

School district considers new partner for alternative school

By STACY NICK 11-26-02
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Poudre School District might close its "last chance" school in favor of a possible collaboration with a local Christian alternative high school.

On Monday night, PSD's Board of Education discussed closing the Village School, an alternative junior and senior high school, and sending its students to Frontier School beginning as early as fall 2003. The school board is expected to vote on the issue during its regular meeting Dec. 9.

Currently at First Christ-

ian Church, 2700 S. Lemay Ave., Frontier will be moving into its new site at 1225 Red Wood St. in early 2003. Including its own anticipated growth, the 65-student school would be able to add approximately 25 PSD junior and senior high school students to its classrooms next fall.

"We believe this gives us all the chance to become something much larger," said Steve Bolton, co-founder of Wingshadow, the nonprofit organization for at-risk youths that operates Frontier. The school opened in 1994.

The school will discon-

tinute its religious curriculum in favor of a secular one if the contract is approved, Bolton said.

"It's something we are willing to let go of," he said. "In reality, what we have really always been about is turning young lives around. We can provide a better education by letting go of this."

One snag: The move could put some of the Village School's 10 staff members out of work.

Staff who are past the probationary period — six years for certified and four for classified — would be guar-

anteed jobs at other schools within the district, said Gary Bamford, PSD assistant superintendent of secondary school services. Staff under probation would be guaranteed job interviews.

As for the facility, the site at 2540 LaPorte Ave., would be used for an unknown program.

Frontier, which currently has six positions, may provide some opportunities.

The school would need another four teachers to maintain its one-to-10 teacher-student ratio, Frontier Principal Bruce Hallman said. This fall,

enrollment is anticipated at more than 100 students.

The recommendation to make this move is not about quality, Bamford said. It's about what most things are about these days — money, or rather a lack of it.

Due to state budget cuts, the Village School will lose \$375,000 in state grants that make up its \$558,000 annual budget, he said. Another \$1.2 million would be needed from bond revenues for renovations to expand the program, but only \$500,000 currently is designated for renovations to the site.

PSD could send students to Frontier for approximately \$150,000 a year, said Jim Sarchet, PSD assistant superintendent of business services. Because the school essentially would become a public institution, it would receive money from the state based on the number of students enrolled.

Several board members voiced support for the recommendation.

"It's a unique situation," board Vice President Jana Ley said. "We'll need to pave our own way, but that's OK. We're up to the challenge."

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