

CARLMONT HIGH SCHOOL  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
DECEMBER 8, 2010

GIRLS RUNNER OF THE YEAR » JESSIE PETERSEN

# Carlmont star ready to take next step

By Glenn Reeves

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Carlmont's Jessie Petersen concluded her high school cross-country career in a way she liked. A blaze of glory might not be a bad way to put it.

Petersen won her second consecutive Central Coast Section Division I championship with a time of 18 minutes, 23 seconds, at Salinas' Toro Park.

But for a runner of Petersen's caliber, CCS is really a lesser affair, a prelim. She had her sights set on doing well at the state meet, and she came away from her race in Fresno feeling pleased.

Petersen came in eighth in a very fast Division I race with a time of 17:34. That was 27 seconds faster than she had run at any of her previous three state meets.

Her showing was good enough

to obtain an invitation to the Nike Cross Nationals in Portland, where she got a chance to run Saturday against the nation's elite.

Petersen has accepted a scholarship offer to run at Syracuse, one of the top programs in the Big East Conference. The Syracuse women placed 10th this year at the NCAA championships.

The cold winters in western New York will be an adjustment, but not totally new. Petersen lived in the Chicago area for three years.

"I guess I'll have to buy a whole new closet of clothes," she said.

She said she would like to focus on the 5,000 meters and the steeplechase in college.

"I'm real excited about the next level," she said. "I'm pretty happy with my high school career. I got better each year. I hope I can do the same in college."



JOHN GREEN/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

**"I'm real excited about the next level."**

— Jessie Petersen, who is headed for Syracuse

EDUCATION

# Schools look forward to funds

Peninsula districts to receive \$18 million from federal bill designed to save teaching positions, other jobs

By Neil Gonzales

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San Mateo County school districts stand to receive up to nearly \$18 million from the federal jobs bill that President Barack Obama recently signed into law, according to preliminary calculations released Thursday by the state Department of Education.

"We (would be) elated if the funds are here," said Emerita Orta-Camil-

leri, superintendent for the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District. "We already have prioritized needs that this money would go to."

The funding is part of the \$26 billion federal initiative designed to save teaching positions and other jobs nationwide. California will receive \$1.2 billion for school agencies to bring back former teachers, hire new ones and add instructional days to short-

ened academic calendars, among other measures.

Belmont-Redwood Shores is expected to use its share — about \$527,000 — to reduce the number of furlough days it is planning to mandate in the next two school years because of budget shortfalls, leaders said.

The district had been looking at four furlough days each in 2010-11 and 2011-12. That approach would trim the traditional 180-day academic calendar by those amounts each year.

See **FUNDING**, Page 5

## FEDERAL JOBS BILL ALLOCATIONS BY THE NUMBERS

**Cabrillo Unified School District:** \$628,214

**Belmont-Redwood Shores School District:** \$526,769

**Jefferson Union High School District:** \$1.1 million

**Redwood City School District:** \$1.6 million

**San Mateo-Foster City School District:** \$1.9 million

**San Mateo Union High School District:** \$1.8 million

**San Mateo County:** \$17.9 million

**Statewide:** \$1.2 billion

Source: California Department of Education

"Money is money, and we welcome it with open arms. The concern is that it's one-time money."

— Elizabeth McManus,  
San Mateo Union deputy  
superintendent  
for business services

The district also planned to increase class sizes. But the federal money could help the district keep class sizes down as much as possible, leaders said.

The San Mateo Union High School District could receive \$1.8 million. It will form a committee to study the best use for the money that improves student achievement, Elizabeth McManus, San Mateo Union deputy superintendent for

business services, said.

The money has to be used within a two-year period, she said.

She is grateful for the

prospective federal funding but cautioned that it's not a long-term revenue source.

"Money is money, and we welcome it with open arms," McManus said. "The concern is that it's one-time money. You really have to realize that we have something that will go away in two years unless the economy substantially improves, so we either have to cut the services provided or backfill them with another funding opportunity."

Senate Bill 847, which the state Legislature approved, authorizes the Education Department to disburse the federal funds statewide.

"Districts need to know how much they can expect from the Education Jobs Fund so they can meet their students' educational needs by hiring or protecting jobs for teacher, nurses, counselors, paraeducators and other important school personnel," state schools chief Jack O'Connell said in a statement.

"As soon as the governor signs this bill into law, we can start the process of distributing the funds to schools."

Neil Gonzales covers education. Contact him at 650-348-4338.

# Furlough days get passing grade

Teachers union OKs plan to help address budget problems; district board expected to approve deal

By Neil Gonzales

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Union teachers in the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District have ratified a tentative agreement to take several furlough days and other measures over the next two academic years to help address budget challenges, leaders said Monday.

"I'm happy for the vote," district Superintendent Emerita Orta-Camilleri said. "We understand we have to bring closure to the negotiations and move forward."

After a months-long impasse, the district and the 155-member Belmont-Redwood Shores Faculty Association agreed earlier this month to four furlough days each in 2010-11 and 2011-12. The teachers union voted to approve the agreement last week. It now heads to the district board, which is expected to approve it Thursday.

The furloughs will shorten the instructional calendar and come at the end of the school year, Orta-Camilleri said. Other districts have agreed on similar furlough plans, as the state has lifted the restriction on trimming the traditional 180-day academic calendar because of ongoing fiscal constraints.

The agreement in Belmont-Redwood Shores also includes having class sizes of 25 students — up from

20 — in kindergarten to third grade in 2010-11 and as many as 30 children in those grades the following year.

However, the class sizes in 2011-12 and number of furlough days could go down if the district receives additional funding — for instance, from the \$26 billion federal jobs bill that President Barack Obama recently signed into law.

"We're keeping an eye on that," said Orta-Camilleri, although she doesn't know yet how much her district could receive.

Belmont-Redwood Shores received concessions worth more than \$1 million from the union. The labor settlement, as well as the use of some reserve money and dona-

tions from the local education foundation, will help the district reach its goal of plugging a \$2.5 million shortfall in the 2010-11 budget, Orta-Camilleri said.

"I'm really proud that our teachers union worked with the district on an agreement that keeps us solvent," board President Cathy Wright said.

Union President Kristin Mack could not immediately be reached for comment.

*Neil Gonzales covers education. Contact him at 650-348-4338.*



**Orta-Camilleri**  
District chief happy about negotiations.

BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
AUGUST 31, 2010

BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES SCHOOLS  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
AUGUST 5, 2010

## SCHOOLS

# Districts reach labor agreements

Belmont-Redwood  
Shores, Millbrae set deals

By Neil Gonzales

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Two local school districts and their employees have reached labor agreements that should help tackle budget constraints.

The Belmont-Redwood Shores district and its teachers union have ended a months-long labor impasse, reaching a tentative agreement that would shorten the instructional calendar over the next two years by eight days.

A similar deal has been made in the Millbrae School District.

"We settled," Belmont-Redwood Shores Superintendent Emerita Orta-Camilleri said Wednesday. "The main thing is we worked in a very collaborative manner to address a difficult, difficult time."

Belmont-Redwood Shores had sought concessions worth more than \$1 million from the 155-member Belmont-Redwood Shores Fac-

ulty Association, according to a letter to the community by the district and union.

The parties agreed to four furlough days each during the 2010-11 and 2011-12 academic years, the letter said.

The agreement also includes having class sizes of 25 students in kindergarten to third grade in 2010-11 and up to 30 children in those grades the following year, the letter said.

However, the class sizes

in 2011-12 and number of furlough days could go down if the district receives additional funding, the letter said.

"The teachers of this district understand the need for everyone to work together to keep the district solvent," association President Kristin Mack said in the letter.

The association's members are expected to vote on the agreement later this month. If they approve the deal, the district board would consider ratifying it.

The labor settlement, as well as the use of some district reserve money and

donations from the local education foundation, will help Belmont-Redwood Shores achieve its goal of plugging a \$2.5 million shortfall in the 2010-11 budget, Orta-Camilleri said.

In April, the district filed for an impasse, which brought in a state mediator to work with both sides on smoothing out disagreements over having furlough days and how much to increase class sizes.

To the north, the Millbrae School District agreed on five furlough days each in 2010-11 and 2011-12 with its teachers and other workers, accord-

ing to board President Frank Barbaro.

That amounts to \$340,000 in annual savings and helps with a 2010-11 budget, from which \$2.8 million was cut, Barbaro said.

"We would've had to make deeper cuts without those furlough days," he said. "I have to commend the teachers and classified employees. They gave up a lot, but they saw that not giving that up would be worse in the future."

Neil Gonzales covers education. Contact him at 650-348-4338.

BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES SCHOOLS  
EXAMINER  
JUNE 27, 2010

# New Redwood Shores school to open this fall

By Andrea Koskey  
Examiner Staff Writer

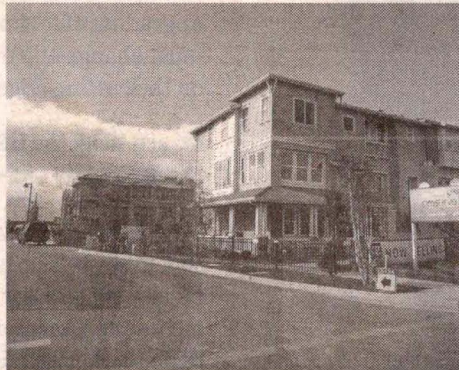
Come Aug. 23, nearly 300 schoolchildren will walk in to a new school in Redwood Shores, which is part of a 109-acre redesign and development of the area.

Redwood Shores Elementary School is part of Preserve of Redwood Shores, a development that offers 156 new townhomes, a neighborhood park and restored wetlands, according to Redwood City documents.

Most of the project has been completed, according to Paul Willis, senior civic engineer with Redwood City, but the remaining \$1.3 million from the \$6.1 million bond is expected to be released Monday after an approval from the joint redevelopment agency meeting.

This remaining money, Willis said, will help pay for the 3.5-acre park in the middle of the development and some tree and street landscaping.

The development is located on the north side of Seaward Parkway, at the northeast end of the Redwood Shores Peninsula.



MIKE KOZMIN/SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

**Brand new:** A new Redwood Shores school is part of a 109-acre development and redesign of the area.

Willis said the permits for the townhomes have been pulled and the developer has a waiting list for homes.

"What I've heard is they can't build homes out there fast enough," he said. "It's good for the industry that there are desirable homes in a

well-established community on the Peninsula and they are still in high demand."

Construction began on the site in 2008.

The project will also restore roughly 92 acres of wetlands.

One of the big focal points, though, is the new school, Willis said.

Officials from the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District could not be reached for comment. Schools were let out for summer break June 11.

Construction of the school was funded through Proposition C, which was approved in 2005 for \$25 million.

Redwood Shores is the second elementary school in the district located in Redwood Shores, the other is Sandpiper. The district's four other elementary schools are located in Belmont.

Willis said the project overall is near completion.

"It's a great little area out there," he said. "And its convenient that it's located next door to a school."

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## EDUCATION

# District may put bonds on ballot

Belmont-Redwood  
Shores campuses  
on track for upgrades

By Neil Gonzales

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**BELMONT** — The Belmont-Redwood Shores School District is considering two bond measures for the November election to upgrade campus buildings.

Last week, the district board told staff to gather information for a pair of potential ballot proposals.

One bond would take care of the four elementary schools in Belmont. The other would target Ralston Middle School, also in Belmont.

Belmont voters would decide on both bonds, while those in Redwood Shores would consider only the Ralston measure, said district board President Cathy Wright, adding that the board is expected to make a final decision this summer on whether to pursue the bonds.

District leaders believe this approach would avoid putting an additional burden on Redwood Shores residents, who are already paying for a \$25 million bond they approved in 2005 for a new elementary campus set to open in August, Wright said.

"We opted for that in order to be fair and equitable for all," she said.

Having Redwood Shores vote on just the one measure could also help both proposals at the polls.

"I think that option has the greater chance of success," board Vice President Andrew Stulbarg said.

Results of a community survey show the bonds are viewed favorably, district leaders

said. A bond measure needs a 55 percent majority to pass.

Money from the bonds would renovate buildings and add classroom space districtwide as well as replace the roof at Ralston, Wright said.

Neither bond would upgrade Sandpiper Elementary in Redwood Shores, however. Unlike the other schools, Wright said, Sandpiper does not require any major repairs.

Although the bonds would cover building improvements, the district in the near future will also likely ask voters to renew parcel taxes to continue funding educational programs and other concerns.

The search for new revenue comes as the district faces ongoing budget challenges.

Earlier in the year, the

board approved a list of cuts totaling \$2.5 million for the 2010-11 fiscal year, including shuttering all libraries, increasing class sizes and requiring workers to take furlough days.

However, the teachers union opposes furloughs as well as the amount the district plans to increase class sizes.

Other local districts are

exploring measures for the November ballot. Daly City and Pacifica voters in the Jefferson Union High School District could decide on a parcel-tax measure, while those in South San Francisco Unified could be asked to support a \$144 million bond.

Contact Neil Gonzales at  
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BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
MAY 25, 2010

BELMONT-REDWOOD CITY SCHOOL DIST.  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
APRIL 25, 2010

## LABOR NEGOTIATIONS

# District, teachers' union at impasse

Belmont-Redwood Shores  
seeks furloughs, larger classes

By Neil Gonzales

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BELMONT — Labor negotiations between the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District and its teachers' union have reached a stalemate largely over furlough days and increasing class sizes.

The district has filed for an impasse, which means a state mediator will come in to help resolve the standoff, Superintendent Emerita Orta-Camilleri said.

The district sought to have all its employees — administrators, staff and faculty — take six furlough days as part of a strategy to slash \$2.5 million from the 2010-11 budget.

But the 155-member Belmont-Redwood Shores Faculty Association opposes that approach.

"Furlough days are not very popular because they mean basically we are unemployed," teacher George

Metropulos said. "That's a considerable amount of money for many people."

The district's budget plan also includes increasing class sizes to a maximum of 30 students from 20 in kindergarten through third grade to ensure fiscal solvency, according to a proposed tentative agreement.

But the district's real goal is to limit the increase to 25 students, Orta-Camilleri said.

The union countered with an increase to 22 students, according to the proposed agreement.

"The teachers don't want to go that high because we feel the district is breaking the contract," union President Kristin Mack said. "It's disappointing that the district doesn't want to bargain with us."

Although negotiations have broken off for now, Mack said, the teachers still "have a valid contract."

District officials "are still looking to work with our teachers," Orta-Camilleri said.

The district will go ahead with a class-size increase to 25 students but not the furloughs, she said.

Because of the furlough standoff, "we have to find other areas to cut," district board President Cathy Wright said. "But I'm not sure there are any other areas."

OVER

BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
MARCH 12, 2010

EDUCATION

# District to close school libraries

Belmont-Redwood Shores  
cuts \$2.5 million for 2010-11

By Neil Gonzales

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The Belmont-Redwood Shores School District plans to shutter all its libraries and take other drastic cost-savings measures as it seeks to slash millions of dollars from the budget to keep financially solvent.

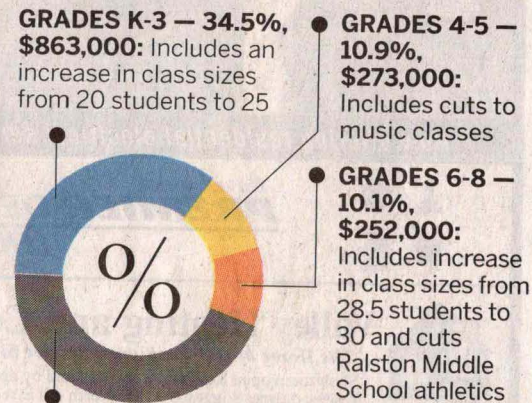
"We're at a loss at how we would replace that (library) service, because that's a very important part of the students' education," said Maria Lang-Gavidia, principal at Cipriani Elementary. "It's a really sad time for education."

The district board recently approved a list of cuts totaling \$2.5 million for the 2010-11 fiscal year.

The list includes closing the libraries, eliminating summer school, requiring workers to

## Breaking down the cuts

The \$2.5 million in cuts approved by the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District:



**DISTRICTWIDE AND ADMINISTRATION — 44.5%, \$1,112,000:** Includes six furlough days and the closure of all school libraries

SOURCE: Belmont-Redwood Shores School District

(OVER)

take six furlough days, increasing class sizes and eliminating the fourth- and fifth-grade music program, a district report said. The district still needs to negotiate many items on the list with employee groups.

Teachers will still be able to take students to school libraries, but the children will not be able to check out books, district board President Cathy Wright said.

And because the libraries will have no staff, Wright said, students who enjoy going there to read, play chess or do other quiet activities during recess will no longer be able to do so.

"We had to identify (cuts) because if we don't balance the budget ... then the state can take us over," she said.

Chopping \$2.5 million will help "ensure we have a balanced budget for this and two more subsequent years," district Superintendent Emerita Orta-Camilleri said.

The furlough days will save the district \$550,000, while the library closures will yield \$220,000, according to the report.

Class sizes in kindergarten to third grade will increase from 20 to more than 25 students for a savings of \$799,000, according to the report. The student-teacher ratio in grades six through eight will go from the current 28.5:1 to 30:1 for a \$210,000 savings.

Much of the shortfall is a result of potentially giv-

## The district still needs to negotiate many items on the list with employee groups.

ing back to the state \$1.7 million in categorical funds in 2010-11 and again the following year, the district said.

Those projected payments are a response to the state's request for basic-aid districts such as Belmont-Redwood Shores to make comparable "share-the-pain" budget reductions to what their revenue-limit counterparts have done.

Basic-aid districts are primarily funded by property tax revenue. Revenue-limit districts are mostly funded by the state based on their daily average student enrollment.

The Belmont-Redwood Shores board also approved sending preliminary layoff notices to about 30 certificated workers — including 25 teachers, the district report said.

So far, about 4,000 educators in the Bay Area have received pink slips, according to the California Teachers Association. Statewide, the tally is more than 21,000.

Districts have until Monday to issue notices to teachers informing them they could lose their jobs. Districts have until May 15 to finalize layoffs.

SAN MATEO COUNTY

# More schools report shaky fiscal footing

Four districts have said they may not be able to balance budgets

By Neil Gonzales

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An increasing number of school districts statewide are reporting that they may not be able to meet their future financial obligations given California's ongoing budget shortfalls.

So far this school year, San Mateo County has seen four cases in which districts have submitted interim financial reports that indicate they may be in danger of not balancing their budgets in the current or next fiscal years. Last year, the county had three cases.

Those reports are sent to county offices of education twice every academic year and are classified as positive, qualified or negative.

A positive certification is when the district can meet its financial obligations for the current and two subsequent fiscal years. A qualified certification is when the district may not meet its obligations for the current or two subsequent years. A negative mark is when a district likely will be unable to meet its obligations for the current or subsequent fiscal years.

In the county, the Bayshore, La Honda-Pescadero Unified and San Carlos districts filed

## Fiscal

Continued from Page 1

qualified first interim reports, according to a list released earlier this week by the state Department of Education.

But for the second interim reports, those three districts have filed positive certifications, according to a preliminary list from the county Office of Education. However, the Belmont-Redwood Shores district has sent in a qualified second interim report.

Districts can move from one status to another based on several factors, county education office spokesman Peter Burchyns said, but one of the most common ways involves taking cost-cutting measures.

"A district that is qualified in the first interim can take steps to reduce expenditures, which can move the budget to a positive certification," Burchyns said.

Although Belmont-Redwood Shores has submitted

"A district that is qualified in the first interim can take steps to reduce expenditures."

— Peter Burchyns,  
spokesman, county  
education office

a qualified second interim report, leaders there still expect to cobble together balanced budgets through the 2011-12 fiscal year.

That's because the district board recently approved a list of cuts totaling \$2.5 million for 2010-11, including closing all the school libraries, requiring workers to take six furlough days and increasing class sizes.

By the following year, district board President Cathy Wright said, "I think we'll cut so much we'll be able to balance the budget."

In 2008-09, La Honda-Pescadero submitted a qualified

first interim report and then a negative second interim report, the state department said. San Carlos sent in a qualified first interim report that year.

Much of La Honda-Pescadero's fiscal troubles in recent years have come from botched school construction projects paid for with local bond money. That prompted the county office a year ago to take control of the district's budget management.

If a district continues to show negative reports, Burchyns said, state law requires the county office to send in a fiscal adviser to help resolve the issues. If that doesn't work, the state steps in.

According to the state department, 126 local educational agencies submitted first interim qualified or negative reports this year — a 17 percent jump from the 108 in the second interim last year.

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BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
MARCH 1, 2010

## BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Support for schools bond

Ballot measure to address overcrowding, repairs would likely pass, poll finds

By Neil Gonzales

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BELMONT — The Belmont-Redwood Shores School District should draw enough yes votes to pass a construction bond measure possibly later this year to address student overcrowding and needed campus repairs, according to results of a community survey.

"I think we got a pretty strong green light from the pollster," dis-

trict board member Brian Matthews said. "It shows there's support in the community."

Matthews and his board colleagues reviewed the survey by the polling firm Godbe Research that showed nearly 65 percent of voters would support a \$75 million bond measure.

The measure would need a 55 percent majority to pass.

"Our schools have some drastic repairs needed," district Superintendent Emerita Orta-Camilleri said. "Knowing that the community would support a bond is encouraging."

The survey has a 5 percentage point margin of error.

District leaders are considering a possible measure in the November election. A bond would help the district tackle an enrollment surge by building new classrooms, repairing or replacing leaky roofs and making other campus improvements, school leaders said.

Currently, the district serves more than 2,900 students. It is projected to have about 3,400 students in the 2012-13 school year.

District leaders say they still need to determine the bond amount that should go before voters.

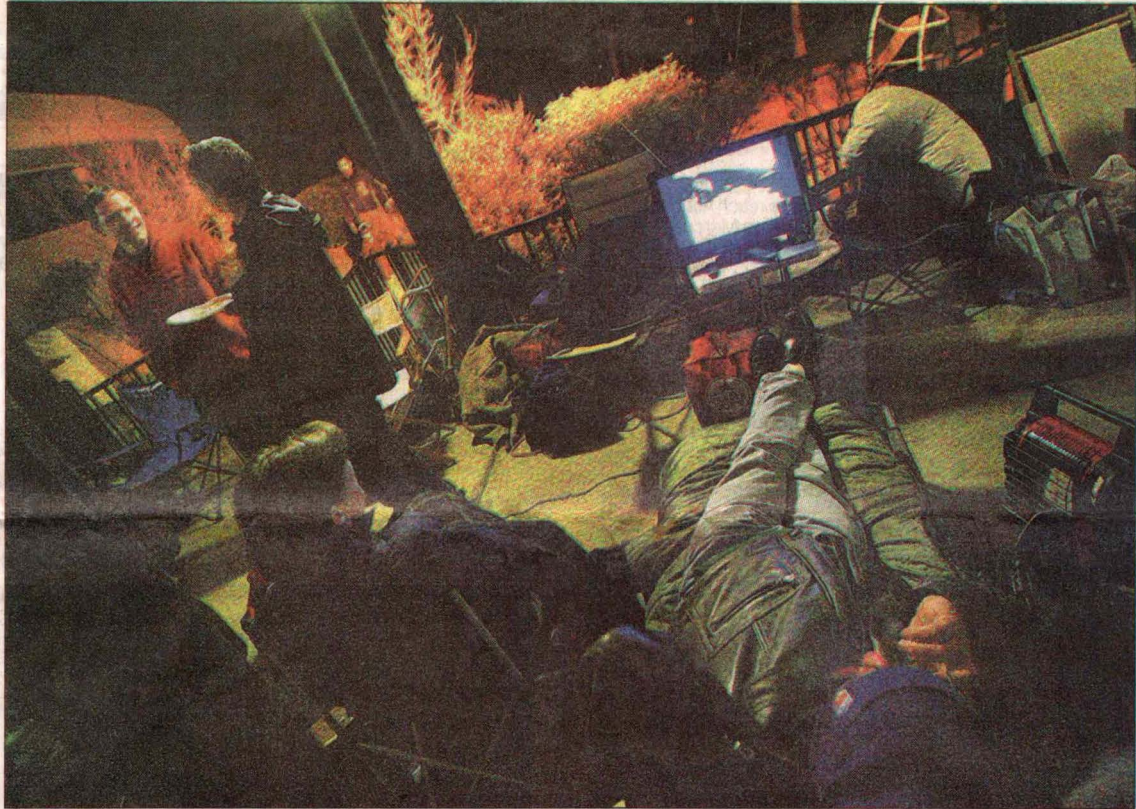
The district should "go for something reasonable that will let us do the work that our schools really need," Matthews said.

In 2005, Redwood Shores voters passed a \$25 million bond for a new school in their neighborhood. That campus is being built near Shearwater Parkway and Monaco Drive as part of a residential development called The Preserve. The school is scheduled to open in August and will ultimately serve about 400 students.

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Neil Gonzales covers education.  
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## BELMONT



ARIC CRABB/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Some parents watch television while others sleep and mingle at campsites set up Sunday night in front of Central Elementary School in Belmont. More than 30 sets of parents camped out at Central for two days and nights so they could be among the first to turn in their kindergarten registration forms when the school opened Monday. A similar scene played out at Cipriani.

# Parents camp out for school

It was first-come, first served for 34 kindergarten slots

By Neil Gonzales

ngonzales@bayareanewsgroup.com

The Longs thought Sunday night would be early enough to get in line to register their daughter for kindergarten at Central Elementary School the following morning.

But then they heard other parents had begun showing up bright and early Saturday.

"Next thing you know, everybody was making a pilgrimage here," said David Long, 46.

So he hustled down to the school and spent the rest of the weekend taking shifts with his wife to keep their place in line.

More than 30 sets of parents camped out at Central for two days and nights so they could be among the first to turn in their

"We have the perfect combination of (high) test scores and ... affordable housing on the Peninsula."

— Board official Andrew Stulbarg families."

kindergarten registration forms when the school opened Monday. They were competing for about that many spots in their neighborhood school in a district experiencing a surge in student numbers.

A similar scene played out at a second Belmont school, Cipriani Elementary.

Belmont-Redwood Shores School District leaders didn't condone the families camping out but understood parents' concerns about ensuring their children are enrolled.

"I think it's the reality," district

board Vice President Andrew Stulbarg said. "We got an overcrowding issue. When you look at our district, we have the perfect combination of (high) test scores and relatively affordable housing on the Peninsula. Because of that, we're attracting more and more

Currently, the district serves more than 2,900 students. It is projected to serve about 3,400 students in the 2012-13 school year.

As part of a plan to address the enrollment boom, district leaders said, the board has approved placing kindergartners who can't find spots in Central and Cipriani at Nesbit Elementary in Belmont over the next two school years.

District leaders are also eyeing a possible construction bond measure in November that would help tackle the enrollment in-

(OVER)

BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES SCHOOLS  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
MARCH 2, 2010

crease. The measure would build new classrooms and make other campus upgrades districtwide.

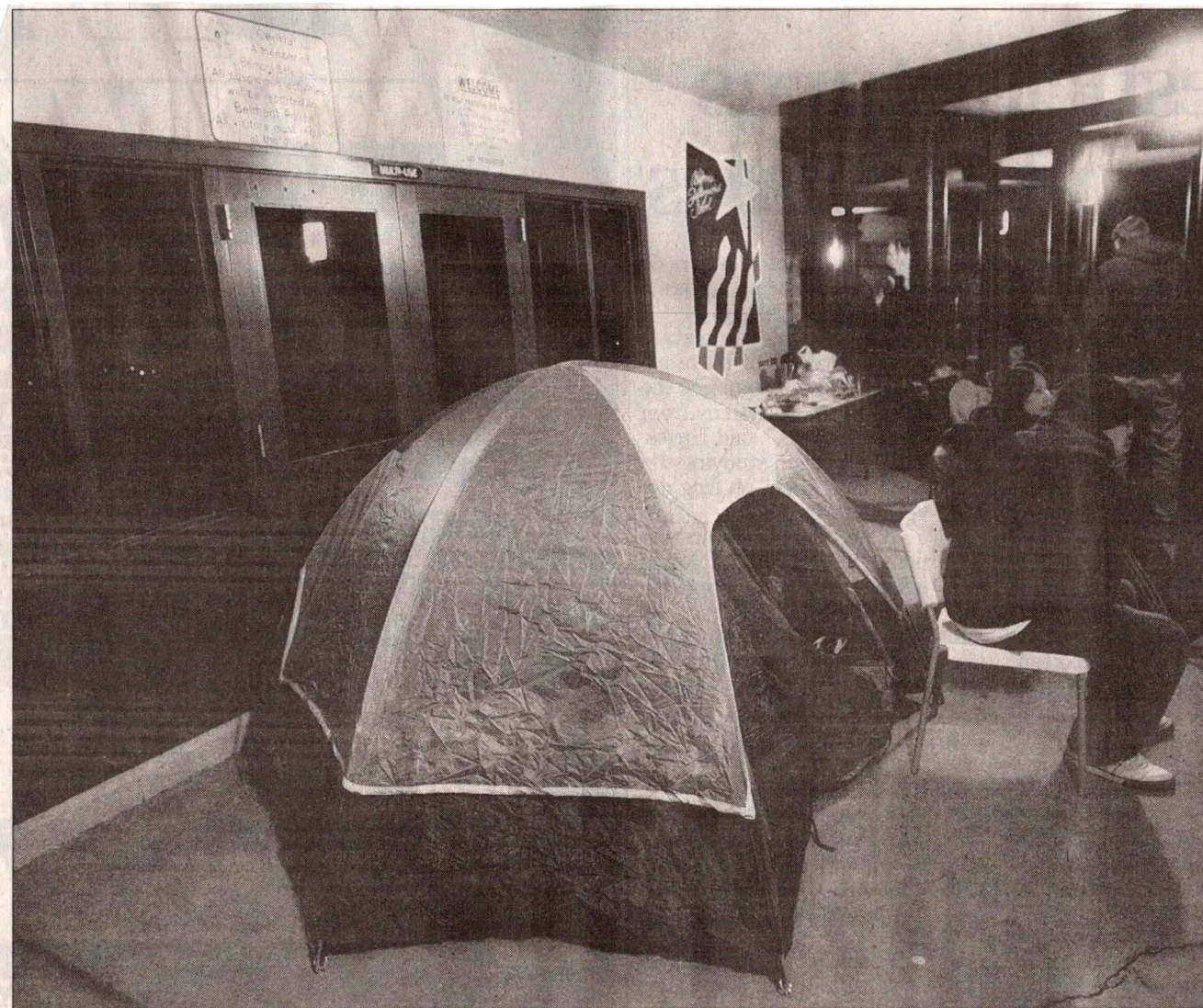
"The only school with space is Nesbit," district Superintendent Emerita Orta-Camilleri said. "If we continue to grow, we won't have enough space. That's why we need a bond."

Central offered a total of 60 kindergarten spaces for next year, Principal Cori McKenzie said. Of those, 26 were taken last week by siblings of current Central students.

Siblings have enrollment priority, district leaders said. Otherwise, the registration forms are processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

The remaining 34 slots were taken by students whose parents camped out over the weekend, McKenzie said. Six other students whose parents came to the school on Monday will go to Nesbit unless an opening occurs at Central, McKenzie said.

Some parents saw a dual-language Spanish immersion program proposed for Nesbit as a way to avoid having unhappy families attend schools not of their choice given the overcrowding problem. Families interested in the program would gladly send their children to Nesbit — freeing up space for others to stay at their home schools, proponents said.



ARIC CRABB/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Parents camped out Sunday night in front of Central Elementary School in Belmont. Central offered a total of 60 kindergarten spaces for next year, Principal Cori McKenzie said. Of those, 26 were taken last week by siblings of current students. The remaining 34 slots were taken by students whose parents camped out over the weekend.

But district officials are recommending to the board this week not to proceed with the program. They cite its potential cost at a time when the district faces \$750,000 in

budget cuts and other challenges.

"That's too bad, since (an immersion program) would be great for the district and would make Nesbit the shin-

ing star of our district," Long said.

But he's happy to get his daughter enrolled at Central, a five-minute walk from their home.

"We're in," he said. "We were No. 8 on the list."

*Neil Gonzales covers education. Contact him at 650-348-4338.*

# Families camp out for spots at school

Belmont parents  
scramble to file forms  
for kindergarten slots

By Neil Gonzales

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BELMONT — The Long family plans on an overnight camping trip this weekend.

They'll pitch a tent, have hot chocolate ready and make sure to bring something to read.

But this won't be any ordinary outing.

The Longs and a few other families are expected to hunker down Sunday night outside Central Elementary so they can be among the first to turn in their kindergarten registration forms when the school opens Monday morning.

They want to try to ensure that their young children get a spot in their neighborhood school in a district experiencing a surge in student population.

The Longs hope to enroll their daughter at Central, a five-minute walk from their home.

"We got all our paperwork and are ready to go," said David Long, who will be taking shifts with his wife Sunday night into Monday morning. "All the Belmont schools are terrific, but most peo-

## School

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ple prefer to go to the one closest to them."

The Longs will likely buy a camping tent and bring some marshmallows, other campfire goodies and reading material for their venture, he said.

They just hope the weather holds up. "There's a 20 percent chance of rain with a low of 45 degrees," Long said. "If it rains, it would not be good."

Emerita Orta-Camilleri, superintendent of the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District, would rather not see parents camping out. "We're really discouraging parents from doing that," she said.

But she acknowledged that the district processes the forms on a first-come, first-serve basis although siblings of current students at a particular school have priority.

The overcrowding issue districtwide is generating the high demand for kindergarten spots, she said.

The district's enrollment growth has jumped significantly in recent years and shows no sign of slowing.

Currently, the district serves more than 2,900 students. It is projected to serve about 3,400 students in the 2012-13 school year.

District leaders are eyeing a possible construction bond measure that would help tackle that growth.

The measure could go before voters in the November elections. It would build new classrooms, repair or replace leaky roofs and make other campus improvements, district leaders said.

Other schools in San Mateo County that have seen overcrowding have had to contend with parents camping out overnight over the years, including Baywood Elementary in San Mateo.

Another school in Belmont, Cipriani Elementary, could also see parents camping outside this weekend on behalf of their incoming kindergartners.

"Those are the rumors I heard," Cipriani Principal Maria Lang-Gavidia said. "I think parents are worried about getting their students in, so it wouldn't surprise me."

Neil Gonzales covers education. Contact him at 650-348-4338.

BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
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# Students may become bilingual

■ Belmont-Redwood Shores School District expected to consider approving dual-language program

By Neil Gonzales

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BELMONT — Students in the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District could start learning early on how to speak both English and Spanish fluently.

On Thursday, the district board is expected to consider approving a dual-language immersion program to begin in August at Nesbit Elementary.

Supporters believe the program would be one way to avoid having unhappy families attend schools not of their choice because of a potential attendance reshuffle given a districtwide overcrowding problem.

But district Superintendent Emerita Orta-Camilleri said she is not sure how much the program could help

## IF YOU GO

■ **What:** Belmont-Redwood Shores School District board meeting

■ **Where:** District offices, 2960 Hallmark Drive, Belmont

■ **When:** 7 p.m. Thursday

in that regard.

"We know there's interest" in the program, she said, "but we don't know how many families will actually apply."

A community survey did indicate enough of an interest for the district to pursue a program at Nesbit, where space is available and where the district's largest population of Spanish-speaking English learners are, a staff report said.

The program would start with two kindergarten and two first-grade classes, the report said. Kindergartners would learn their lessons in Spanish 90 percent of the time and English the remaining 10 percent.

Over subsequent years, the report said, the instruction time in Spanish would gradually go down. In fifth grade, students would learn in Spanish half the time and English the other half.

The program's start up cost is estimated at \$37,480, according to the report.

Supporters expect the program to last at least six years and have pledged to contribute about \$40,000 a year to the effort, the report said.

The district could add a Mandarin immersion program in the future, the report said.

Critics question having an immersion program when the district is experiencing an enrollment surge and budget shortfalls. But supporters such as Jeanne Sole argue that the program would help address concerns over a district proposal

to tackle the student growth partly by moving kindergarten classes at Central and Cipriani schools to Nesbit.

Families interested in the program would gladly send their children to Nesbit, Sole said. She would be one of them and apply for a spot for her daughter, who is currently attending kindergarten at Central.

Proponents also understand the financial issues, she said, and that's why they have made pledges and plan on a fundraising campaign to help cover the program's materials, teacher training and other needs.

Across San Mateo County, other districts have immersion programs. The San Mateo-Foster City district, for instance, offers Mandarin instruction at its College Park campus starting in preschool.