

Last call

Gill Year-Round parents making a final push to save program

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It's crunch time for parents who have been working since late last year to save their treasured Gill Year-Round school-of-choice program.

Although official registration for the ninth-year program concluded on March 2, parents with an interest in registering their children are encouraged to contact Gill Principal Gayle Zimmerer no later than Tuesday. Their names would be put on a wait list.

Meanwhile, at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 21, year-round parents and Gill personnel will learn from schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield what the program's probable fate will be.

Whatever scenario is outlined by Maxfield in the Gill media center then would be subject to a final vote by the school board at its Tuesday, March 27 Farmington Board of Education meeting, slated for the Farmington Training Center.

"We're upbeat, but worried, because we're not getting information from the school (administration), in terms of (enrollment) numbers and what the desire is going to be," Halton said.

Parents still have a few days to try and garner some recruits, and therefore, they still have hope about gaining a reprieve for a program they care deeply about.

"We're trying to get them to write letters and get them to take action," Halton said, referring to the parents. "And we want them to show up at the (March 27) meeting."

Praise for parents

Zimmerer noted that the effort of the parents "has absolutely been spectacular."

But, Zimmerer emphasized that she is still putting together information. Low enrollment and cost to continue running the program are the main issues being studied by school administrators.

There are about 100 students currently in the year-round program, factoring in that 21 fifth-graders will leave the building, Gill Principal Gayle Zimmerer earlier said more than 40 newcomers would be needed to sustain the program.

The parent and school campaign to keep the program alive reached a pinnacle on Feb. 6, when representatives from about 50 families attended a safari-themed open house and informational meeting.

Kindergarten teacher Linda Lipson said the turnout that night was heartening and indicated the "cohesive, small community feeling" in the program.

"Since parents have specifically chosen this program for their children," Lipson added, "they have demonstrated their com-

mitment to being active partners in their children's education. I think this is a definite strength of the program."

The program, hosted in a wing

of Gill Elementary School, extends from late August until mid-July. Students attend the same number of instructional days as do counterparts in tradi-

tional elementary schools and receive the exact curriculum.

Because smaller groups of students continue through each grade, the program lends itself to the development of strong friendships, said parent Pam Prezioso, who lauds the "continuity for children and their friendships from year-to-year."

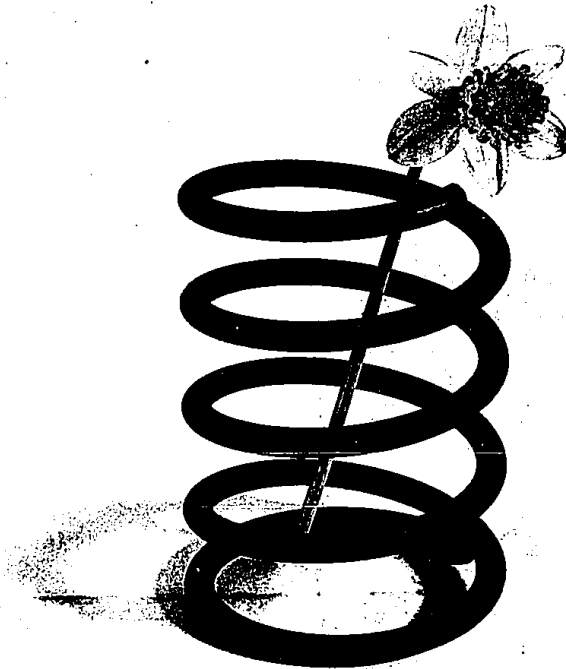
The alternative calendar features two-week intersession breaks in November, February and May, but students still have a six-week summer vacation.

"I like summer vacation because it's shorter and you don't forget stuff," said third-grader David Kucukaralan. Zimmerer said any parent still

interested in signing up for the program should contact her immediately at (248) 489-3690.

The March 27 board meeting is being held at the Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas Street, due to the annual District PTA Reflections Awards program. The meeting is at 7:30 p.m.

(Spring just got springier!)



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