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Parents battle to keep preschool center

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Parma Children's Center parents say the Montecito Street facility is the best place for their youngsters.

Despite repeated assurances by Santa Barbara school board members that services will not be eliminated, parents insisted that relocating the 68 children to different sites will destroy the educational program and community bond the families have developed.

"We are convinced this is the

best place for the children," said Edna Trujillo, who has two preschool-aged daughters in Parma.

The children's center is in an unwilling tug-of-war over the Montecito Street building known as Parma School. The new Santa Barbara Charter School also wants the site to start a program for grades kindergarten through third.

The debate on which program will get the Parma site continued Wednesday as school board members went over a list of locations that either programs could use.

Debbie Flores, district child development programs director, reported that the children's center program could be transferred to Franklin Children's Center at Franklin School on the Eastside for one year and Monroe School in the Mesa area.

Two classrooms would be available on each campus for the students, she said. In September 1994, the Parma program at Franklin would transfer to Harding School to ease overcrowding at the Eastside campus.

Flores said the two classrooms

would push enrollment at Franklin Children's Center to 300 youngsters. Add to that the regular school enrollment and roughly 1,000 students would be on the Franklin campus.

The cost to restart at Franklin would be less than \$1,000, she said. The Monroe project would cost \$10,000 because certain improvements would be needed to meet state standards.

District funds would be used for those projects, Flores said. That way, the district would not have to repay the \$13,000 to \$14,000 in fed-

eral money that was used to upgrade Parma Children's Center.

The ideal site, though, is still Parma, she told board members.

The school does not have to share facilities with another school, it is located in a part of the city that most needs subsidized child care, it has enough space to train student teachers and store equipment, and it meets state licensing standards.

Trujillo said many parents who talked Tuesday night about the

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possible relocation were not convinced the Parma program would be preserved.

"They (district officials) say the program is the same," she said, "but I don't think so. Every child is going to go in different parts. The teachers aren't going to be the same."

"We understand the duty of the board," Trujillo said. At the same time, "we want them to know our situation. We want to keep our place, our program without affecting the other programs."

Charter school organizer Cyndi Wheeler said charter parents believe Parma would benefit them, too.

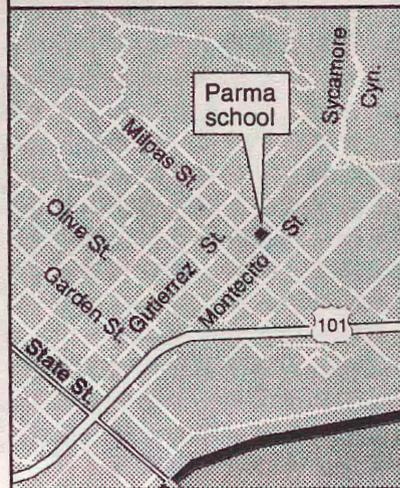
Of the five potential sites that staff members studied, Parma provides the office space and three classrooms the charter school needs, she said. Plus, there is room to add fourth and fifth grades.

The other possibilities — Adams School, Monroe School and La Colina Junior High School — do not have the office space, Wheeler said.

Goleta Valley Junior High School has the space and the flexibility to accommodate Santa Barbara Charter, a staff report noted,

Parma school: children's center or Santa Barbara Charter School?

The school currently houses a children's center. Santa Barbara Charter has requested to use the campus.



News-Press graphic

but as with the other existing schools, it would have to share facilities with Goleta Valley. The site also would not be in the elementary district, the report said.

Whatever the board decides, parents want a decision soon.

"We need a site quickly," Wheeler said. The standstill is hindering efforts to recruit students and finalize a budget.