TO: GCSD Board of Directors
FROM: Jen Randle, President
DATE: September 18, 2025
RE: Preschool / Childcare Feasibility at the Proposed Community Recreation Center

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BACKGROUND

As part of planning for the new Community Recreation Center (CRC), the District has previously reviewed whether the facility could include preschool or childcare uses. This question has arisen due to community interest in early childhood programming and the current preschool lease at 480 Avenue Alhambra.

This memo provides a synthesis and refresher of information already gathered and presented through prior Board memos, CRC Ad Hoc Committee work, benchmarking conversations, and staff/legal review. It does not present new research, but rather consolidates key findings for discussion.

DEFINITIONS | Licensed vs. Non-Licensed Early Childhood Programs

Licensed Childcare/Pre-School (Title 22–regulated):

- Children are dropped off and cared for by staff without a parent/guardian present.
- Must be licensed by the state and meet strict facility, staffing, and safety requirements.
- Requires exclusive, dedicated classrooms and outdoor play yards.
- Examples: full-day preschool, Montessori programs.

Non-Licensed Early Childhood Programs (Recreation/Enrichment):

- Short-duration, caregiver-participation programs where children are not dropped off.
- Treated as recreation programs, not childcare facilities.
- Can operate in multipurpose rooms with flexible setup.
- Examples: parent-and-me classes, toddler music or art, cooperative playgroups.

FINDINGS

1 | Licensing requirements and facility configuration

- Title 22 requires ≥35 sq. ft. of indoor activity space per child and ≥75 sq. ft. of outdoor space per child (exclusive, fenced, adjacent).
- Licensed classrooms must be dedicated spaces with child-sized furnishings, direct restroom access, and secure storage.
- "Flipping" a licensed classroom into community use during off-hours is not feasible.

2 | Benchmarking

- **Highlands Recreation Center** (San Mateo): Licensed preschool is in a separate building with a fenced outdoor area; classrooms are not shared.
- **Los Altos Community Center**: This 24,000 sq. ft. facility has 11 rooms, including one licensed preschool room and a fenced yard for 15 children.
- Both examples confirm licensed preschools in community centers require dedicated facilities and larger sites than GCSD's parcel.

3 | Site and space constraints

- The CRC parcel (0.75 acres) must accommodate the building, parking, setbacks, and shared park space.
- Replacing core multipurpose rooms with a dedicated preschool room and outdoor yard would displace community uses.
- A 2022 Board memo concluded: *"Incorporating a small preschool into a small Community Center on a property this small is simply not feasible."*

4 | By-the-numbers capacity check (Picasso's 40–49 children as benchmark)

Indoor requirement (Title 22):

- 40 children × 35 sq. ft. = 1,400 sq. ft.
- 49 children × 35 sq. ft. = 1,715 sq. ft.
- The CRC's ~2,000 sq. ft. community room could meet this if converted into a dedicated classroom.

Outdoor requirement (Title 22):

- 40 children × 75 sq. ft. = 3,000 sq. ft. (~0.07 acres)
- 49 children × 75 sq. ft. = 3,675 sq. ft. (~0.08 acres)
- This represents roughly 10% of the total CRC parcel, which would need to be fenced and dedicated as an exclusive preschool yard immediately adjacent to the classroom.
- This would displace usable parkland and restrict shared outdoor access.
- Any structure greater than 18 inches tall counts toward lot coverage limit. That

includes play and shade structures as well as fencing.

Flexibility: Licensed classrooms cannot serve as multipurpose rooms. Once licensed, the space is permanently restricted to preschool use.

Conclusion. While the indoor square footage could be met by converting the community room, the outdoor requirement and dedicated-use mandate make replicating Picasso's 40–49 slots on this parcel infeasible.

5 | GCSD's legal authority (LAFCO)

- Under current LAFCO-approved powers, GCSD does not have authority to operate childcare facilities.
- Section 61100(s) of the Public Resources Code allows for childcare powers, but GCSD did not request or receive this authority.
- In consultation with District counsel we determined that contracting with or subsidizing a third party would be outside GCSD's powers, since the District would be funding and maintaining a childcare facility with taxpayer resources.
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6 | Community-wide benefit considerations

- Parks and recreation funding is intended to provide broad, multi-generational benefit.
- A licensed preschool would serve a narrow subset of residents (families with preschool-aged children) while reducing access for other community members.
- This raises an equity concern: dedicating taxpayer-funded facilities to a single age group is not aligned with GCSD's broader mandate.
- By contrast, non-licensed programs allow young families to participate while preserving flexible access for seniors, teens, clubs, and civic use.

SUMMARY

- A licensed preschool inside the CRC is not feasible given Title 22 requirements, the need for exclusive outdoor play space, site limitations, and GCSD's current legal authority.
- Even if feasible indoors, dedicating space to a licensed preschool would reduce equitable community access by serving only a narrow subset of residents.
- The CRC can still support non-licensed early childhood programs in multipurpose rooms, ensuring young families have enrichment opportunities while preserving broad, taxpayer-funded community use.

This memo consolidates prior findings and is provided for Board review and public discussion.