

# School closings may not ease woes

## Group foresees revenue shortfall



Students left the Hyde Park Education Complex yesterday. The three high schools within the complex would be closed under a proposal from Boston's public schools superintendent, Carol R. Johnson. (Jonathan Wiggs/Globe Staff)

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Globe Staff / October 8, 2010

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As parents, students, and educators across Boston mounted campaigns yesterday to keep their schools open, a financial watchdog group warned that Superintendent Carol R. Johnson's proposal to shutter six schools falls short of solving the district's money troubles.

The proposal, which also calls for the merger of two other schools that share a building, would save between \$7.7 million and \$8.7 million annually in operational costs, school officials say.

But the reduction would do little to cover a potential \$60 million revenue shortfall for the next school year, according to the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, a nonpartisan financial watchdog group. The \$60 million reflects the increase in spending necessary next year to maintain the same level of education the district is providing this year.

Calling the proposal's estimated savings "inadequate," Samuel Tyler, the bureau's president, said, "More difficult decisions will have to be made."

His assessment follows concerns raised Wednesday night by two School Committee members who questioned whether Johnson was being aggressive enough in closing schools.

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But many students, parents, and staff members at the affected schools countered yesterday that Johnson's proposal already cuts too deeply.

Parents at the Roger Clap Elementary School in Dorchester took to Facebook to galvanize support to keep their school open. The Lee Academy Pilot School community is sporting stickers to prevent a merger with another Dorchester school, and students at the Hyde Park Education Complex, where all three high schools are slated for closure, are circulating petitions.

"It's devastating," said Kenny Jervis, 40, of South Boston, the father of two Roger Clap students. "We absolutely love the school. We've always called it a hidden gem."

But others seem to have given up. Yesterday morning, as she stood outside the Ralph Waldo Emerson School in Roxbury, which is slated for closure, Tamara Johnson, 33, said she was unimpressed with the school and is considering enrolling her 7-year-old daughter, a second-grader, in a private school with a more challenging and stable academic environment next fall.

"They'll close these schools now, but in two years, will they close other schools?" she asked.

The superintendent's recommendation to the School Committee Wednesday follows a similar proposal she made two years ago that led to the shuttering of six school buildings, the merger of other schools, and the opening of some new programs.

Other aspects of Johnson's current proposal include shutting down the East Zone Early Learning Center and converting the Patrick Gavin Middle School in South Boston into a district-run charter school.

Even if the School Committee approves Johnson's plan next month, the number of empty seats is expected to grow.

School officials say there are more than 4,000 empty seats, but another 5,000 could be added to the list as more independently run charter schools open in the city in the coming years. [Continued...](#)

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