

Merle Davies building faces more changes

School district expansion plans could alter facility

By RAY PITZ
Of Times Newspapers

An old Beaverton school, which in the past has been a sentimental favorite, is most likely in line for a major facelift.

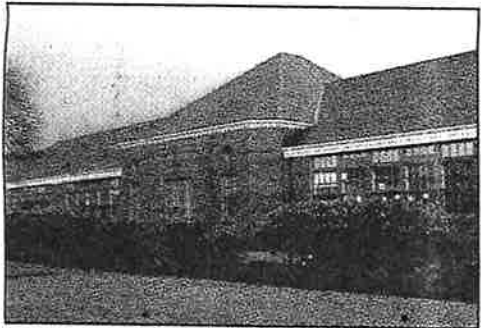
On Monday, the Beaverton School Board discussed scenarios for renovation of the 70-year-old Merle Davies school on the Beaverton High School campus in downtown.

"Merle Davies was originally an elementary school that was built in 1937," Superintendent Jerry Colonna told board members.

In 1963, the district began using the school as a location for students to attend when they were waiting for their new schools to be built.

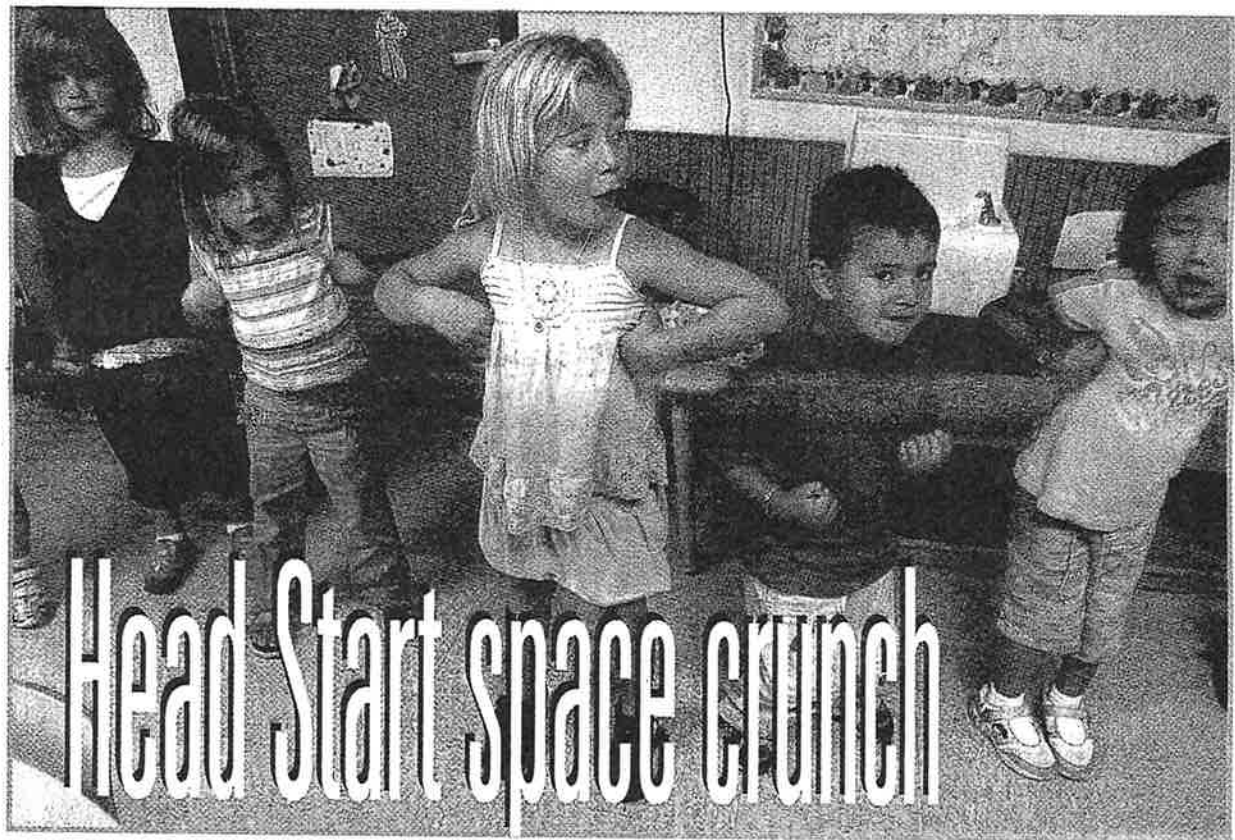
Twenty years later, the building became an annex and overflow facility for Beaverton

■ See DAVIES, A7



FILE PHOTO /TheTimes

REMODEL PLANS — Beaverton School District officials are considering plans that could alter the 70-year-old Merle Davies school building.



JAIME VALDEZ /TheTimes

RIGHT START — Students in Beaverton's CDC Head Start class, from left, Addie Green, Katelyn Burke, Alicia Dalsin, Alexis Canales and Fernanda Martinez, do the chicken dance during a class exercise Monday. Below, Kris Long is the Beaverton CDC interim program area coordinator.

Beaverton's school space needs could leave little room for hundreds in county Head Start classes

By RAY PITZ
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A lack of space for students has prompted the Beaverton School District to consider terminating its contract with Washington County Community Action Head Start.

On Monday, the Beaverton School Board discussed the possibility of ending a 15-year contract with the Head Start program. That could mean that the county agency would have to provide classrooms for up to 280 students expected to attend this fall.

"We believe the district needs to give serious thought to terminate that agreement," Bud Moore, the district's deputy superintendent for operations and support services, told board members.

Head Start is a federally funded pre-kindergarten program to prepare economically disadvantaged students for elementary school by helping them



■ See HEAD START, A6

Head Start: District plan surprises agency

■ Continued from A1

develop academic and social skills.

Beaverton schools have had a contract with the Washington County Community Action Organization since 1998 for Head Start classroom space. The district could buy out the remaining years of the contract for an estimated \$200,000 to \$225,000.

Under its agreement with the district, Community Action has paid for the purchase and location of seven portable classrooms at sites in exchange for the use of an equal number of classrooms inside participating schools.

"It is the consensus of (the) Division of Teaching and Learning and Facilities Department staff that the District will be unable to continue to fulfill its current obligation to allocate appropriately designated classroom space for Head Start classroom functions," according to a memo distributed this week to the School Board. "Subsequently, staff believes the District should proceed toward terminating the current BSD-CAO agreement effective the end of the 2007-08 year."

Moore said it has been difficult to determine where to place Head Start classrooms without affecting other district programs each year.

Help and encourage

Farzana Siddiqui, Washington County Community Action Head Start's director of child development, said the district's decision to possibly terminate its Head Start contract was "a little surprising."

"This is something that came up all of a sudden," said Siddiqui. "I need to consult with various groups and see how we're going to handle this."

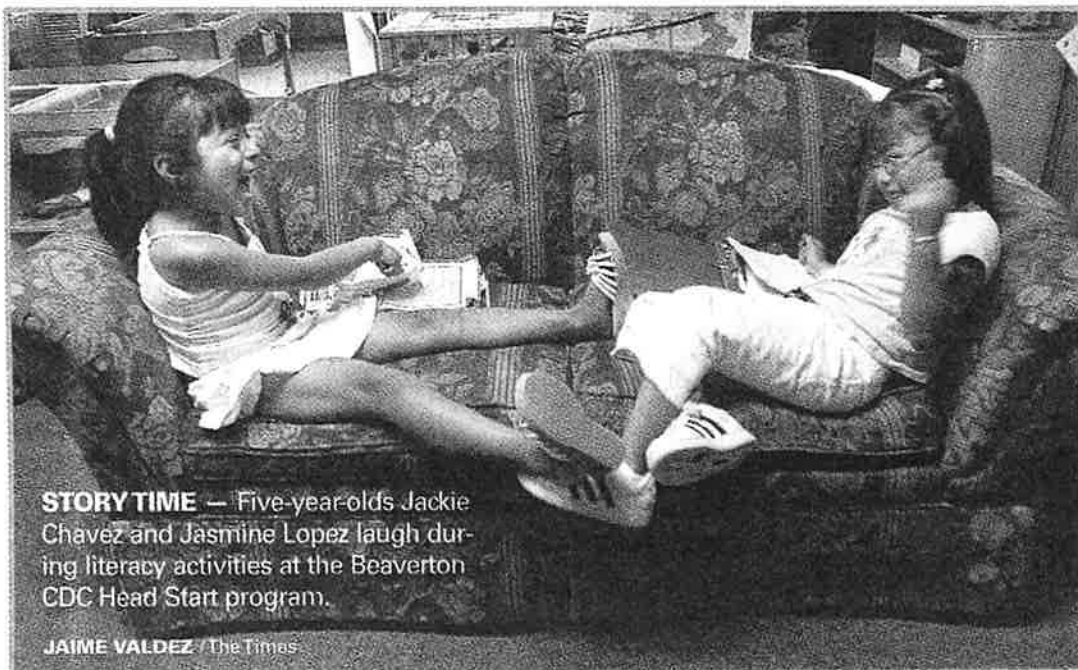
She said that discussion would have to include Gerralynn Ness, executive director of Community Action, who is out of town.

"Obviously this is an incredible program and obviously they need a home," school board vice-chairman Tom Quillan said during Monday's discussion.

Board Chairwoman Karen Cunningham agreed, saying the district should do everything it can to "help and encourage" Head Start officials to find space.

"We're all really supportive of Head Start and know how good of a program it is," Cunningham said when contacted Tuesday.

Cunningham hopes the district will



STORY TIME — Five-year-olds Jackie Chavez and Jasmine Lopez laugh during literacy activities at the Beaverton CDC Head Start program.

JAIME VALDEZ / The Times

provide help and guidance to the program if it has to find alternative sites.

Investing in children

Ironically, the news of possibly breaking ties with Head Start comes on the heels of a recent announcement of a \$39 million boost for Oregon Head Start by the Legislature.

The money will help the Beaverton-area program pay for an anticipated 36 new students expected to be added to the program this school year.

It also will pay for six new teachers, a supervisor and a program assistant.

Siddiqui said in an average year, anywhere from 110 to 120 Head Start students from the program transition into Beaverton schools.

Head Start operates programs at Chehalem, Elmonica and Kinnaman elementary schools and Mountain View Middle School.

In addition, programs run out of Vose Elementary School and the International School of Beaverton will close, but a new program will begin at Jacob Wismer Elementary School where students will occupy portable classrooms in that school's annex, said Siddiqui.

Also, Head Start will have a classroom at Sexton Mountain Elementary School this year.

The additional state funding also will allow Head Start to add classes at those sites.

Talking with other Head Start administrators, Siddiqui said the \$39 million funding boost is the largest they can recall in at least two decades.

"It's great," said Siddiqui. "We're investing in our children at such an early age."

Washington County Community Action Head Start maintains a waiting list of 400 to 500 children from which it selects the neediest in the county.

Lots of fun

During a visit to Head Start's Community Action Beaverton Child Development Center on Monday, 5-year-old Giselle Martinez carefully counted money from her beach shack register, after supplying fellow students with pretend fruit smoothies.

Alisha Stoecklein, the lead teacher at Community Action's Beaverton Child Development Center, said teachers try to keep the children's interest by frequently coming up with new themes. This week, children are trying out a beach theme.

In another part of the classroom, youngsters cook plastic fish over a construction paper fire.

"We have lots of fun in here," said Stoecklein.

The Beaverton center, which caters to toddlers as well, is for children of parents who work or go to school. It is not part of Beaverton School District and wouldn't have to move if the district terminates its contract.

"We are fully enrolled year-round," said Kris Long, interim program area coordinator and a lead teacher in the half-day program that was formerly housed at Vose.

Long said kindergarten teachers have told her they like the Head Start program because it not only provides children with academic skills but social and motor skills as well.

"We plan for every aspect of the child

FUNDING START

A portion of new state money will provide services to 162 additional children in Beaverton, Hillsboro and Tigard-Tualatin School districts.

■ Community Action Head Start will add 36 more children to programs in Beaverton this fall, expanding the total number of children to between 266 and 280.

■ There are up to 807 children expected to be enrolled in Head Start programs this fall.

■ Up to 120 students transition from Head Start programs to Beaverton schools each year.

every week," said Long.

Long said many students who come to Head Start don't even know how to ask another child for toys.

By the time they leave, those students learn such social skills as asking when they might be able to play with the toy. They also are taught such nuances as how to read another child's body language.

Siddiqui said kindergarten teachers have expressed support for the Head Start program.

"The kindergarten teachers tell us we can see the difference," she said, pointing out that students coming from the program are more ready to work in groups, follow directions and have their alphabets, numbers and colors memorized.

"That's what we hear from the teachers, they're ready to learn," said Siddiqui.

Nelly Herrera, whose son, Alonso, 4½, attends the center, said she volunteers in his classroom every Monday. Both she and her son like the program.

"I like it a lot," said Herrera. "The kids, they learn very fast."

Herrera said she's been amazed at how fast her son is learning, praising teachers for the progress he's made.

"When he came here, he was speaking only Spanish," she said. "Now he's learning a lot of English."

Meanwhile, Community Action Head Start will add up to 35 new teaching and non-teaching positions this year.

Of those, Beaverton will receive six teachers, one supervisor and one program assistant.

Anyone who wants to apply can call 503-693-3262. Applications also are available at the county office, 1001 S.W. Baseline Road, Hillsboro.