensure that research-based best practices are implemented in student-centered environments and that parents and communities served are empowered to actively participate in the school improvement process; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTR will encourage the district to work with parent groups and city groups to increase communication to them in various languages and that they engage in real partnership to solve issues like school closures in our neighborhoods; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the UTR will support teachers and students at schools needing improvement, and the right of educators at charter schools to collectively bargain for the resources

necessary for success, including professional development, collaboration (not competition) between teachers and schools, and a true voice in the workplace.