Overview of Long Range Enrollment Projections

The art and science of creating mathematical models to predict public school enrollment began in 1959 with two studies by Wasik and Webster. Since that time, school demographers have been developing models that attempt to more accurately predict future school enrollments with significant improvements and refinements. The introduction of geographical information systems modeling on personal computers in the early 1990’s helped improve long-range enrollment forecasting models by adding spatial components.

Although many forecasting schema exist, two general approaches have emerged: 1) Models that look at prior years’ enrollment data and extrapolate into the future. 2) Models that correlate predicted future events, such as new housing units or prior year’s birth data with future school populations. The accuracy of future forecasts is dependent upon the number and impact of unexpected intervening events, which influence school enrollment choices.

Although the steady expansion of San Diego County’s housing stock since the early 1950’s has led many to assume that school enrollments would continue to increase, school demographers have seen actual enrollment follow unexpected trends. Intervening variables, such as neighborhood real estate cycles, generational birth patterns regional economic cycles, and the events which followed September 11, 2001, have all impacted the best forecasts.

Reasonably high accuracy has been achieved in short-range forecasts of one to three years over a limited geographical area where housing growth, real estate cycles, economic conditions, and other variables are relatively consistent. However, developing accurate long-range enrollment forecasts of four or more future years over a larger geographic area, such as the San Diego Unified School District’s territory have presented many challenges.

The San Diego Unified School District is composed of diverse established and developing neighborhoods with both low and high density housing interspersed, with commercial and industrial development. These neighborhoods are aging and revitalizing simultaneously. Affordability and desirability of neighborhoods for families with school-age children vary across relatively small geographic areas. Socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural factors have also impacted the ability to predict long-range enrollment patterns.

The demographic study for this master plan has been developed in conjunction with the district’s Instruction Facilities Planning Department staff. It is designed to facilitate the process of forecasting and updating one - through five year enrollment forecasts at the district and school level that permit the efficient and affordable delivery of facilities improvement and instructional programs in the most timely and accurate manner. Although it provides a five-year forecast and a
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Ten-year supplement, the forecast must be updated regularly to maintain accuracy.
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San Diego Unified School District Demographic History

The San Diego USD’s enrollment cannot be characterized as having continuous growth, but rather one of growth and decline that has followed economic and housing development and population cycles within the City of San Diego and the San Diego Metropolitan area. On average, The District’s enrollment has grown at the rate of over 1,641 students per year over the last 55 years.

Generation cycles have been one of the most influential factors affecting The District’s enrollment history. The baby boom generation began entering school in 1952. Within five years the enrollment of The District more than doubled the 1952 enrollment, an increase of over 42,600 students. In 1970, at the peak of the baby boom generation, The District’s enrollment had grown to over 130,000 students or more than three times the 1952 enrollment level.

Paralleling the increase in students was an increase in residential housing construction. During the baby boom expansion period, the area of the District south of Mission Valley and Mission Bay became fully developed. Also, during this period, initial development of the Clairemont Mesa and Kearney Mesa areas of the City of San Diego were initiated and much of the Mira Mesa area was in the planning stages.

In 1971, the impact of the baby boom generation on enrollment began to wane and The District entered period of declining enrollment that lasted for 12 years. Student enrollment declined by over 15 percent and many schools were forced to contract their programs and reduce staff.

By 1983, several factors had converged to restart enrollment growth. The economic and political problems of the 1970’s had ended and the country had elected a California President who was focused on promoting prosperity. In 1978, Californians had enacted Proposition 13, which reduced property taxes and limited future property tax increases. These factors helped start an 18 year period of residential development, in-migration, and enrollment growth that would last through 2000, and peak district-wide enrollment above 142,000.

In 2001, The District entered a declining enrollment period. If the 30-year real estate cycle that has applied to The District’s historical enrollment is maintained, the declining enrollment period could last twelve years or through 2012. If during this 12-year period, The District follows a 15 percent decrease in enrollment, the nadir enrollment would be approximately 120,800 students in the 2012-13 school year.

The District’s Instructional Facilities Planning Department staff and this study have performed five-year enrollment forecasts for the 2007-08 school year...
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through the 2012-13 school year. The results of the school-level forecasts result in similar pattern of declining enrollment district-wide and the results are with 2 percent of the real estate forecast of 120,800 students for 2012-13. Enrollment decline and or growth varies by neighborhood throughout the district, however, the district-wide totals are similar.

The current downturn in enrollment is most prominent in middle-class neighborhoods of the district, where housing costs have dramatically increased since 2001. New families with children have been priced out of these neighborhoods where in contrast, the more well-to-do neighborhoods of La Jolla and Point Loma have remained level or have experienced some enrollment growth. Most likely, future enrollment growth will take place in the more affordable neighborhoods as the southwestern United State real estate market recovers.

The critical issue for this study is when does the district-wide enrollment turn to growth, and at what percentage does the growth occur? The real estate model, using the 18-year growth period followed by the 12-year decline period could suggest that enrollment could begin to increase in 2013 and reach a peak of approximately 155,000 students by 2030. If the real estate model follows the previous 30-year cycle, the growth patterns within The District will be different than in prior periods, mostly because the large tracts of available land have all been developed, and the remaining areas occupied by the United States military are unlikely to become available for large-scale residential development.

The current wave of residential construction is in the urban core of The District. It has focused on high-rise condominium development replacing older urban commercial structures with urban residential units. These units are currently not yielding many students per residential unit. Developers have been attracted to this urban design because the assemblage of a few commercial properties to support dense residential construction has made economic sense. The future areas of development may not be as easy to predict. Assembling parcels in previously developed single-family neighborhoods could be more challenging, taking significantly more money and time.

Some west coast urban areas such as Oakland and Portland have experienced urban growth through gentrification, where marginal single-family neighborhoods attract young families with economic power who can afford to purchase homes and rejuvenate the neighborhood. The key factor to attracting these families is high quality schools. It is the focus of this Long-Range Facilities Master Plan, along with the critical improvements currently underway in The District’s curriculum and instructional programs that will lay the foundation for the next generation of high quality schools.
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Current Demographic Trends & Enrollment Projections

In the previous section, the observed district-wide 30-year enrollment trend cycle was described as 18 years of enrollment growth, followed by 12 years of enrollment decline. That cycle, which began in 1953 and ended in 1982, preceded a new cycle, beginning in 1983 and predicted to end in 2012. This current cycle forecasts K-12 enrollment for the remaining five to six years, followed by a period of growth. Enrollment growth in the K-5 student population, however, could occur earlier than 2013.

Although this cycle is based on observed enrollment data, other information sources are forecasting a similar trend with similar timelines. The California Department of Finance (CDOF) has developed an age-based county-wide population forecast for the period of 2000-2050. The graph to the left shows the results of this forecast, which correlates with The District’s observed trends.

The CDOF San Diego County-wide forecast indicates an overall decline in the school-age population for the years 2000 through 2012, with a net loss of over 18,000 students, followed by growth. It should be noted that the growth and declines in the school-age population is not even throughout the elementary, middle and high school levels. The elementary-school-age population is forecasted to decline rapidly through 2007-08 and then recover. The middle-school-age population is forecasted to grow through 2003-04 and then decline. The high-school-age population is forecasted to grow through 2005-06 and then to decline at a slower rate than both the elementary and middle school age populations. Because individual grade level populations are forecasted to grow and/or decline at varying rates throughout this period San Diego County-wide, the K-12 population is forecasted to decline until 2009. Although growth in the San Diego Unified School District may lag by two or three years, the CDOF forecast reinforces The District’s observed enrollment trend data and the forecast of SDUSD’s decline, ending around 2014-15.

Birth rate data from the California Center for Health Statistics, collected in 2004, indicates that San Diego County birth rates are below the California average for most age groups. This may be due to several factors, including age distribution of the San Diego County population, as compared with statewide data. The accompanying graph (at left) illustrates these population distributions. District enrollment data seems to correlate with lower birth rates as a continuing trend.

A San Diego County-based study, conducted with data collected from 1981 through 1991, of kindergarten enrollment forecasting models indicated that, of all the economic factors influencing kindergarten enrollment, single-family dwelling units contributed 85 percent and dwarfed other factors, (“An Economic Model for Kindergarten Enrollment Forecasting,” Winters, 1991). Since 2001, the
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The rate of detached single-family unit construction within The District has decreased, as has kindergarten enrollment. Although The District has seen development of multi-family and condominium projects in the core urban areas, the likelihood of these units producing a significant number of kindergarten enrollees is less than 15 percent of what detached single-family units would produce.

Existing residential development trends may be an indication of the future enrollment patterns within the district. In some areas of The District, older units are being replaced with higher-density, multi-family housing that is usually less affordable than the residential units that they have replaced. Although families with children have occupied some of these newer high-density, multi-family units, there have not been a substantial number of children attending The District’s schools.

Trends in the real estate market and mortgage interest rates also correlated with the enrollment trends. After September 11, 2001 mortgage interest rates declined to their lowest levels in 30 years. This permitted the financing of first mortgages on residential units at historically low rates, allowing more expensive units to become affordable to a greater population. Home sales accelerated to take advantage of these market conditions and home prices increased at record levels.

Two trends began emerging in 2002, with the commencement of the recent housing boom that could have a substantial impact on The District’s future enrollment. First, families whose children had grown and left home, were choosing to remain in their homes rather than move to another unit, either within San Diego or in another area. In a Wells Fargo Home Mortgage survey, David Bradley concluded that:

Many older adults—plus their boomer children—are adamant about staying put in their home as long as possible. And builders have readily adapted techniques to convert homes with long-term livability in mind. Manufacturers, too, have warmed to stylish design of products that meet functional needs of older homeowners but sacrifice little in esthetic appeal.

It’s a market poised for growth. Older adults in the millions will remain a substantial driver of homeownership as life expectancy rates continue to rise. According to the U.S. Census, there are more than 42 million people in the 55-to-74 age group. The portion of Americans ages 65 and over is expected to grow by 147 percent by 2050. The latter is a group not without
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resources. The median net worth of those households is nearly $109,000, compared to just $7,200 for households under age 35, (Remodeling Finance That Makes Sense for Older Consumers, David Bradley, www.wellsfargo.com/mortgage, 2007).

Furthermore, the population of older, urban-dwelling Americans is expected to increase.

A new report from the National Association of Home Builders’ (NAHB) 50+ Housing Council predicts that 40 percent of all households will be headed by someone 55 or older by 2012. The 55+ population is expected to reach 85 million by 2014. The number of households in the 65-74 age bracket by itself will grow by 4.5 million between 2005 and 2014, an increase of more than 38 percent in only ten years, (The Profile, put together by NAHB Housing Policy Researcher Paul Emrath, analyzes U.S. Census Bureau data, provides demographic information, and forecasts housing characteristics, mobility, neighborhood attributes and other factors that will help determine demand for 50+ housing).

To fuel the demand for financing this trend, Wells Fargo Mortgage indicates:

These older consumers face myriad finance options rolled out after their peak mortgage-paying years. From 1950 until relatively recently, the mortgage of choice was a 30-year fixed-rate. Now, mortgage alternatives have swelled to all manner of fixed and adjustable rates, as well as exotic choices such as interest-only or no down payment versions. These may kindle delays in the remodeling process while wary consumers sort out how to move forward, (Wells Fargo Mortgage, Ibid).

The second trend, which also began in the early portion of this cycle, is that some urban families were able to afford new single-family detached units in the suburban communities of North and East San Diego County. This movement of families was a contributing factor in The District’s declining enrollment from 2001 through 2004.

As the cycle progressed, both urban and suburban families choosing to move up in the housing market were priced out of San Diego County homes. Many potential San Diego County homebuyers chose more affordable units in Riverside...
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and San Bernardino Counties, or moved out of California altogether, (California Realtor’s Association, *Trends*, 2006-2007). In 2006, long-term mortgage rates began to increase, slowing the residential real estate market. In April 2007, the sales rates of residential units had significantly declined, and this move-up trend had all but disappeared, (*Ibid*). Several mortgage rate forecasts, including Kiplinger and Dow Jones, do not expect the residential real estate market to recover moderately accelerated sales until early 2009.

The implications for The District’s short-term enrollment trends can be related to these real estate trends. Continuing growth in school enrollment depends on a continuing supply of families with school-age children. When families stay in their current housing, their children will progress through the school system, but few new families will be available to supply replacement populations for those children that graduate the system. This factor has been especially evident at the elementary school level and may be a major factor in the middle school level, starting in the 2008 school year. When the real estate market recovers, mobility may increase and enrollment could resume growth.

The decrease in the school-age population within The District is most evident in neighborhoods where the above trends have occurred.

Declines in District-enrolled students over the past decade have been evident in the neighborhoods of North Clairemont, Clairemont Mesa East, Clairemont Mesa West, Bay Park, Morena, Birdland, Serra Mesa, Logan Heights, Mountain View, Chollas View, Southcrest, Shell Town, Lincoln Park, Valencia Park, Encanto, Paradise Hills, and portions of Bay Ho and University City, where most units were constructed between 1950 and 1979. Many of these neighborhoods could undergo revitalization in the next real estate cycle, forecasted to begin as early as 2009. If revitalization of these neighborhoods attracts new families with children, there may be increased enrollment in The District’s schools which serve these areas, although there would be an initial period of decline as housing stock is demolished then rebuilt.

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has developed a population forecast for The District, based on regional and local growth estimates, including housing growth. Contrary to existing SDUSD enrollment trends and current forecasts, SANDAG predicts that The District’s total school-age population will grow by over 2 percent between 2006 and 2010. The discrepancy between the SANDG and District forecast can be explained by examining the basis for each forecast. Although both forecasts include housing growth, actual housing growth has been in multi-family attached units and condominium units, which produce far fewer students.
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Although enrollment has declined over the past several years and is expected to decline for several years in the future, The District may use this opportunity to ready its schools to accommodate future populations. During the past two growth periods, The District has accommodated excess enrollment growth in portable and/or temporary buildings, placed on school sites in spaces not designed for them. In this current period of enrollment contraction, many of these school sites that are impacted with portable and/or temporary buildings could be returned to less crowded conditions, resulting in more attractive and suitable facilities for future school populations. However, it is important to recognize that the enrollment contraction trend will not continue forever. At some future time, possibly beginning in 2012, enrollment growth may re-emerge. A trend-based forecast indicates that the next enrollment growth peak could occur around 2030 and may result in a K-12 enrollment of approximately 150,000 +/- 2,000. Therefore it is important to recognize that current plans may need to be structured in a manner that will permit The District schools to accommodate future growth.
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### Enrollment Projections and Capacity Information by Cluster

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## 4: Demographic & Enrollment Projections

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4: Demographic & Enrollment Projections

Enrollment Projections and Capacity Information by Cluster

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| MO       | FULTON  | 394 | 465 | 576 | 561 |
| MO       | LEE     | 582 | 434 | 392 | 382 |
| MO       | NYE     | 599 | 589 | 533 | 519 |
| MO       | PARADISE HILLS | 424 | 358 | 314 | 306 |
| MO       | PENN    | 693 | 549 | 492 | 479 |
| MO       | PERRY   | 443 | 366 | 317 | 309 |
| MO       | VALENCIA PARK | 607 | 614 | 551 | 536 |
| MO       | ZAMORANO | 1380 | 1250 | 1146 | 1116 |
| MO       | BELL    | 1463 | 1374 | 1191 | 1159 |
| MO       | MORSE   | 2622 | 2714 | 2310 | 2249 |

**POINT LOMA CLUSTER**

| PL       | BARNARD | 154 | 174 | 196 | 191 |
| PL       | CABRILLO | 216 | 203 | 195 | 190 |
| PL       | DEWEY   | 420 | 443 | 453 | 441 |
| PL       | LOMA PORTAL | 389 | 359 | 371 | 361 |
| PL       | OCEAN BEACH | 265 | 276 | 237 | 231 |
| PL       | SILVER GATE | 447 | 453 | 445 | 433 |
| PL       | SUNSET VIEW | 399 | 405 | 368 | 358 |
| PL       | CORREIA  | 1010 | 925 | 767 | 747 |
| PL       | DANA    | 884 | 811 | 760 | 740 |
| PL       | POINT LOMA | 2086 | 2024 | 1860 | 1811 |

**SAN DIEGO CLUSTER**

| SD       | BAKER   | 450 | 483 | 429 | 418 |
| SD       | BALBOA  | 682 | 707 | 602 | 586 |
| SD       | BIRNEY  | 312 | 339 | 376 | 366 |
| SD       | BURBANK | 246 | 354 | 373 | 363 |
| SD       | CHAVEZ  | 522 | 543 | 452 | 440 |
| SD       | EMERSON/BANDINI | 824 | 760 | 663 | 645 |
| SD       | FLORENCE | 285 | 281 | 258 | 251 |
| SD       | GARFIELD | 441 | 397 | 320 | 311 |
| SD       | GOLDEN HILL | 428 | 458 | 647 | 630 |
| SD       | GRANT   | 443 | 531 | 652 | 635 |
| SD       | JEFFERSON | 394 | 325 | 295 | 287 |
| SD       | KIMBROUGH | 928 | 808 | 574 | 559 |
| HV       | LAURA RODRIGUEZ | 0 | 384 | 480 | 467 |
## 4: Demographic & Enrollment Projections
### Enrollment Projections and Capacity Information by Cluster

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| TOTAL   | 112150 | 111806 | 104246 | 101475 |
4: Demographic & Enrollment Projections

Enrollment Projections and Capacity Information by Cluster

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131815  132109  123288  120008
4: Demographic & Enrollment Projections

How Demographic Information is used in the LRFMP

The changing demographics of the San Diego Unified School District outlined in this chapter help inform facilities planning strategies for the next ten years. Where significant residential development is expected, planning may require the construction of new school facilities; where continued decline is projected, the opportunity to remove the oldest portable classrooms in the district exists. Future enrollment projections are compared to current information on capacity, site utilization and the quantity and age of portable classrooms to develop strategies to ensure that the District’s facilities needs are accounted for in the Long-Range Facilities Master Plan.

The District provides opportunities for students to attend schools within their residential neighborhoods, as well as opportunities to attend schools in educational settings outside their identified attendance boundaries. The 2008 projections included in this LRFMP were based on The District continuing the District policy of the Choice Program which provides students to select a school outside their neighborhood. As an alternative model, The District will continue to study future enrollment based on students remaining in their neighborhood schools. This information will be useful in actually seeing where students are living and what educational opportunities may be needed in all of the District’s high school Clusters.