

Declining enrollment is not a new problem. I grew up in Santa Clara Valley in an area that was bursting with new homes and young families. The school I went to was filled with kids. I loved my school. It's where I decided to become a teacher. Fast forward a few years. The children were growing up and leaving the schools, but the families stayed. As less and less young children lived in the neighborhoods, schools unfortunately had to be closed. Did I miss the school at the end of my block? Yes, but the children and families became part of other school communities. Was it easy? Not at the very beginning, but both students and staff were welcomed into other equally excellent schools.

This has happened time and time again in our valley. It happened in the neighborhood where I grew up, it happened in the neighborhood where my own children went to school. In the best of worlds, there would be money to keep all schools open. Unfortunately, there is not.

Some members of the board have chosen to turn a blind eye to the dwindling student numbers and against recommendations, have decided to postpone the closures. Exactly what does that mean? The closures will still come at later date and the quality of education for every student in the district will be affected. Severe budget cuts will not only impact the quality of education, but also impact working conditions for every Evergreen employee. Less people doing more work, and with increased cost of health care pushed onto employees, being paid less.

Larger class size for primary, cutting back on art, no help for English Language Learners. smaller office staff, less money for classrooms, and even for basic custodial supplies. Is this the best the board can do?

How can you possibly hope to attract new students and retain existing students when you make the conditions at our schools worse? New logos, one-minute elevator pitches, and glossy pamphlets describing our schools will not bring students back. Politicians put style over substance, but as educators we know substance always trumps style. Maintaining a high quality of education will keep as many students as possible here.

Do what is right for your students and employees.

Cindy Otewalt, Millbrook

