

Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning and Research
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Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency)
Rincon Valley Union School District
1000 Yulupa Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

Clerk-Recorder
County of Sonoma
585 Fiscal Drive, Rm. 103
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Project Title: Whited Elementary Charter School Consolidation and Attendance Boundary Adjustments

Project Applicant: Rincon Valley Union School District

Project Location – Specific: Whited Elementary Charter School, 4995 Sonoma Highway; Austin Creek Elementary, 1480 Snowy Egret Drive; Binkley Elementary Charter School, 4965 Canyon Drive; Madrone Elementary, 4550 Rinconada Drive; Manzanita Elementary Charter, 1687 Yulupa Avenue; Sequoia Elementary, 5305 Dupont Drive; and Village Elementary Charter, 900 Yulupa Avenue.

Project Location – City: Santa Rosa

Project Location – County: Sonoma

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of the Project:

The Rincon Valley Union School District (District) approved the closure of Whited Elementary Charter School (Whited Elementary), contingent upon the following conditions: (1) revision of the District's attendance boundaries in accordance with the California Education Code and Board Policy, including consideration of potential environmental impacts and/or applicable California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions associated with the reassignment of students to other schools resulting from boundary changes; (2) preparation of a transition plan; and (3) compliance with all charter school closure procedures pursuant to Title 5, Section 11962(a) of the California Code of Regulations and the Whited Elementary Charter Petition, Element 15. The action was prompted by declining enrollment and associated reductions in District revenues. The closure of Whited Elementary will result in the consolidation of operations into six receiving schools: Austin Creek Elementary; Binkley Elementary; Madrone Elementary; Manzanita Elementary; Sequoia Elementary; and Village Elementary. Based on projected 2026-27 academic enrollment and operational capacity, all six receiving schools have sufficient capacity to accommodate the reassignment of 342 Whited Elementary students.

This CEQA analysis evaluates the potential physical environmental effects of the proposed actions, which include:

1. Closure of Whited Elementary;
2. Adjustment of attendance boundaries and reassignment of students to receiving schools; and
3. Programmatic and physical changes to receiving schools.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Rincon Valley Union School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Rincon Valley Union School District

Exempt Status:

- Statutory Exemption. Closing of Any Public School (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15282[i])
- Categorical Exemption. Existing Facilities (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15301)
- Categorical Exemption. Minor Additions to Schools (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15314)
- Categorical Exemption. Educational or Training Programs Involving No Physical Changes (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15322)

Reasons why project is exempt:

See attachment: Whited Elementary Charter School Consolidation and Attendance Boundary Adjustments CEQA Exemption Findings.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Mike Herfurth,
Interim Superintendent

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (707) 542-7375
ext. 24071

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature:



Date: 03/18/26

Title: Consultant to the Rincon Valley
Union School District

Signed by Lead Agency (Consultant)

Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Signed by Applicant

Revised 2011

CEQA Exemption Findings

Whited Elementary Charter School Consolidation and Attendance Boundary Adjustments

Rincon Valley Union School District

March 10, 2026

**Prepared by
EMC Planning Group**



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**WHITED ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL
CONSOLIDATION AND ATTENDANCE
BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS
RINCON VALLEY UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT**

CEQA EXEMPTION FINDINGS

Table of Contents

WHITED ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION AND ATTENDANCE

BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION	1
Project Description	1
Environmental Setting at Receiving Elementary Schools	5
Statutory Exemption	6
Categorical Exemption	6
Environmental Analysis.....	9
Exceptions to Categorical Exemptions.....	12
Evidence And Findings	14
Sources	15

Tables

Table 1	Changes in District Elementary School Enrollment, 1997-98 to 2025-26.....	2
Table 2	Reallocation of Whited Elementary Students Among Receiving Schools	3
Table 3	Comparison of Peak Enrollment, Current Enrollment, Projected Enrollment, and Capacity of Receiving School Facilities.....	4

Appendices

Appendix A	Rincon Valley Union School District Resolution No. 01-26-01	
Appendix B	VMT Study for Rincon Valley Union School District (Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc. 2026)	

Whited Elementary Charter School Consolidation and Attendance Boundary Adjustments Categorical Exemption

Project Description

School Closure and Consolidation

Per Resolution No. 01-26-01 ([Appendix A](#)), the Rincon Valley Union School District (District) approved the closure of Whited Elementary Charter School (Whited Elementary), contingent upon the following conditions: (1) revision of the District's attendance boundaries in accordance with the California Education Code and Board Policy, including consideration of potential environmental impacts and/or applicable California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions associated with the reassignment of students to other schools resulting from boundary changes; (2) preparation of a transition plan; and (3) compliance with all charter school closure procedures pursuant to Title 5, Section 11962(a) of the California Code of Regulations and the Whited Elementary Charter Petition, Element 15. The action was prompted by declining enrollment and associated reductions in District revenues.

This CEQA analysis evaluates the potential physical environmental effects of the proposed actions, which include:

1. Closure of Whited Elementary;
2. Adjustment of attendance boundaries and reassignment of students to receiving schools; and
3. Programmatic and physical changes to receiving schools.

The District currently operates seven elementary schools, including Whited Elementary, as follows:

- Austin Creek Elementary (1480 Snowy Egret Drive);
- Binkley Elementary Charter School (Binkley Elementary) (4965 Canyon Drive);
- Madrone Elementary (4550 Rinconada Drive);
- Manzanita Elementary Charter (Manzanita Elementary) (1687 Yulupa Avenue);
- Sequoia Elementary (5305 Dupont Drive);
- Village Elementary Charter (Village Elementary) (900 Yulupa Avenue); and
- Whited Elementary (4995 Sonoma Highway).

Table 1, *Changes in District Elementary School Enrollment, 1997-98 to 2025-26*, summarizes enrollment trends by school. Between these years, enrollment declined at Madrone Elementary (14.8 percent), Sequoia Elementary (10.3 percent), and Whited Elementary (9.7 percent). Overall, total district elementary enrollment increased by 30 students (1.2 percent), from 2,581 students to 2,611 students.

Table 1 Changes in District Elementary School Enrollment, 1997-98 to 2025-26

School	1997-98 Enrollment	2025-26 ¹ Enrollment	Percent Change
Austin Creek Elementary	312 ²	360	15.4 increase
Binkley Elementary	333	349	4.8% increase
Madrone Elementary	419	357	14.8% decrease
Manzanita Elementary ³	344	396	15.1% increase
Sequoia Elementary	464	416	10.3% decrease
Village Elementary	328	389	18.6% increase
Whited Elementary	381	344 ⁴	9.7% decrease
Total	2,581	2,611	1.2% increase

SOURCE: Rincon Valley Union School District 2026; Lozano Smith 2026; California Department of Education 2026

NOTES: 1 Enrollment data as of September 2025.

2 Austin Creek Elementary opened in August 2000; 312 represents the enrollment for academic year 2000-01.

3 Prior to 2021, Manzanita Elementary Charter School was named Spring Creek Matanzas Charter School (same CDS number and school site). It appears that this charter school operated on two sites for several years. The attendance shown only represents the current Manzanita Elementary site.

4 Enrollment data as of January 5, 2026 as reported in Resolution No. 01-26-01 ([Appendix A](#)).

While districtwide elementary school enrollment has slightly increased since 1997–98, several individual school sites have experienced sustained enrollment declines. Among schools with declining enrollment, average enrollment has decreased by approximately 12 percent over this period, resulting in underutilized capacity at these campuses. Whited Elementary, in particular, has experienced a general downward enrollment trend since the 2013–14 academic year, with the exception of a modest increase in the 2022–23 academic year (California Department of Education 2026). In response to these trends, as well as associated budgetary and operational considerations, the District has approved the closure of Whited Elementary to consolidate resources and improve operational efficiency across the remaining school sites.

Reassignment of Students Among Receiving Schools

Table 2, *Reallocation of Whited Elementary Students Among Receiving Schools*, identifies the number of students to be reassigned to each receiving school and the total projected enrollment at each school for the 2026–27 academic year following the reallocation.

Table 2 Reallocation of Whited Elementary Students Among Receiving Schools

School	Reallocated Students	2026-27 Projected Enrollment ¹
Austin Creek Elementary	11	387
Binkley Elementary	91	427
Madrone Elementary	118	448
Manzanita Elementary	14	354
Sequoia Elementary	82	469
Village Elementary	26	403
Total	342	N/A

SOURCE: Rincon Valley Union School District 2026

NOTES: 1 Projected enrollment for academic year 2026-27 represents projected enrollment after the reallocation of Whited Elementary students.

As shown in Table 2, a total of 342 students are proposed for reassignment among the six receiving schools as a result of the closure of Whited Elementary and the consolidation of operations. While Madrone Elementary is proposed to accommodate the largest number of reassigned students, Sequoia Elementary is projected to have the highest enrollment among the receiving schools for the 2026–27 academic year.

Enrollment and Operational Capacity of Receiving School Facilities

Table 3, [Comparison of Peak Enrollment, Current Enrollment, Projected Enrollment, and Capacity of Receiving School Facilities](#), evaluates the capacity of receiving schools to accommodate additional students after the reallocation of Whited Elementary students has occurred.

Operational capacity and available capacity shown in Table 3 are derived from the Rincon Valley Union School District Facility Capacity Information report presented to the District Board in October 2025. In that report, the District identified the operational capacity of each receiving school based on the number of available spaces that could be used as classrooms at each campus without structural modification or expansion of space and the District’s classroom loading standards. According to these standards, classroom sizes are capped at 20 students for transitional kindergarten, 24 students for grades 1–3, and 32 students for grades 4–6 (Rincon Valley Union School District 2026).

As shown in Table 3, the October 2025 enrollment reported in the District’s Facility Capacity Information report is used to calculate available capacity by comparing the enrollment at that time to the operational capacity identified for each receiving school. Accordingly, the operational capacity and available capacity values reflect the District’s facility capacity analysis as of October 2025 and are not based on the 2025–26 current enrollment or the projected 2026–27 enrollment presented in the table.

Table 3 Comparison of Peak Enrollment, Current Enrollment, Projected Enrollment, and Capacity of Receiving School Facilities

School	Peak Enrollment (Year)	2025-26 Current Enrollment ¹	2026-27 Projected Enrollment ²	October 2025 Enrollment ³	Operational Capacity ⁴	Available Capacity ⁵
Austin Creek Elementary	441 (2014-15)	360	387	364	520	156
Binkley Elementary	420 (2014-15)	349	427	379	748	369
Madrone Elementary	428 (2009-10)	357	448	375	684	309
Manzanita Elementary	599 (2014-15/2015-16)	396	354	404	708	304
Sequoia Elementary	510 (1998-99)	416	469	422	646	224
Village Elementary	428 (2014-15)	389	403	411	612	201

SOURCE: Rincon Valley Union School District 2026; Lozano Smith 2026

NOTES: 1 Enrollment data as of September 2025.

2 Projected enrollment for academic year 2026-27 represents projected enrollment after the reallocation of Whited Elementary students.

3 October 2025 enrollment is based on the Rincon Valley Union School District Facility Capacity Information report presented to the District Board in October 2025.

4 Operational capacity is based on the number of classrooms at each receiving school and the total loading standard capacity identified in the Rincon Valley Union School District Facility Capacity Information report.

5 Available capacity is calculated based on the operational capacity and the October 2025 enrollment at each receiving school, as reported in the Rincon Valley Union School District Facility Capacity Information report and Resolution No. 01-26-01 ([Appendix A](#)).

Comparison of the October 2025 enrollment and the projected 2026–27 enrollment indicates that several receiving schools would experience increases in enrollment associated with the reassignment of students from Whited Elementary. However, projected enrollment at all receiving schools would remain well below the operational capacity identified for each campus.

As further shown in Table 3, the projected 2026–27 enrollment at most receiving schools is below each school’s historical peak enrollment. Two schools—Binkley Elementary and Madrone Elementary—have projected enrollments that slightly exceed their historical peak levels. Binkley Elementary has a projected 2026–27 enrollment of 427 students compared to a historical peak of 420 students, and Madrone Elementary has a projected enrollment of 448 students compared to a historical peak of 428 students. However, operational capacity at both schools substantially exceeds the projected enrollment. Overall, the projected 2026–27 enrollment at each receiving school remains well below the operational capacity identified for each campus, and therefore, sufficient capacity remains at all receiving schools to accommodate the projected 2026–27 enrollment, including students reassigned from Whited Elementary.

Programmatic and Physical Changes

No programmatic or physical changes are proposed at the receiving schools as a result of the closure of Whited Elementary.

Environmental Setting at Receiving Elementary Schools

Austin Creek Elementary

Austin Creek Elementary, located at 1480 Snowy Egret Drive, is situated within a developed residential area surrounded by residential neighborhoods to the east, south, and west, and bordered by Skyhawk Community Park to the north. Sonoma Highway is located approximately 0.3 miles southwest of the school. Austin Creek Elementary is located approximately 1.9 miles east of Whited Elementary.

Binkley Elementary

Binkley Elementary, located at 4965 Canyon Drive, is situated within a developed residential area surrounded by residential neighborhoods to the north, east, south, and west. Sonoma Highway is located approximately 0.6 miles south of the school. Ducker Creek traverses the north/northwest boundary of Binkley Elementary adjacent to the school's open space/sports fields (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2026). Binkley Elementary is located approximately 0.6 miles north of Whited Elementary.

Madrone Elementary

Madrone Elementary, located at 4550 Rinconada Drive, is situated within a developed residential area surrounded by residential neighborhoods to the north, east, and west, and bordered by Rinconada Park to the south. Sonoma Highway is located approximately 0.5 miles south of the school. Ducker Creek traverses the east/southeast boundary of Madrone Elementary (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2026). Madrone Elementary is located approximately 0.6 miles northwest of Whited Elementary.

Manzanita Elementary

Manzanita Elementary, located at 1687 Yulupa Avenue, is situated within a developed area characterized by residential and commercial uses. Residential neighborhoods border the school to the south, west, and north, and commercial uses are located west of Yulupa Avenue. Manzanita Elementary is located approximately 1.96 miles southwest of Whited Elementary.

Sequoia Elementary

Sequoia Elementary, located at 5305 Dupont Drive, is situated within a developed area characterized by residential and commercial uses. Residential neighborhoods border the school to the north, east, and south, and commercial uses are located east of Calistoga Road. Sequoia Elementary is located approximately 0.6 miles northeast of Whited Elementary.

Village Elementary

Village Elementary, located at 900 Yulupa Avenue, is situated within a developed area characterized by residential, commercial, and public/institutional uses. Residential neighborhoods border the school to the south/southwest, west, and north; commercial uses are located southwest of Yulupa Avenue; and Herbert Slater Middle School is located east/northeast. Village Elementary is located approximately 1.54 miles southwest of Whited Elementary.

Statutory Exemption

The proposed project qualifies for a statutory exemption under California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15282(i).

Section 15282(i) Closing Any Public School or Transfer of Students

The closing of any public school or the transfer of students from that public school to another school in which kindergarten or any grades 1 through 12 is maintained as set forth in 21080.18 of the Public Resources Code.

PRC 21080.18 states:

Application of Division to Closing of Public School Maintaining Kindergarten or Any of Grades 1 Through 12. This division does not apply to the closing of any public school in which kindergarten or any of grades 1 through 12 is maintained or the transfer of students from that public school to another school if the only physical changes involved are categorically exempt under Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 15000) of Division 6 of Title 14 of the California Administrative Code.

Discussion. The proposed project qualifies for this exemption because it involves the closure of Whited Elementary and the consolidation of operations among six receiving schools, accompanied by adjustments to the District's attendance boundaries. As a result of the closure, a total of 342 students would be reassigned to the receiving schools. As illustrated in Table 2, Austin Creek Elementary would accommodate an increase of 11 students; Binkley Elementary, 91 students; Madrone Elementary, 118 students; Manzanita Elementary, 14 students; Sequoia Elementary, 82 students; and Village Elementary, 26 students. The receiving schools are expected to accommodate the projected 2026–27 enrollment without the need for additional classroom facilities. No physical changes are proposed as part of the project.

Categorical Exemption

The proposed project qualifies for a categorical exemption under California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15301, section 15314, and section 15322.

Section 15301 Existing Facilities

Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities,

mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or *no expansion of existing or former use* (emphasis added). The types of “existing facilities” itemized below are not intended to be all-inclusive of the types of projects which might fall within Class 1. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of use. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (a) Interior or exterior alterations involving such things as interior partitions, plumbing, and electrical conveyances;
- (b) Existing facilities of both investor and publicly owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage, or other public utility services;
- (c) Existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities (this includes road grading for the purpose of public safety), and other alterations such as the addition of bicycle facilities, including but not limited to bicycle parking, bicycle-share facilities and bicycle lanes, transit improvements such as bus lanes, pedestrian crossings, street trees, and other similar alterations that do not create additional automobile lanes);
- (d) Restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment to meet current standards of public health and safety, unless it is determined that the damage was substantial and resulted from an environmental hazard such as earthquake, landslide, or flood;
- (e) Additions to existing structures provided that the addition will not result in an increase of more than:
 - (1) 50 percent of the floor area of the structures before the addition, or 2,500 square feet, whichever is less; or
 - (2) 10,000 square feet if:
 - (A) The project is in an area where all public services and facilities are available to allow for maximum development permissible in the General Plan and
 - (B) The area in which the project is located is not environmentally sensitive.
- (f) Addition of safety or health protection devices for use during construction of or in conjunction with existing structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment, or topographical features including navigational devices;
- (g) New copy on existing on and off-premise signs;
- (h) Maintenance of existing landscaping, native growth, and water supply reservoirs (excluding the use of pesticides, as defined in Section 12753, Division 7, Chapter 2, Food and Agricultural Code);

- (i) Maintenance of fish screens, fish ladders, wildlife habitat areas, artificial wildlife waterway devices, streamflows, springs and waterholes, and stream channels (clearing of debris) to protect fish and wildlife resources;
- (j) Fish stocking by the California Department of Fish and Game;
- (k) Division of existing multiple family or single-family residences into common-interest ownership and subdivision of existing commercial or industrial buildings, where no physical changes occur which are not otherwise exempt;
- (l) Demolition and removal of individual small structures listed in this subdivision:
 - (1) One single-family residence. In urbanized areas, up to three single-family residences may be demolished under this exemption.
 - (2) A duplex or similar multifamily residential structure. In urbanized areas, this exemption applies to duplexes and similar structures where not more than six dwelling units will be demolished.
 - (3) A store, motel, office, restaurant, or similar small commercial structure if designed for an occupant load of 30 persons or less. In urbanized areas, the exemption also applies to the demolition of up to three such commercial buildings on sites zoned for such use.
 - (4) Accessory (appurtenant) structures including garages, carports, patios, swimming pools, and fences.
- (m) Minor repairs and alterations to existing dams and appurtenant structures under the supervision of the Department of Water Resources.
- (n) Conversion of a single family residence to office use.
- (o) Installation, in an existing facility occupied by a medical waste generator, of a steam sterilization unit for the treatment of medical waste generated by that facility provided that the unit is installed and operated in accordance with the Medical Waste Management Act (Section 117600, et seq., of the Health and Safety Code) and accepts no offsite waste.
- (p) Use of a single-family residence as a small family day care home, as defined in Section 1596.78 of the Health and Safety Code.

Discussion. The proposed project qualifies for this exemption because it involves the continued operation of existing school facilities with negligible or no expansion of use. The project consists of the closure of Whited Elementary and the proposed reassignment of students to six existing elementary schools. No physical alterations, construction, or expansion of facilities are proposed at Whited Elementary or at any of the receiving schools.

As shown in Table 3, projected 2026–27 enrollment at each receiving school remains within the operational capacity of each campus. Accordingly, the reassignment of students represents the consolidation of enrollment within existing facilities and would involve negligible or no expansion of existing use.

Section 15314 Minor Addition to Schools

Class 14 consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25% or ten classrooms, whichever is less. The addition of portable classrooms is included in this exemption.

Discussion. The project qualifies for this exemption because no additional classrooms are proposed at any of the receiving schools as a result of the closure of Whited Elementary. Therefore, the project would not increase original student capacity by the lesser of 25 percent or 10 classrooms. As evaluated, all six receiving schools have sufficient capacity to accommodate the 342 students proposed for reassignment from Whited Elementary.

Section 15322 Educational or Training Programs Involving no Physical Changes

Class 22 consists of the adoption, alteration, or termination of educational or training programs which involve no physical alteration in the area affected or which involve physical changes only in the interior of existing school or training structures. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (a) Development of or changes in curriculum or training methods.
- (b) Changes in the grade structure in a school which do not result in changes in student transportation.

Discussion. The proposed project qualifies for this exemption because it involves the closure of Whited Elementary and the consolidation of operations among six receiving schools. No physical alterations are proposed at Whited Elementary or at any of the receiving schools.

Environmental Analysis

Aesthetics

None of the receiving schools are located within a designated scenic area (California Department of Transportation 2026; Placeworks 2025). The proposed project consists of the closure of Whited Elementary, adjustment of attendance boundaries, and reassignment of students among six receiving schools. No physical alterations are proposed as part of the project. Accordingly, the project would

not: (a) affect scenic vistas; (b) damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway; (c) conflict with zoning or other regulations governing scenic quality; or (d) create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views.

Agriculture and Forest Resources

None of the receiving schools are located on land designated for agriculture nor do they contain forest resources (Placeworks 2025, Figure 2-6; Google Earth 2026). The project would occur entirely within existing, developed school sites and would not require rezoning or off-site improvements affecting agricultural or forest lands. Therefore, the project would not: (a) convert important farmland; (b) conflict with zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract; (c) conflict with zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land or timberland; (d) result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or (e) indirectly lead to conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use.

Biological Resources

All receiving schools are located within developed residential and/or commercial areas. Although the Binkley Elementary and Madrone Elementary campuses are located near a creek or other riverine habitat, no in-water, riparian, or other ground-disturbing activities are proposed. No physical alterations are proposed as part of the project. Accordingly, the project would not affect riparian habitat or wetlands, would not interfere with wildlife movement, and would not result in adverse effects on biological resources.

Cultural Resources

No physical alterations are proposed as part of the project. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in an adverse change in the significance of any unknown buried historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5, cause an adverse change in the significance of an unknown archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5, or disturb any unknown Native American human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries.

Geology and Soils

No physical alterations are proposed as part of the project. Therefore, the proposed project would not result impacts associated with seismic ground shaking, liquefaction, or slope instability. Further, the proposed project would not result in direct or indirect potential adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving any of the following:

- rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault;
- strong seismic ground shaking;

- seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction; or
- landslides.

Additionally, the project would not result in soil erosion or the loss of topsoil, be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Water Use

The proposed project would not result in a cumulative increase in the student population within the District; therefore, water use within the District would not increase. Conversely, with student enrollment declining over the years, water use at District facilities has decreased. Therefore, the proposed project would not decrease groundwater supplies.

Surface Water Quality

No physical alterations are proposed as part of the project. Therefore, the project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise degrade surface or ground water quality; interfere with groundwater recharge; alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site; increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite; create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or impede or redirect flood flows; or conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.

Transportation (Vehicle Miles Traveled)

Hexagon Transportation Consultants (Hexagon) conducted a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) study to assess the impacts of closing Whited Elementary and the transfer of students to the six receiving schools. The full VMT study is provided in [Appendix B](#).

Hexagon estimated that the average distance to school for Whited Elementary students would increase slightly from an average of 1.88 miles prior to the closure to an average of 1.89 miles following reassignment to receiving schools. Although the reassignment of students would increase the average distance traveled to school by approximately 0.01 mile, the decrease in total student enrollment over the past fifteen years results in fewer vehicle trips overall. As a result, districtwide VMT is expected to decrease, and VMT generated by reassigned Whited Elementary students would be reduced by approximately 24 percent compared to the 2011–12 baseline (Hexagon 2026, pp. 5-6).

Air Quality

Each of the receiving schools are located within the jurisdiction of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (hereinafter “air district”), which regulates criteria air emissions to comply with state and federal standards. The air district establishes significance thresholds for criteria air pollutants to assess the significance of air quality impacts under CEQA, including those from proposed new schools. Transportation sources, particularly passenger cars and light-duty trucks, are the primary contributors to air emissions for such projects, including schools. As described in the Transportation section, the project would result in an overall decrease in VMT; therefore, there would be no adverse impact associated with air quality.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Similar to the discussion under Air Quality above, the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory (the sum of emissions from all sources) for projects subject to CEQA, including school operations, are typically dominated by emissions from transportation sources, particularly passenger cars and light-duty trucks. As described in the Transportation section, the project would result in an overall decrease in VMT; therefore, there would be no adverse impact associated with greenhouse gas emissions.

Energy

Electricity, natural gas, and transportation fuel are the most common forms of energy used in the operation of land use projects, including schools. As described in the Transportation section, the project would result in an overall decrease in VMT; therefore, there would be no adverse impact associated with transportation energy use.

No physical alterations are proposed as part of the project that could result in an increase in electricity. Further, closing and consolidating schools could result in a reduction of district-wide electricity and natural gas.

Noise

The proposed project would not result in significant noise impacts. Due to a decline in enrollment, traffic volumes on surrounding streets have decreased and would remain lower with project implementation, compared to peak enrollment levels at all receiving schools (Table 3). As a result, noise levels at all receiving schools would remain below the highest, historic levels. Further, no physical alterations are proposed as part of the project, and therefore, noise impacts associated with construction would not occur.

Exceptions to Categorical Exemptions

Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines lists exceptions that would prohibit a project from qualifying for a Categorical Exemption, even if the project satisfies the requirements for one or more of the exemption classes. EMC Planning Group conducted a review and evaluation of the

proposed project and concluded that none of the exceptions listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 (a-f) apply to the proposed project (discussed below). Therefore, the Statutory Exemption, as well as the Categorical Exemption, is appropriate pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301, 15303, 15311, 15314, and 15322.

a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

Discussion. All receiving schools are located within developed residential and/or commercial areas, and no physical changes are proposed as part of the project. As summarized in the Environmental Analysis, there is no evidence that the receiving schools are located in particularly sensitive environments. Therefore, this exception does not apply.

b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

Discussion. The proposed project involves the closure of Whited Elementary and the consolidation of its operations into six receiving schools. While this action affects multiple campuses, it represents a single administrative and operational change within the District’s existing elementary school system, which includes a total of seven elementary schools including Whited Elementary. No physical alterations are proposed as part of the project. Therefore, this exception does not apply.

c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

Discussion. Based upon the Environmental Analysis discussion above, there is no reasonable possibility that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.

Discussion. None of the receiving schools are located near an officially designated scenic highway or within a designated scenic area (California Department of Transportation 2026; Placeworks 2025). Further, no physical alterations are proposed as part of the project. Therefore, the project would not result in adverse impacts to scenic resources associated with a state scenic highway.

- e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

Discussion. The receiving school sites are not located on the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Cortese List (Health and Safety Code Section 25187.5). The State Water Resources Control Board’s GeoTracker (Health and Safety Code Section 25295 and Water Code Sections 13273 and 13301) does not indicate any active hazardous sites at any of the receiving schools. The receiving school sites are not listed on the California Environmental Protection Agency’s list of solid waste sites identified by the Water Board with waste constituents above hazardous waste levels outside the waste management unit (Health and Safety Code Section 116395).

- f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

Discussion. No physical alterations are proposed as part of the project; therefore, the project would not result in a substantial adverse change to a historical resource.

Evidence And Findings

The proposed project consists of the closure of Whited Elementary, adjustment of attendance boundaries, and reassignment of students among six receiving schools. No physical alterations are proposed as part of the project; therefore, the project would not result in environmental impacts associated with construction. Consistent with declining enrollment trends within the District, the projected 2026–27 enrollment at the receiving schools remains below each school’s historical peak enrollment, with the exception of Binkley Elementary and Madrone Elementary, where projected enrollment would slightly exceed historical peak levels. However, enrollment at both schools would remain well within their operational capacity. As shown in Table 3, sufficient capacity exists at all six receiving schools to accommodate the projected 2026–27 enrollment resulting from the closure of Whited Elementary and consolidation of operations among the receiving schools.

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Rincon Valley Union School District
Resolution No. 01-26-01



**BEFORE THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE RINCON VALLEY UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
RESOLUTION NO. 01-26-01**

**RESOLUTION APPROVING CLOSURE OF WHITED ELEMENTARY
CHARTER SCHOOL**

WHEREAS, throughout the 2024-2025 fiscal year and ongoing, the Rincon Valley Union School District ("District") has undergone a detailed and holistic review of its budget in order to assess and remedy financial challenges including declining enrollment and, as a result, declining revenues; and

WHEREAS, after reviewing financial and enrollment data, District staff recommended that the Board of Trustees ("Board") examine the possibility of closing a District campus as part of an overall plan to reduce annual operational costs and maintain long term financial stability in the District; and

WHEREAS, in October of 2025, the District formed a Budget Advisory Committee ("Committee"), composed of District administrators, District staff and parent representatives from each school, which was tasked with reviewing the District's budget and identifying ways to optimize resources, enhance instructional programs, and eliminate the budget deficit; and

WHEREAS, the Committee met on October 8, 2025, to review and consider information from District staff regarding the District's past and current spending, enrollment trends, projected expenses, projected ongoing revenues, and potential budget reduction opportunities including school reconfiguration options; and

WHEREAS, on December 17, 2025, the Board held a Special Meeting during which the Interim Superintendent and District staff recommended, based on the Committee's findings, that the Board strongly consider closing a school and maintaining the remaining elementary schools as serving grades TK through 6. The Board directed District Administration to evaluate seven (7) elementary school sites to determine which school is recommended for closure and reconfiguration. The Board would then consider a resolution to officially close a school at its regularly-scheduled meeting on January 13, 2026; and

WHEREAS, consistent with Education Code section 17387 and guidelines on school consolidation prepared by the California Department of Education ("CDE"), the District engaged in a process to garner meaningful input and community involvement regarding school closure and/or consolidation scenarios, including as outlined herein; and

WHEREAS, the Committee held Community Forums on November 10, November 17, and December 3, 2025 to review and discuss potential school closure and reconfiguration data, and to provide an opportunity for community input and engagement. FAQs and notes

from the Community Forums can be accessed on the Budget Committee webpage hosted by the District website at <https://www.rvusd.org/page/budget-committee>; and

WHEREAS, the District administered a survey regarding school closure criteria to District staff and families on December 28, 2025. Results were analyzed by a District team led by a consultant;

WHEREAS, the Committee considered input from the Community Forums, survey data, criteria recommended by the California Department of Education (“CDE”), and other data, in making a recommendation presentation to the Board which can be accessed at www.rvusd.org; and

WHEREAS, the Committee has recommended that the District close Whited Elementary Charter School (“Whited Elementary”) and redistribute the students among the six (6) remaining elementary schools within the District (the “Recommendation”);

WHEREAS, the enrollment at Whited Elementary is 344 as of January 5, 2026, with 83 of the students residing outside of the District (interdistrict students) and 79 students residing in an attendance area for one of the District’s other elementary schools (intradistrict students);

WHEREAS, the 79 intradistrict students will be assigned to their respective resident school, but will be eligible for the District’s intra-district transfer process, as any other resident of the District;

WHEREAS, the remaining 265 students will be dispersed among the other District schools in accordance with Board Policy (“BP”) 5116 and future action to be taken by the Board at a future meeting regarding boundary adjustments and reassignment of students, at which time the District will review, in consultation with legal counsel, potential impacts and/or exemption(s) from the California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000, *et seq.*, (“CEQA”));

WHEREAS, the existing available student capacity at each of the other 6 elementary school sites is: 156 at Austin Creek Elementary School (“Austin Creek”), 369 at Binkley Elementary Charter School (“Binkley”), 309 at Madrone Elementary School (“Madrone”), 304 at Manzanita Elementary Charter School (“Manzanita”), 224 at Sequoia Elementary School (“Sequoia”) and 201 at Village Elementary Charter School (“Village”) therefore, there is sufficient facility capacity at the schools to absorb all of the displaced students from Whited Elementary without the need for any increase in capacity through construction or addition of new classrooms; and

WHEREAS, because the specific reassignment of students to new schools following closure of Whited Elementary will not be determined until a future Board meeting, no specific environmental study can feasibly be completed to forecast potential impacts beyond those described herein; and

WHEREAS, the Board serves as the governing body of the Charter School, and the Board may, at its discretion, voluntarily rescind the Charter Petition and close Whited Charter School pursuant the Charter Petition, Element 15.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FOUND, DETERMINED AND RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE RINCON VALLEY UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT, SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, AS FOLLOWS:

1. The foregoing recitals are adopted as true and correct.
2. Subject to the conditions set forth below, after consideration of the meaningful input and community involvement received throughout this process as outlined above, review of available data and of the Committee's findings, and consideration of the CDE's guidelines, and in order to address projected budget shortfalls and declining enrollment, the Board approves the following reconfiguration of its schools and hereby finds and determines that the Recommendation is in the best interests of the District, its students, and the community:

The following elementary school shall close at the conclusion of the 2025-26 school year:

Whited Elementary Charter School

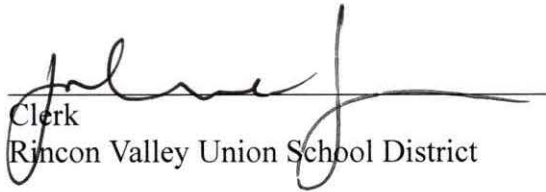
3. The Board's approval of the foregoing closure and consolidation shall be subject to and conditioned upon the following, each of which shall be met prior to closure or consolidation of the schools identified above:
 - a. The District's attendance boundaries shall be revised in a manner that is consistent with the Education Code and Board Policy and shall be presented to the Board for approval, along with appropriate consideration of potential environmental impacts and/or CEQA exemptions related to the relocation of students to new schools resulting from changes in attendance boundaries.
 - b. A transition plan shall be prepared outlining the District's anticipated community outreach efforts to assist students and their families with the transition and shall be presented to the Board.
 - c. The District shall comply with all charter closure-related procedures pursuant to Title 5, section 11962, subdivision (a) of the California Code of Regulations and the Whited Elementary Charter Petition, Element 15.

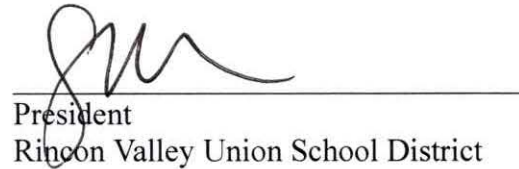
4. The Interim Superintendent and/or his designee are authorized and directed to take such further actions as may be necessary and appropriate to carry out the intent of this Resolution.

The foregoing Resolution was adopted at a meeting of the Governing Board of the Rincon Valley Union School District on January 13, 2026, by the following vote:

AYES: 5
NOES: 0
ABSTAIN: 0
ABSENT: 0

CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE
AND CORRECT COPY:


Clerk
Rincon Valley Union School District


President
Rincon Valley Union School District

VMT Study for Rincon Valley Union School District
(Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc. 2026)

B
APPENDIX



HEXAGON TRANSPORTATION CONSULTANTS, INC.

March 5, 2026

Ms. Teri Wissler Adam
EMC Planning Group
601 Abrego Street,
Monterey, CA 93940

Re: VMT Study for Rincon Valley Union School District

Dear Ms. Adam:

Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc. has completed a transportation impact assessment of the planned school consolidation for the Rincon Valley Union School District. We understand that the district is closing Whited Elementary School at 4995 Sonoma Hwy in Santa Rosa, California following the conclusion of the 2025-26 school year.

It is also our understanding that the elementary schools that will be receiving general students from the closing school will include Austin Creek, Binkley, Madrone, Manzanita, Sequoia, and Village elementary schools. For this study these schools will be categorized as “Receiving Schools.”

Background

The purpose of this report is to analyze the potential transportation impact of the closure of Whited Elementary School. Specifically, this analysis studies the impact on vehicles miles traveled (VMT) as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City of Santa Rosa lays out in its Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Guidelines (June 2020) that “When assessing a retail, hotel, or school project, the project’s total VMT, as opposed to a residential VMT per capita or employment VMT per worker metric is measured.” In line with these guidelines the change in total VMT is the metric used to evaluate the planned school consolidation.

VMT is defined as the number of trips associated with each school multiplied by the length of each trip. VMT is typically analyzed on a daily basis. The trips generated by each school include trips to and from the school by faculty and staff as well as students being dropped off and picked up. VMT is a measure of the burden placed on the transportation system to move vehicles and is also a measure of the greenhouse gas emissions attributable to motor vehicles.

Methodology

There are three data points needed to calculate VMT for this analysis: number of students, number of trips generated by each school, and the average distance to school for students.

Enrollment data for every year between 1997-98 and 2024-25 as well as projected enrollment for the 2026-27 school year was provided by the district for the affected school (see Table 1). The 2011–12 school year represented Whited Elementary’s historic peak in enrollment and was used as the baseline year corresponding to the school’s peak VMT.



Table 1
Enrollment Data 1997-2024

Year	Whited	Madrone	Binkley	Sequoia	Manzanita*	Village	Austin Creek	7-School Total
2024-25	327	363	351	414	369	384	366	2,574
2023-24	336	393	375	422	383	395	357	2,661
2022-23	348	373	365	406	412	393	336	2,633
2021-22	337	374	332	401	396	349	341	2,530
2020-21	345	364	342	393	428	333	342	2,547
2019-20	379	414	352	412	494	342	389	2,782
2018-19	406	419	360	400	533	364	387	2,869
2017-18	429	409	386	418	582	398	420	3,042
2016-17	445	402	395	423	581	408	434	3,088
2015-16	447	418	418	439	599	411	420	3,152
2014-15	450	418	420	445	599	428	441	3,201
2013-14	455	389	419	441	589	425	409	3,127
2012-13	455	387	412	432	595	417	396	3,094
2011-12	456	412	391	431	574	408	401	3,073
2010-11	412	425	377	433	584	394	383	3,008
2009-10	356	428	373	437	544	383	365	2,886
2008-09	355	414	342	413	312	385	372	2,593
2007-08	352	412	309	410	290	360	381	2,514
2006-07	350	399	288	404	291	353	391	2,476
2005-06	329	399	306	404	298	310	415	2,461
2004-05	310	412	306	389	294	296	413	2,420
2003-04	347	406	318	375	303	314	404	2,467
2002-03	356	409	339	356	301	311	385	2,457
2001-02	353	427	331	317	340	293	363	2,424
2000-01	358	424	328	331	335	296	312	2,404
1999-00	395	417	363	495	322	315	0**	2,307
1998-99	381	415	374	510	338	318	0	2,336
1997-98	381	419	333	464	344	328	0	2,269

*Prior to 2021, Manzanita Elementary Charter School was named Spring Creek Matanzas Charter School (same CDS number and school site). It appears that this charter school operated on two sites for several years. The attendance shown only represents the current Manzanita site.

**Austin Creek Elementary School opened in August 2000.



Table 2
Peak Year and Reallocation of Students

School	Whited Enrollment	
	2011-12	2026-27 ¹
Whited	456	0
Madrone	-	118
Binkley	-	91
Sequoia	-	82
Manzanita	-	14
Village	-	26
Austin Creek	-	11
Total	456	342

Notes:
1. Former Whited students assigned to each school

The enrollment figures were used to calculate the estimated number of trips generated by the schools using the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) *Trip Generation Manual, 12th Edition*, which indicates that an elementary school generates an average of 2.27 trips per student per day.

Table 3
ITE Trip Generation Numbers

School	ITE Trips Generated ¹	
	2011-12	2026-27
Whited	1,036	0
Madrone	-	268
Binkley	-	207
Sequoia	-	187
Manzanita	-	32
Village	-	60
Austin Creek	-	25
Total	1,036	779

Notes:
Source: ITE Trip Generation Manual, 12th Edition 2025
1. ITE average trip rate 2.27 trips per student for Elementary School (Land Use 520) are used.

Using anonymized address data provided by the district (see Figure 1) and Geographic Information Software (GIS) the distance to school for each current Whited student was calculated. The analysis then calculated the distance from each student's address to their assigned receiving school. These distances to school were averaged to determine the current average distance to school and average distance to school under the proposed plan.

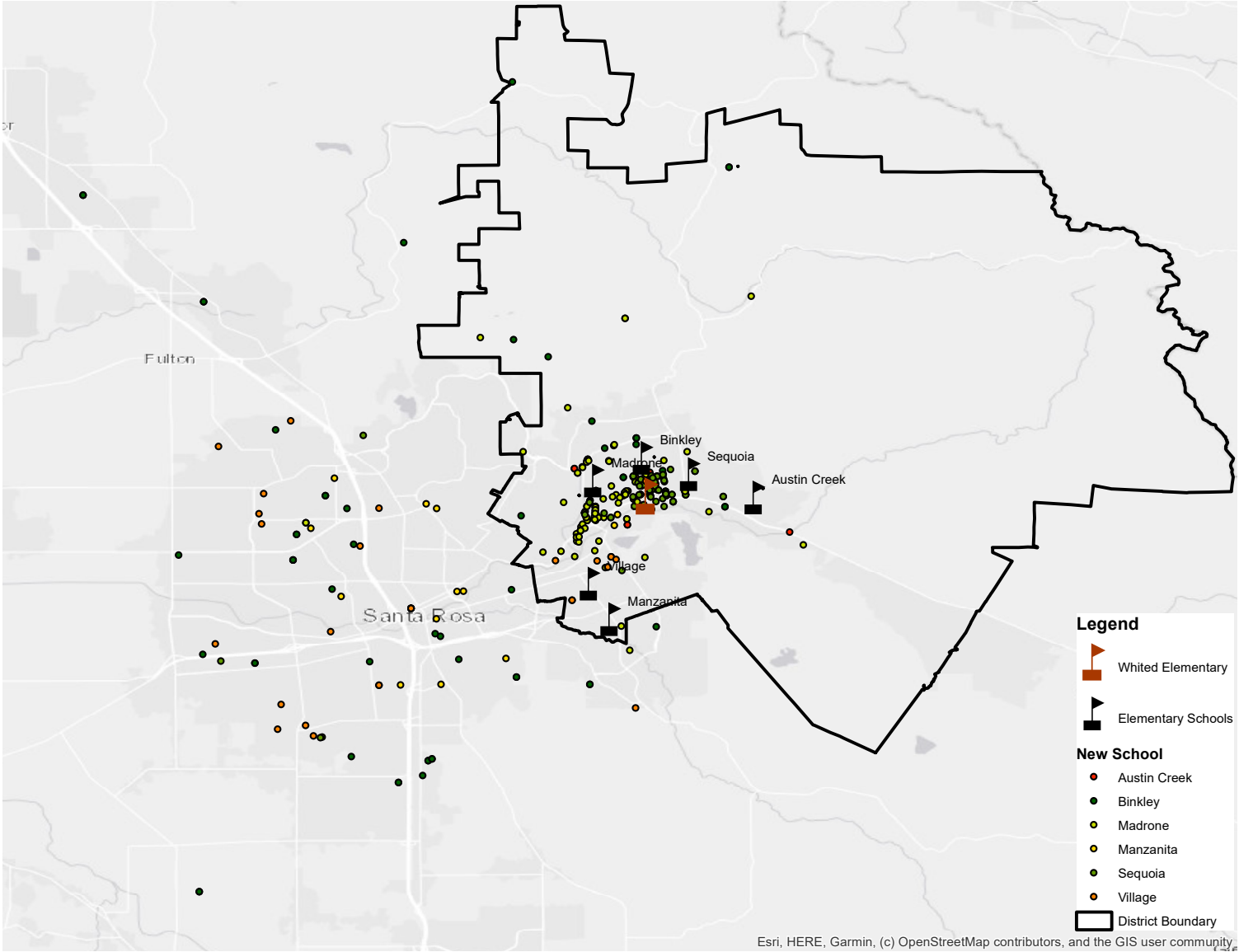


Figure 1
Student Distribution Map



Analysis

Enrollment at Whited Elementary has declined from 456 students in the 2011–12 school year to 342 students projected to be received by other schools in 2026-27 (see Table 2). Whited Elementary trip generation is estimated to have decreased at a proportional rate from 1,036 daily trips in the 2011–12 school year to 779 daily trips to new schools projected in 2026–27 (see Table 3).

For students received by Austin Creek, Madrone, and Sequoia elementary schools the average distance to school would decrease, while distance to school would increase for students received by Binkley, Manzanita, and Village elementary schools. Overall, the average distance to school for relocated students would increase from an average of 1.88 miles to travel to Whited Elementary to an average of 1.89 miles to travel to their receiving school (see Table 4).

Table 4
Average Distance to School

School	Distance to School ¹	
	Students	2026-27
Madrone	118	0.8 miles
Binkley	91	3.9 miles
Sequoia	82	1.0 miles
Manzanita	14	2.6 miles
Village	26	2.6 miles
Austin Creek	11	1.6 miles
Weighted Average ²		1.89 miles
Notes:		
1. Average distances calculated by measuring from each address to Whited and to the assigned new school.		
2. Weighted average distance is average distance times number of students, summed, then divided by total number of students.		

In isolation the increased distance to school may increase VMT, however, the decrease in elementary school enrollment at Whited Elementary, compared to the baseline, offsets the increased average distance to school. The drop in total enrollment has resulted in fewer vehicle trips to and from school, leading to a 24 percent reduction in total VMT generated by the received students compared to the 2011-12 baseline for Whited Elementary students (see Table 5). The distance to school for students attending other District elementary schools has not changed; however, enrollment has also decreased at those schools, resulting in a similar reduction in VMT district wide.



Table 5
VMT Calculations

Change in VMT		
	2011-12	2026-27
# of Students	456	342
ITE Trips	1,036	779
Avg. Distance (Mi)	1.88	1.89
VMT	1,948	1,476
% Change in VMT:		-24.2%

In Summary

The closure of Whited Elementary School would result in a net reduction in vehicle miles traveled compared to the baseline of school operations in 2011-2012. The decrease in total student enrollment over the past fifteen years offsets the 0.01 mile increase in average travel distance to school that would occur for former Whited Elementary students received by other schools. Compared to the baseline, district wide total VMT would be reduced and the VMT from received Whited students would be reduced by 24 percent.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this analysis. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,
HEXAGON TRANSPORTATION CONSULTANTS, INC.

Gary K. Black
President

Ethan Heckman
Planner