



## OVERVIEW

The Kyrene Long-Range Planning Committee has proposed closing Kyrene de la Mirada as part of a district-wide plan to reduce schools due to declining enrollment. Despite this, Mirada is one of the district's top-performing schools and a cornerstone of the community.

Mirada is an A+ School of Excellence, ranked among the top Arizona elementary schools by U.S. News, and the only Leader in Me Lighthouse School in Chandler. More than 60% of families actively choose Mirada from outside its school boundaries. This includes 18% from outside the district, which could equate to **\$650,000 or more in funding** to the district each year. Its long-tenured teachers, thriving leadership programs, and deep community partnerships make it a model of excellence.

Closing Mirada would displace students, overburden nearby schools that are already near or above capacity, and weaken Kyrene's competitive standing in the East Valley. Mirada Strong believes there is no reason to close one of the district's most successful schools—Mirada should remain open and continue to serve as an example of what public education can be.

More info can be found here:

<https://www.kyrene.org/about-kyrene/governing-board/long-range-planning-committee>

## GET INVOLVED

- [Sign the petition](#)
- [Join the Mirada Strong Facebook group](#)
- Spread the news in your neighborhood, local businesses, and more
- [Attend upcoming protests and events](#)
- [Sign up to speak at an upcoming board meeting](#)
- Write letters to the district board and local legislators
- Share your story on social media with the hashtag: #MiradaStrong

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## MIRADA FACTS

Keep these in mind when answering why we're opposing the closure of Kyrene de la Mirada. Weave the stats in with your own personal story about why you chose Mirada as your school of choice.

### A+ School of Excellence

#### [Arizona Educational Foundation](#)

- **What is it?**
  - A+ School of Excellence award recognizes the "best-of-the-best" in Arizona public schools
- **Why is it important?**
  - Mirada has maintained its A+ status since 2016. The current proposal would close 36% of the district's A+ schools (Colina, Mariposa, KTA, and Mirada), which are the very best schools in Kyrene.

### US News - Top Arizona Elementary School

#### [US News](#)

- **What is it?**
  - The U.S. News & World Report Best Elementary Schools report is a publication that provides rankings and data for public elementary schools across the United States, based on state math and reading test scores
- **Why is it important?**
  - Mirada ranked as the second-highest Kyrene district school east of the I-10 and 6th overall districtwide

### Leader in Me Lighthouse Certified

#### [Leader in Me](#)

- **What is it?**
  - The Leader in Me program is a school-wide transformation process by Franklin Covey that empowers students with 21st-century leadership and life skills by weaving Stephen Covey's 7 Habits and other universal principles into the school's culture. It teaches students responsibility, teamwork, problem-solving, and goal-setting, aiming to foster a culture of student empowerment, improve academic achievement, and reduce behavioral issues by creating leaders who can thrive in any setting.

- The Lighthouse certification is evidence that schools have produced outstanding results in school and student outcomes by implementing the Leader in Me process with fidelity and excellence. It typically occurs 4-5 years after a school begins the Leader in Me process and needs to be recertified every 2 years.
- On average boast outcomes of
  - 92% greater efficacy
  - 45% higher attendance
  - 42% fewer behavioral incidents
- **Why is it important?**
  - Mirada is the **only** Leader In Me Lighthouse certified school in Chandler. It adds **no expenses** to the district as our PTO pays for half and Mrs. Anderson's budget via tax credits pays the other half. However, it adds a competitive edge to the school in the greater Chandler/Tempe area.

## AZ School Report Cards

[azed.gov](http://azed.gov)

- 82% experienced teachers (more than 3 years in their position)
- 88% certified to teach in their field
- 80% of English Learners achieving English Language proficiency (AZELLA)
- 88% non-chronic absenteeism
- State Letter Grade: A (86.81% score)

## Staff & Academics

- Average teacher tenure is over 10 years
- Mirada has the second-highest enrollment of all K-5 schools in the district next to Cielo
- 60% of families are out of the school boundaries showing that families intentionally choose Mirada. Of these families out of the school boundaries, 42% are in bounds for another Kyrene school and 18% are outside the district.
  - There are roughly 2800 out of district students who currently choose Kyrene schools. With this plan - what happens to those families? Will they still choose Kyrene?
  - There are approximately 100 out-of-district families at Mirada, which equates roughly to \$650k in funding that could potentially be lost for the district.

- One of the more recently built schools (1993) so it's less likely to have advanced building maintenance issues - many schools proposed to remain open were built in the 80s or earlier.
- The school features:
  - 13 classrooms with their own bathroom
  - Central pods and breakout rooms
  - 3 outdoor learning spaces with gardens
- 97% of kindergartners were proficient based on the DIBELS end of year assessment last year
- Two-time recipient of the Level 4 AZ PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) Award
  - A Level 4 award indicates that a school has established a robust, data-driven, and multi-tiered support system.

## Finances & Community Partnership

- Intel Matching Grant
- Fundraising Events
  - Read A Thon (\$52,000 raised in 2024)
  - American Heart Association (\$10,400 raised in 2025)
  - Monarch Nights Out
  - Top contributing elementary school to the Kyrene Resource Center
- Thriving Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students - where Dads spend the day volunteering at the school to help with projects, assist in the classroom, and at lunch) program that fills up for the year within 30-60 minutes of the link going live each year.
- Each grade level participates in annual service-learning initiatives in the local community. Some examples from last year include:
  - **Kindergarten** students visited a nearby assisted living facility, where they brought joy to the residents by singing, reading books, and sharing handmade cards.
  - **First graders** focused on kindness. First graders were given 10 smiley face stickers to give out to people in their community. If they saw people who looked like they were having a bad day, the teachers encouraged them (with the help of their adult) to go up and give them a smiley face sticker. The goal was to help spread kindness around our community and promote positivity amongst others.

- **Second graders** began the year by collecting donations for a local animal shelter.
- **Third graders** gathered gently used or new sports equipment to donate to the Kyrene Family Resource Center, directly benefiting students within our community.
- **Fourth graders** raised a little over \$1,500 for the Arizona Foster Alliance. The money went to the Birthday Dreams Program. Students toured the facility and filled the birthday wishes of a young foster child by decorating their birthday bag and choosing toys, books and stuffed animals for them.
- **Fifth graders** went on a field trip to Feed My Starving Children.

## Methodology/Process Questions

Below are some of the glaring issues we see with the data that was presented to the Long Range Planning Committee.

### Optimal Enrollment Capacity

- **One Liner:** The current proposal puts the west side K-5 schools within the district's recommended enrollment capacity level, but leaves the east side K-5s well above that recommended level.
- **Details:** According to the Long Range Planning FAQ, "Resources are used most efficiently if schools are between 75-85% capacity." However, the current proposal places the majority of the schools east of I-10 above this level at the time of implementation.
  - The current proposal places the west side K-5s at 72% of total school capacity (573 average students per school, average of 73% enrollment capacity per school).
  - The east side K-5s are at 90% total capacity (average capacity per school is 90% with 706 average students per school)
  - While they suggest that they still anticipate an additional 1100 student drop over 5 years, that only equates to an average of 18 students per school per year. That means it would take years for the schools to fall back into suggested ranges, leaving plenty of time for the families to choose different schools in the meantime due to overpopulated schools.
  - This also assumes that the 1100 student drop will be perfectly even at every school across the district, which is extremely unlikely. This highlights that there needs to be a much more diligent approach to how to address the budget shortfall.

## Cookie-Cutter Modeling

- The current proposal leaves 6 elementary schools and 2 middle schools on both sides of I-10, despite the east side having more than 800 additional K-5 students.
  - Therefore, it seems that the east side of the I-10 needs at least one additional K-5 school at the very least, but more likely, this plan needs additional scrutiny as this shows inadequate care and data in the decision-making.
  - It's noted in the demographer's notes that a *partial* explanation is due to a new housing development where an additional 250-350 students are added over 5 years but even in the best case scenario that leave 450 more students *in 5 years from now* assuming enrollment continues to trend down.

## Committee Membership

- 3 of the 12 people (25%) who comprised the "Community Members" portion of the committee are executives of the top 3 construction companies for K-12 projects in the state.
  - Why is this the case?
  - Can the district provide a list of others that were turned away from joining the committee as "Community Members"?
  - Are conflict of interest statements available for these executives?
  - If they were on the committee to provide expertise in building maintenance costs - why were they not instead asked to provide a report for the committee consider instead of taking up 3 voting seats on the committee?

## CORE MESSAGING

*Mirada Strong Full Response to Kyrene Long-Range Planning Committee Proposal*

### ***Kyrene Long-Range Planning Committee Proposes Closure of Top-Performing Kyrene De La Mirada Based on Incomplete Data & Methodology***

Closure proposed for Kyrene de la Mirada, a top-ranked Kyrene district school with national leadership designation, multiple award-winning and long-tenured staff, and a top-choice school for families within and out of its traditional district boundary lines.

#### **Kyrene de la Mirada One of Top Schools in District**

Kyrene de la Mirada was included in a recent proposal to be closed down despite recently being recognized as an A+ designated school in February 2025, along with having a unique and rigorous Leader In Me Lighthouse certification, and a diverse school population - including large and successful special and gifted education programs, and an average teacher tenure of over 10 years.

Ranked as the second-highest Kyrene district school east of the I-10 and 6th overall districtwide by [US News - Top Arizona Elementary Schools](#), Kyrene de la Mirada boasts more than 60% of its families who specifically chose Mirada - with roughly 40% of students in the boundary for a different Kyrene district school and about another 20% outside of the Kyrene district.



Additionally, of the schools proposed to close east of I-10, Mirada has the current highest enrollment capacity potential for a K-5 school. Of the schools set to remain open, they all have less total student capacity than Mirada and are at much lower current capacity rates - signaling that families are choosing other schools in the district instead.

### **Critical Flaws in Proposal Methodology**

#### **The decision to close Mirada is almost exclusively based on demographic projection models with no other factors taken into account.**

We have many community members who specialize in this type of modeling - including PhDs in mathematical and statistical modeling, who have spotted foundational issues in the reasoning and methodology of the current proposals put together by the demographer and presented to the committee.

As one Mirada Strong community member puts it: "The proposal takes a 'demographer first' approach - prioritizing numbers on a map rather than quality of education."

First, the modeling alternatives for the redesign do not have transparent robustness estimates. This makes the models difficult to compare. For example, one model with 9 school closures can show better school utilization but has greater uncertainty than a model with 7-8 school closures and somewhat less optimal school use.

Second, the demographer who presented the models does not come across as objective. He emphasizes personal experiences and communicates his own opinions about the different alternatives (specific examples from committee meeting recordings available upon request), including what model patterns he liked and did not like. This is not how our community members with expertise in this field expect a demographer to act. His job was to present alternatives as objectively as possible and let the committee assess them independently. Instead, it is our opinion that he biased the committee's recommendation to his personal opinions.

Third, school quality - as assessed by institutions like the Arizona Educational Foundation or Kyrene surveys - was never mentioned as part of the model input. We find that surprising. There is no independent assessment of the modeling, which is often expected when much is at stake. As one member of our community put it who has a PhD in mathematical and statistical modeling put it, "I can tell you: I can get a model to do what I like."

### **Inadequate Proposal Presented to Committee**

Mirada's closing is a product of the decision to adopt a model of closing 5 East elementary schools. Mirada survives if a model of 4 East closures is elected instead. It is our opinion that the committee was locked into the 5 East closure model by how their meetings were organized and how information was presented. In the final vote, the model with 4 closures got 0 votes. It is fascinating to see how this unfolded.

The models that were vote up are based on assumptions of retention (that very few parents will take their kids out of Kyrene - this is something the demographer said was his experience, but no data was provided to support his claim), willingness to drive kids across the district (this was not the demographer's wording, but rather a logic/view voiced by the Superintendent in the recent Board meeting), and a certain number of students coming in from a new housing development near Cerritos. However, the development is not yet completed and it remains to be seen if families with school-aged children will actually move in.

### **Proposal Goes Against District's Best Practices**

The Kyrene district's recommendation for enrollment capacity at any given school is 75-85% according to the long-range planning committee [FAQ page](#). While the current proposal would keep the west side of the district mostly aligned with that recommendation, nearly all of the schools on the east side of the district will be well over that recommended range. In other words, the current recommendations made equal cuts across both sides of the I-10, which gave inequitable results on the east side of the district.

Kyrene de la Mirada is a top-performing school that keeps the Kyrene district competitive in an increasingly competitive school environment in the southeast valley.

### **Losing A Unique and Rigorous Designation**

The unique Leader in Me Lighthouse certification fosters student leadership as early as Kindergarten and has been shown to have outcomes like 92% or greater efficacy, 45% higher attendance, 42% fewer behavioral incidents. Kyrene de la Mirada is the only Leader in Me Lighthouse school in Chandler.

### **Local Community Impact**

The loss of Kyrene de la Mirada would also be devastating for the surrounding local business community due to the school's deep ties and local engagement. Through outsized

fundraising nights at locally owned businesses, the PTO has had a focus on intentionally promoting and supporting these businesses through highly attended support nights. This includes an upcoming fundraiser at Zesty Zzeeks Pizza with a focus on raising funds for a Mirada teacher battling breast cancer.

Additionally, Mirada has built strong community partners through a matching grant from the Intel plant across the street and sponsorships from the Chandler Scheels. Mirada is also noted to be the largest contributor to the [Kyrene Family Resource Center](#) - bringing in significant donations to support this community staple.

Mirada implemented the Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program in 2024 and the local Dads sign up so quickly after the scheduling link goes live each year that there is a waitlist that forms with hours of the link going live.

In Mirada's 2024 Read-A-Thon fundraiser, the community raised more than \$52k for the school, a \$22k increase from 2023's Read-A-Thon final amount of \$30,000.

### **Outdated and Incomplete Methodology; Misinformed Proposal**

In the current board proposal, Kyrene de la Mirada is listed for closure; however, the methodology used in selecting school closures was incomplete. While the long-range planning committee has done fantastic and hard work to help make difficult but necessary decisions, the plans that were presented to them were put together purely from traditional district boundary lines.

As noted in the stats above, families no longer choose schools with this rigid methodology, but take into account all of the additional factors like school performance, programs, and staff. Not to mention that these factors also play a significant role in positively influencing students' futures.

The #MiradaStrong community asks the Kyrene school district board to reject the current proposal or at least modify it to no longer include Kyrene de la Mirada. The current proposal does not take into account additional important details that align with the Kyrene district's values and are critical components of making this decision.

There is no reason to arbitrarily close one of the top-performing exemplar schools in the district. Instead, keep Kyrene de la Mirada open and fold in other families in the surrounding area for continued student success within a model that is already thriving.

## **SAMPLE LETTERS & PUBLIC COMMENT TALKING POINTS**

### **Addressed to Individual Board Members Based on Their Areas of Focus**

1-minute or less with different options focused on each board member's expertise/focus

#### **For President Kevin Walsh (legal/policy background, emphasizes fairness & transparency)**

"President Walsh, Kyrene families respect the difficult position you and the Board are in. Our concern is that the closure proposals rely almost entirely on one demographer's model, without independent review or consideration of open enrollment trends. Families no longer pick schools by boundary maps alone. Mirada, for example, is chosen by 60% of its families from outside its zone, including 20% from outside Kyrene. That choice keeps enrollment and state funding in Kyrene. Without factoring in community impact and retention, we risk closing schools that actually stabilize the district. We're simply asking the Board to ensure the process is transparent, balanced, and grounded in the reality of how families choose schools today."

#### **For VP Triné Nelson (equity & community engagement focus)**

"Vice President Nelson, you have been a consistent voice for equity. That's why we want to highlight a troubling outcome of the closure plan: schools east of I-10 will be pushed far above the district's own recommended 75–85% capacity range, while west-side schools remain aligned. That's inequitable. Mirada, which serves Chandler, Tempe, and Ahwatukee families, would close—even though it is an A+ school, a Lighthouse leader in student empowerment, and a magnet for families who would otherwise leave Kyrene. Closing Mirada hurts not only one neighborhood, but multiple communities that depend on it. Equity means ensuring all parts of the district share resources fairly and that high-impact schools are preserved."

### **For Member Amy Satre (education & student experience lens)**

"Member Satre, as someone who champions the student experience, I urge you to look closely at what Mirada offers that can't easily be replicated. It is the only Leader in Me Lighthouse school in Chandler, with documented benefits like higher attendance and fewer behavioral incidents. It has a self-contained gifted program, a diverse student body, and teachers with average tenure of more than 10 years. Families bypass closer schools to enroll here—40% from other Kyrene boundaries, 20% from outside the district. If Mirada closes, those students may not stay in Kyrene at all. That undermines student experience across the district. Let's make sure quality and uniqueness are part of the decision-making, not just population projections."

### **For Member Bunny Davis (finance & stewardship focus)**

"Member Davis, as someone who values fiscal responsibility, I want to highlight a key financial risk. Mirada brings in roughly \$650,000 a year in additional state funding from out-of-district families—money Kyrene wouldn't otherwise have. If Mirada closes, many of those families will leave the district, and that revenue goes with them. National studies show single-school closures often produce modest or even negative net savings once transition costs and lost enrollment are factored in. Closing Mirada could cost more than it saves. Fiscal stewardship requires looking not just at short-term building utilization, but at the net revenue impact and the long-term sustainability of Kyrene's enrollment base."

### **For Member Cedric Collins (community leadership & equity focus)**

"Member Collins, you've spoken about Kyrene's role as a community leader. Mirada embodies that role—it connects families across Chandler, Tempe, and Ahwatukee. It's the district's largest contributor to the Kyrene Family Resource Center, supports local businesses through fundraising events, and partners with Intel and Scheels to strengthen community ties. It is also one of the few Kyrene schools where demand consistently outpaces its own boundaries. If Mirada closes, the ripple effects hit multiple neighborhoods and undermine Kyrene's role as a hub of stability. We ask that the Board consider not only buildings and maps, but also the schools that anchor Kyrene's relationship with the wider community."

## Student Testimony (60 seconds)

"Good evening, members of the Board, my name is [Student Name], and I'm a student at Kyrene de la Mirada.

At Mirada, we're not just students; we're leaders. We're part of the **Leader in Me Lighthouse program** - Mirada is the only school and Chandler that is Lighthouse certified. This means every student learns how to set goals, take responsibility, and work together. These are skills I know I'll use for the rest of my life.

Mirada is also unique because students come from all over—Tempe, Chandler, Ahwatukee, even outside Kyrene. That diversity makes our school stronger and teaches us how to learn from people with different backgrounds.

In the current proposal, Mirada's tight-knit community would be split at least in thirds. So if Mirada closes, many of my friends won't just go to another Kyrene school. They'll likely leave the district. That means we lose classmates, teachers lose students, and Kyrene loses part of what makes it special.

Please keep Mirada open. It's not just our school—it's our community."

## Sample Letter Template

Dear Members of the Kyrene Governing Board,

I am writing as a proud member of the Kyrene community to urge you to reconsider the proposal to close Kyrene de la Mirada. While I understand the district must make difficult decisions in light of declining enrollment, closing Mirada would be a mistake with lasting consequences for students, families, and the district as a whole.

Kyrene de la Mirada is one of the district's highest-performing schools. It has been recognized as an *A+ School of Excellence*, ranked among the top elementary schools in Arizona by *U.S. News*, and is the only *Leader in Me Lighthouse School* in Chandler. Its staff has an average tenure of more than 10 years, and more than 60% of families actively choose Mirada from outside its boundaries—bringing in over **\$650,000 in annual funding** to Kyrene.

Closing Mirada would displace thriving programs, overburden neighboring schools that are already near or above capacity, and weaken Kyrene's ability to compete with surrounding districts. Mirada is also one of the district's newer buildings, with modern facilities and fewer maintenance issues than many schools slated to remain open.

I believe the board should adopt a solution that preserves excellence, equity, and choice for Kyrene families. Mirada is not just a school; it is a community anchor that consistently delivers outstanding outcomes for students and strong partnerships with local businesses and organizations.

Please protect this vital resource and vote to keep Kyrene de la Mirada open.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[Your Connection to Mirada – parent, alumni, community member, etc.]

Families can direct their letters or emails to the Governing Board—it reaches all board members **and the superintendent**:

**Email address:** [governingboard@kyrene.org](mailto:governingboard@kyrene.org)

**You can also submit them here:**

<https://www.k12insight.com/Form/Dialogue/DialogueFormDefault?k=PR9K9YY6B1Z7LT@WY6B1Z7LT@DY2Z5F1LT>

Alternatively, handwritten or printed letters can be mailed or delivered to:

**Kyrene Governing Board**

Ben Furlong Education Center

8700 S. Kyrene Road

Tempe, AZ 85284

**District Office Phone (optional):** (480) 541-1000

# **PEACEFUL PROTEST GUIDELINES**

## **Safety First**

- Stay on public property (sidewalks, designated protest areas). Do not block entrances, driveways, or fire lanes.
- Follow all traffic and pedestrian laws - use crosswalks, do not step into the street
- Look out for each other. If someone feels unwell, step aside and call for help.
- Hydrate & prepare. Bring water, sunscreen, hats, and comfortable shoes.

## **Respect & Behavior**

- This is a peaceful protest. No yelling at cars, staff, or community members entering the building
- No profanity or personal attacks - keep the focus on our message about Mirada.
- Respect law enforcement and security staff. They are present to keep everyone safe.
- Be kind to children present - they are part of our message.

## **Signs & Messaging**

- Keep signs clear, positive, and family-friendly
- Suggested themes: "Mirada Strong," "Keep A+ Schools Open," "Student First, Always."
- Visuals and colors make your message more impactful.

## **Engaging With Others**

- If approached by the media: Share why Mirada matters. Keep it short and positive. Pull points from Fact Sheet section.
- If approached by opponents: Do not engage in conflict. Walk away and stay focused.



## During the Meeting

- Only registered speakers may address the board inside.
- If you attend inside after protesting, please remain respectful - the goal is to show the strength of our community, not disrupt proceedings. WEAR PURPLE to visually represent Mirada.

**Remember:** We are here to show **unity, strength,** and **care** for our children. They are watching how we conduct ourselves. Our voices are stronger when we remain **calm, safe,** and **respectful.**