

## **VI. Conclusion**

As measured by objective statistics—including STAR test results, API scores, and teacher retention rates—Hillcrest School is one of the finest institutions in the OUSD. The school scores equally high on subjective measures, such as the range and quality of its enrichment offerings; the degree of parent participation; the general satisfaction level of students and teachers; and the extended school population's overall sense of community and belonging. As a thriving school, Hillcrest is joined by other Hills schools that also have stellar test scores plus wonderful enrichment programs, such as Chabot, Kaiser, Thornhill, Joaquin Miller, Montclair and others. Hillcrest is a rarity, however, in offering a K-8 educational model in a district that is almost exclusively comprised of separate K-5, middle, and high schools.

Not surprisingly, these attributes make Hillcrest tremendously attractive to parents who support public education and who want an excellent academic and social experience for their child or children.

Two factors have been key in facilitating Hillcrest's success: its small overall student population, and the school principal's continuous and rigorous attempts to maintain individual class sizes within the limits prescribed by the Class Size Reduction provisions. The small school model allows every teacher and administrator to better know every student, while limited class sizes facilitate greater individualized learning and support teachers' desires to teach both “to the test” and creatively, following students' leads and igniting new interests in their pupils.

Forcing Hillcrest to attempt to absorb more students than it has capacity for will simply result in the loss of the very qualities that make the school exceptional. The physical campus, which was significantly improved with the addition of a new building and updated playground fixtures in 2006, cannot readily be any further extended to accommodate larger class groups. As it is, it's expected that the science lab will be repurposed by 2008-2009 to create another classroom; within the last year, the only remaining portable on the campus (which had housed a variety of enrichment programs) was updated to serve as a dedicated classroom for a K-1 group.

In short, immediate action must be taken to circumscribe near- and long-term future enrollment at the school, while making thoughtful plans to otherwise accommodate students who cannot be admitted to Hillcrest.