

The Impact of Mather Airport on New School Construction

In April 2007 a \$750 million bond issue was approved by voters to help finance 24 new schools in the approach corridor to Mather Airport. Thirteen of the proposed sites are clustered about 3 miles from the approach end of runways 22L/22R. [See Attachment 1] All are subject to direct over flight by aircraft on the various approach courses into Mather. A large and growing body of scientific evidence shows that jet aircraft noise has a significant negative impact on learning. [See Attachment 2] Of particular concern was a study by Clark et al, published in the American Journal of Epidemiology in 2006 which found a negative impact on reading comprehension due to aircraft noise but no evidence of a relationship between road traffic noise and children's ability to learn. Why? *"Aircraft noise is more intense and less predictable than road noise. The transient nature of aircraft flyovers, which have high short-term noise levels, may disrupt children's concentration . . . while the constant nature of road traffic may allow children to habituate . . ."* This paper and others re-enforce long-held serious doubts about classroom noise criteria formulated in earlier times.

Clearly the classrooms at these new schools will have to be sound-proofed. The questions are: (1) at what cost and (2) will sound-proofing alone be sufficient to mitigate learning impairment since not all school activities take place the classroom? This matter needs to be investigated in depth in the environmental impact studies. A conservative approach is required since new discoveries, such as Clark's, could be forthcoming.

Glen Otey, 10/18/07