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## Lafayette Elementary Fourth Grade Camp Now Day Trip

By Jean Follmer

For years, fourth graders at Lafayette elementary schools ventured to the Coloma Outdoor Discovery School (CODS) in Coloma for a two-night fieldtrip. But after a lengthy – often heated – debate at the June 24 board meeting, the Lafayette School District board changed the location and duration of the trip.

Students will now spend a full day in the town of Columbia to experience the California Gold Rush curriculum. Activities will include panning for gold, a stagecoach ride, a blacksmith demonstration, and lessons in a one-room school house, according to Director of Curriculum and Instruction Rachel Zinn.

Concerns about CODS that fourth grade teachers expressed to Zinn at the beginning of last school year prompted the change, including a lack of on-site medical support, insufficient security, and the resulting potential liability increase for participating teachers. After many conversations with CODS directors, the District determined that CODS would not make the changes needed to alleviate the concerns.

Many parents were outraged that they hadn't been invited to participate in the decision-making process. From their standpoint, the decision had been made behind closed doors and the lack of transparency angered them. Zinn publicly assured parents the intent was not to be secretive. Lafayette Elementary parent Sandra Harris had heard rumor of the change, and said other parents were surprised by the decision. "Are other programs on the chopping block that we're not aware of?" Harris asked.

Several other parents were unhappy that the fieldtrip changed from an overnight to a day trip. "Why in December didn't the District contact the PTA and voice their concerns with them?" said Lafayette Elementary parent Michael Ross. Ellen Miramontes had concerns that children would get carsick on such a long day trip, and one parent threatened to keep her child home from the fieldtrip and wondered aloud about the loss of revenue to the district if other parents did the same.

In contrast, Pam Severson said, "There is some parental support for what the teachers are doing and I feel that needs to be mentioned."

CODS's founder, Fred Faieta, was present and publicly offered his response to District concerns. "I don't know where the disconnect is," he said. "There is not one of the 11 concerns I've put down that we can't find a win-win."

Board President Teresa Gerringer acknowledged the District received a number of e-mails reiterating the concerns expressed by parents, but Board Member Stephenie Teichman had concerns. "From a process standpoint, it's a fieldtrip. I'm very leery about establishing a process about parents deciding what fieldtrips our schools make," she said.

Superintendent Dr. Fred Brill closed the loop. "Absolutely we would consider fieldtrip requests. This is an extremely vocal community and I'm afraid teachers will be bulldozed by some parents. I've received some very nasty e-mails saying this was because teachers are lazy. We have to respect our teachers and honor what they do," said Brill.

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### Lafayette School District to Decide Allen Bills

By Jean Follmer

Facing declining enrollment, Lafayette School District (District) administrators are considering ways to avoid the reduction in state revenue that is tied to the Average Daily Attendance (ADA). "For every loss of a student, it's a loss of \$5,000 in revenue," said Superintendent Dr. Fred Brill at the June 24 board meeting.

The district is considering accepting Allen Bill transfer applicants during the coming school year. Unlike inter-district transfers, Allen Bill applicants have a tie to the District community. Allen Bill transfers enable non-resident students to attend school in the district where their parent works, in

lieu of their place of residence. Once admitted under the Allen Bill, a student has the right to attend school in that district as long as the parent maintains employment within the district community for a minimum of 35 hours per week.

While the transfer applicants would enable the District to collect the \$5,000 ADA allowance for those students, those families would not have to pay the parcel tax since they are not residents.

As it stands, there are approximately 10 Allen Bill transfer applications that have been submitted for next year. A decision on whether or not to accept the applicants will be made at the August board meeting.

Reach the reporter at: [jean@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:jean@lamorindaweekly.com)

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