

# Parents discuss school rebirth

Bay View community worried about a decrease in diversity

Bayview School

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**SANTA CRUZ »** Parents from Bay View Elementary urged trustees for Santa Cruz City Schools on Wednesday not to change the site's ethnic and socioeconomic diversity as they consider how to reopen a nearby school, a plan others question for financial reasons.

"I want my kids to grow up in a school where there are children with varied life stories," said veterinarian Sheena Logothetti, saying Bay View has "achieved that beautifully." "I really want you to look at more creative options than just neighborhood schools and don't really achieve diversity balance."

The most recent statistics show Bay View is the city's most diverse elementary school, with about 45 percent white students and 45 percent Latino students. About half are from low-income households.

While DeLaveaga school is also nearly as diverse, Westlake school is predominantly white and middle-or upper-class and Gault school is predominantly Latino and poor. Parents are concerned if boundaries are changed to reopen Natural Bridges as a neighborhood school, it could create even less diverse schools because a great deal of housing in Santa Cruz tends to be segregated by income and ethnicity.

Francisca Perez, a Santa Cruz High graduate,

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said she took her son out of Westlake and enrolled him in Bay View years ago because she believed he would blossom if he were around a greater number of students of color. "I felt that it made the difference for him," she said.

Superintendent Gary Bloom assured parents the board won't make a decision about Natural Bridges until June 18 at the earliest. A 25-member committee that has been meeting for months about the future of Natural Bridges is expected to make a recommendation to the board May 21.

Trustee Sheila Coonerty,

a committee member, encouraged parents to attend the next meeting at 6:30 p.m. Monday at Mission Hill Middle School. She said she was sorry some parents felt they had not been heard.

"This process is far from over," she said.

The board voted in March 2013 to reopen Natural Bridges, which was closed for budgetary reasons a decade ago, in the 2015-2016 year to relieve high enrollment at the other schools, most notably at Westlake and DeLaveaga. The schools, which were built with a capacity of 450 students (except for Gault Elementary at 350), remain overcrowded although the district has added portable classrooms to each of the sites.

"Santa Cruz City schools

**"I just want the board to feel very confident they can support a fifth elementary."**

— Jamie Young, former Bay View teacher

have been overcrowded since 2008, and our younger parents have experienced this as their normal situation," Trustee Ken Wagman said during a break in the meeting. "But we know our schools were built for 450, and students achieve more across the board in smaller school settings."

But some question whether the district should open the school next year.

Absent a new contract, the teachers union leadership objects to the reopening when faculty have had but one raise in recent years.

Jamie Young, a former teacher who has child in third-grade at Bay View, said teachers need supplies and parents need support with field trips.

"I just want the board to feel very confident they can support a fifth elementary," she said.

The cost of operating Natural Bridges, in addition to the \$1 million needed to renovate, is estimated at \$720,000 annually. Bloom said the funds are available, largely due to ongoing new tax revenue from the city's shuttered redevelopment agency, and a revised budget outlook is expected May 21.