



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kyrene School District no doubt faces a looming budget crisis. While it seems clear that some kind of school closures must be part of the solution, we believe the proposal selection process was too rushed, which did not account for adequate time, data, and care that this decision needs to ensure the continued success of the district.

Further, we believe the proposals themselves are cut too deeply and don't adequately account for or provide the necessary data to make an informed decision by the Long Range Planning Committee.

The current process moved too fast for robust deliberation, and the current east-side proposal overshoots the district's capacity recommendations. Additionally, the current East B proposal displaces more students (43% of all East Kyrene students - determined by adding 2024-2025 Oct 1 enrollment numbers of schools proposed to close)¹ than the other two East Kyrene proposals.

Kyrene's school-closure decision must be grounded in comprehensive factors & data—not just buildings and legacy school boundaries alone, because only 66.2%² of families in our district choose based on school boundaries. Therefore, this decision shouldn't be driven by school boundaries alone but more properly weighted in order to retain as many families as possible.

As noted during the enrollment demographic report from the February Long Range Planning Committee meeting, Kyrene has one of the highest rates of family school boundary movement that the demographer has seen next to PVUSD. He notes:

"The demographic projections themselves—households and school-age populations—are reliable. **The unpredictable part is choice.** That's what makes projections difficult. We can calculate the population with accuracy, but it's the share

¹ See Appendix 1 - Proposals & Projected Enrollments

² See Appendix 2 - Attendance Area vs Schools

we serve that's uncertain...**So much depends on family decisions that can't be modeled statistically—they're made at the dinner table.**"³

Additionally, this plan is too aggressive and doesn't account for more focused efforts to address a declining service rate. In the original demographic enrollment study, the school-age population is listed as 5-13 and was noted to be 18,150 in 2010 and 16,855 in 2023-2024⁴. However, Census data reports kids aged 5-14, not 5-13 (since 8th graders are aged 13-14). According to the 2010 Census for Kyrene Elementary District, there were 20,522 kids aged 5-14, and according to the most recent census data, the American Community Survey taken in 2023, there were 20,082 kids aged 5-14⁵, which is a difference of just 440 kids. Our strong assumption is that there is an explanation for this, but it should be cited for full transparency.

While the enrollment study provides enrollment projections, it has no grade-by-grade survival ratios (K→1, 1→2, etc.), a helpful enrollment forecasting tool. Without this, we cannot tell whether losses occur because smaller cohorts are entering (birth-rate issue) or because children leave the district after kindergarten (retention issue). For instance, Kyrene's own October counts show several cohorts shrinking between 1st and 4th grade, but the enrollment study treats the whole district as one undifferentiated cohort. That conflates two very different problems needing different remedies.

Kyrene Elementary School District's service rate has gone from 78.6% in 2010 to 57.3% today⁶. There are still new and effective ways to address this that have not been explored yet, including utilizing a Long Range Planning Committee focused on enrollment, marketing, and programs that re-engage families that have left - as opposed to just using the committee to vote on school closures.

The current result of this process includes closing down Kyrene de la Mirada, splitting the vibrant and engaged community into **three different** receiving schools⁷, the only school being split up this way in the current proposals. Mirada continues to be a top choice school for families, including 78% enrollment of its current eligible school boundary residents (one of the highest in the district)⁸, one of the top schools for overall enrollment with ~60% of its enrollment coming from outside its traditional school boundary, and enrollment trends for

³ Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Wt8-4W2dFs> (1:18:14)

⁴ See Appendix 2 - Kyrene District Enrollment and Service Rate

⁵ <https://data.census.gov/vizwidget?q=9500000US0404230&infoSection=Age+and+Sex>

⁶ See Appendix 2 - Kyrene District Enrollment and Service Rate

⁷ See Appendix 1 - Proposals & Projected Enrollments

⁸ See Appendix 2 - Attendance Area vs Schools

Mirada have remained relatively flat since 2022 as opposed to declining, according to state reporting data⁹.

Mirada is the only Leader in Me Lighthouse Certified school in Chandler – a process that can take anywhere from 4-7 years to achieve¹⁰ and costs the district ZERO dollars to upkeep, as half is paid by the PTO and the other half is paid out of the principal's discretionary budget.

It offers a self-contained gifted program integrated with general education, providing inclusion not found in a standalone academy. One of the largest CCD programs in the district that serves students with cross-categorical disabilities and ensures equitable access. It boasts a diverse range of students, including a high number of English Learners (the second highest number of English Learners in the district - including Middle Schools - according to state reporting data¹¹) and Free/Reduced Lunch Recipients. It serves a large number of preschoolers, including an integrated program, which offers an exciting first learning experience for both children who are typically developing, as well as children who are experiencing delays in their development. When preschool enrollment is included for all schools, Mirada has the second-highest total enrollment next to Kyrene del Cielo.

Upon reviewing the August 27 Long Range Planning Committee meeting recording, minutes, and presentation decks, it does not appear that any of these factors (enrollment, program performance, or student equity and demographics) were taken into consideration, weighted along with school locations to determine these proposals.

Kyrene schools are more than brick-and-mortar buildings. Not taking these additional factors into consideration has resulted in incomplete and inequitable results like the proposed closure of Kyrene de la Mirada - a diverse, engaged, and high-performing anchor school for the Kyrene Elementary School District.

More info about the Long Range Planning Committee can be found here:

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

⁹ <https://www.azed.gov/finance/data-collection-reporting-school-and-student-membership-data>

¹⁰ <https://www.leaderinme.org/faq/what-is-a-leader-in-me-lighthouse-school/>

¹¹ <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/data/>

Enrollment Study & Proposals - Methodology/Process Concerns

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

Optimal Enrollment Capacity

- **Summary:** 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.¹²
 - 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. **Furthermore, why would we accept a continued service rate decline?** This highlights that there needs to be a much more diligent approach to how to address the budget shortfall.

East Option B - Student Displacement

- **Summary:** East Option B would force roughly 2050 students (24-25 enrollment numbers) to find a new school, causing 42% in East Kyrene student displacement - it's the highest displacement of the three proposals, thus highlighting its inequity.

¹² See Appendix 1 - Proposals & Projected Enrollments

This is contrasted to 1302 students (24-25 enrollment numbers) or 33% of West Kyrene students being displaced.

- **Details:** Higher displacement correlates with greater leakage to charters/privates/other districts. Minimizing displacement should be an explicit decision criterion.

Enrollment Leakage Due to Closing Schools Not Accounted For

- **Summary:** Although the demographer acknowledged that family choice is unpredictable, it still assumes displaced families will remain and does not test the fiscal impact of losing even a modest number of students after closures.
 - **Details:** In comparable Arizona districts, large-scale school closures triggered permanent losses of 10–20% of affected students. For Kyrene, a loss of 500–700 students × \$8,000 per pupil could erase \$4–6 million/year in state revenue — yet the presentations to the LRP committee show only savings, not lost funding.
 - Our community includes experts in economics, statistics, and modeling. Using a peer-reviewed leakage model and data from nearby districts that experienced similar cuts, we project that at least 700 students—equivalent to about 1.5 elementary schools—will leave the district. This significant loss is not reflected in the current enrollment projections.

Cookie-Cutter Proposals

- **Too many schools cut:** 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.

Housing Development Near Cerritos & Gifted Academy Enrollment Projection

- **Cerritos Housing Development:** It's noted in the west side proposal footnotes that a new housing development near Cerritos is expected to bring an additional 250-350 students to the school¹³
 - However, in the demographic enrollment survey from February, Cerritos' projected enrollment was only shown to grow by 176

¹³ See Appendix 1 - Proposals & Projected Enrollments

enrollments through 2035¹⁴, which is far lower than the 250-350 enrollments noted on the school closure projected enrollment proposals. **This highlights a concerning trend of incongruous and/or mismatched data.**

- **Further, the proposals and enrollment study lists housing units and “possible” enrollments but never discloses the students-per-unit factors by housing type or project. Without these, projections cannot be validated.** Historic yields in older subdivisions may be 0.2–0.3 students/unit; new family-oriented developments can exceed 0.5 students/unit. If AE applied outdated yields to current projects, it will systematically understate incoming students and overstate excess capacity.
- **Gifted Academy Projected Enrollment:** all proposals show the enrollment at Mileno projected to be 500 students. That is 1/2 the gifted population (based on the demographer's enrollment study presentation).
 - Logically, the enrollment should fluctuate between different proposals whether Monte Vista, Mirada, or both stay open. In ALL options, the enrollment is projected to be 500. If Mirada or Monte Vista were to stay open, even with the self-contained gifted shuttered, some families would opt for the gifted pull-out vs moving to the academy.

Boundary–projection consistency (Cielo & Niños):

- The proposed closures of Kyrene schools are based on models that revise school boundaries to optimize certain goals. When boundaries shift, students are routed accordingly. Movement via open enrollment isn't formally modeled, since parents' choices can't be reduced to rules. No model is perfect. That's why modeling must be quality assured. Our community includes experts in dynamic modeling and statistics, and I present their findings in three areas where Kyrene's models fall short:
 - Area 1: In all East models, Cielo's borders stay unchanged. Its enrollment should remain constant, yet projections vary: +100 in model A, +80 in B, and –5 in C. The influx in A appears to be forced open enrollment that controls crowding at Ninos and Waggoner; in B, the same influx is split with Brisas; in C, forced open enrollment shifts to KTA. This shows two flaws:

¹⁴ See Appendix 2 - Attendance Area Projection

- The models assume that parents' choices can be controlled when needed.
- Subjectively assigning +100 students to Cielo in model A downplays potential at Mariposa and Mirada and hides information important for decision-making.
- Area 2: While it's true open enrollment within Kyrene can't be formally modeled, data from other districts allow estimates of how many students leave after closures. Our quality-assured model puts this loss at a minimum of 500, with 700–1,000 most likely. We would be happy to share details.
- Area 3: Despite fluctuating attendance boundaries areas between East A, B, and C, there seems to be additional enrollment guesses that don't appear to follow consistent or recorded methodology. For example:
 - Ninos and Waggoner have the same school boundaries in East B and East C. In both, Waggoner is selected as the Dual Language school and the projected enrollments are the same: 710 for Waggoner (with Dual Language) and 628 for Ninos.
 - In East A, Ninos is set as the Dual Language school with a smaller school boundary zone and Waggoner has a very large boundary zone. In this proposal, projected enrollments are 750 for Waggoner (+40 enrollments from East B and C) and 690 for Ninos (+62 enrollments)
 - The only difference in **total area** gained in East A is the area from I-10 to Kyrene Rd and between Warner and Elliot. According to the in-district distribution chart (which shows K-8 students but does not designate which are K-5 and which are 6-8), there are 40 K-8 students in the new area gained by Waggoner.
 - While the projection methodology is not included, it does seem to suggest that Ninos has more projected students in Option A (+62 more than Options B and C) despite having a smaller area, because it houses the Dual Language program in this proposal. In other words, the model appears to be guessing at family choice.
 - However, this projection highlights the unpredictable guessing about family choice that has to go into this modeling

Audience Modeling & Census Data

- In the original demographic enrollment study, the school-age population is listed as 5-13 and was noted to be 18,150 in 2010 and 16,855 in 2023-2024¹⁵. However,

¹⁵ See Appendix 2 - Kyrene District Enrollment and Service Rate

Census data reports kids aged 5-14, not 5-13 (since 8th graders are aged 13-14). According to the 2010 Census for Kyrene Elementary District, there were 20,522 kids aged 5-14, and the most recent census data, the American Community Survey taken in 2023, there were 20,082 kids aged 5-14¹⁶, which is a difference of just 440 kids.

- Further, Kyrene Elementary School District birth rate data from the Maricopa County Division of Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics show the birth rate per 100,000 people went from 576 in 2019, to a spike in 2021 of 618, and flattened back to 555 in 2023.
- **Please note: this is not to try and argue that birth rates or housing developments bear no negative effects on Kyrene School District enrollment - they most assuredly do. However, it would appear that the most significant contributor is service rate, which is not being addressed by close to 9 schools solely on their locations, and no additional data.**
- The enrollment study provides only one projection line through 2029/30. However, best practice is to include base, low, and high scenarios to show sensitivity to assumptions like service rate and student yields. In fast-changing metro areas, even a 1% shift in service rate can translate to several hundred students. By presenting one “inevitable” line of decline, the study implies certainty it cannot deliver, biasing decisions toward closures.
- The enrollment study lists housing units and “possible” enrollments but never discloses the students-per-unit factors by housing type or project. Without these, projections cannot be validated. Historic yields in older subdivisions may be 0.2–0.3 students/unit; new family-oriented developments can exceed 0.5 students/unit. If the study applied outdated yields to current projects, it will systematically understate incoming students and overstate excess capacity.

Process Speed & Deliberation

- The Long-Range Planning Committee received the final proposals the same night they were asked to vote. Each set of proposals (west options, east options, 5 middle school options) was presented for 15 minutes each, with quick 10-minute discussion periods in between, and then only ~35 minutes for table-level discussion and votes at the end of the evening.

¹⁶ <https://data.census.gov/vizwidget?q=9500000US0404230&infoSection=Age+and+Sex>

- Further, the table groups were not allowed to have discussions outside of their groups - **there was no plenary debate and only ~60 total minutes to see, digest, discuss, and vote on the topic of closing 36% of the district's schools.**
- This compressed timeline limited the opportunity to probe assumptions, propose alternatives, reconcile tradeoffs, or even press into the reasoning behind why schools were selected in different proposals.
- The plan calls for 9 schools to be closed over the course of 3 years, but this does not bake in any periods of reevaluation if/when the service rates fluctuate. It does not set the district up for success to be able to respond accordingly if/when it becomes obvious that this is too steep a cut.

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 who were turned away from joining the committee as “Community Members”?
 - Are conflict of interest statements available for these executives since their firms could stand to profit if the schools were closed, sold, and/or new developments were built in their place?
 - For example, in the April meeting, Emerson Ward, VP of CORE Construction and Long Range Planning Committee member, suggested ideas to repurpose closed schools, including creating sports complexes and other revenue-generating ideas. He notes that while there are capital costs to do that, it opens opportunities to create private partnerships.¹⁷
 - 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 to consider, instead of taking up 3 voting seats on the committee?

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/live/BiMFwpMJJ1Q?si=FP7-B3wLb6sTC44q> - relevant discussion begins around 2:57:00 mark

MIRADA FACTS

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](#)

- 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)

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

Staff, Students, & Academics

- Average teacher tenure is over 10 years
- Mirada has the second-highest total enrollment (when including preschool) of all K-5 schools in the district, next to Cielo
- Self-contained gifted program integrated with general education, providing inclusion not found in a standalone academy.
- One of the largest CCD programs in the district that serves students with cross-categorical disabilities and ensures equitable access.
- Diverse range of students, including second highest number of English Learners in the district, including Middle Schools¹⁸, and Free/Reduced Lunch Recipients.
- Large number of preschoolers, including an integrated program, which offers an exciting first learning experience for both children who are typically developing, as well as children who are experiencing delays in their development.

¹⁸ <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/data/>

- 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 to funding that could potentially be lost for the district.
- Mirada is 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.