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Reynolds wants a school closed next year

By Sharman Stein
Times Tribune staff

REDWOOD CITY — Superintendent Harry Reynolds stated for the first time Thursday night his intention to recommend closure of one school in the Sequoia Union High School District by June of next year.

Reynolds said he plans to make his recommendation to the school board in December on which of the south San Mateo County district's five schools should close.

Reynolds told trustees and parent members of the District Central Committee (DCC) that severe finan-

cial problems make the closing of a school imperative. Only when that occurs can the district address the academic program, Reynolds said.

He lauded parents for their hard work and repeatedly denied the existence of any animosity between himself and the DCC, despite their differences of opinion.

As they did in two earlier meetings, parents urged Reynolds to combine school closure plans with plans to strengthen the curriculum.

The community is willing to pay the price of losing one school if it can be sure that curriculum will improve, parents said.

"We have a price for school closure," said DCC member Jim Mudra. "We'll work with you if we can see that the curriculum will benefit. Otherwise, we'll fight you."

Saying he shared parents' concerns about the eroding academic program, Reynolds proposed forming one committee to study curriculum and another to

study ways of raising money from the community.

But administrative assistant Linda Yule said she would not "cloud" the public forums scheduled to discuss school closure with discussions about curriculum.

Forums will be held to discuss school closure at each high school and in East Palo Alto during October and November. The first forum will be held at Carlmont High School in Belmont on Oct. 5 at 7:30 p.m. Subsequent meetings will be held at Woodside and San Carlos high schools, Sequoia High in Red-

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wood City and Menlo-Atherton High in Atherton. The East Palo Alto location has not been chosen. The district closed Ravenswood High in East Palo Alto in 1976.

Trustee Ted Wellings called Mudra an "idealist" for thinking people will accept school closure if they are told that the result would be an improved curriculum.

People will be only be concerned with defending their own turf, Wellings said.

In a detailed report and presentation, district administrators reviewed the finances and declining enrollment figures that support the

argument for closing a school.

The economies that have been made in the past few years were pointed out, as well as the financial benefits that will result if a school is closed.

Through savings in personnel and building maintenance, the district projects a saving of \$1 million a year by closing one school.

With that money, Reynolds said, more math and science teachers can be hired, class sizes can be reduced and the curriculum improved.

Reynolds said the quality of education in the district is not as good as it should be. But he defended the district's strong record of achievement despite the loss of funds and declining enrollment.

Students have won scholarships,

done better than average on statewide exams, and they have been accepted to the best colleges and universities, Reynolds said.

He said he was concerned, however, that the curriculum might not be rigorous enough for students.

His suggestions for strengthening curriculum included:

- Establishing curriculum plans which detail objectives in each course.
- Adopting minimum proficiency tests in all areas.
- Adopting new graduation requirements that require more units and more stringent course credit requirements.
- More emphasis on instructional supervision and teacher evaluation.