

September 26, 2007

To: Members of the Board

From: Tom Bishop

Subject: Article of Interest

Attached is the following article of interest:

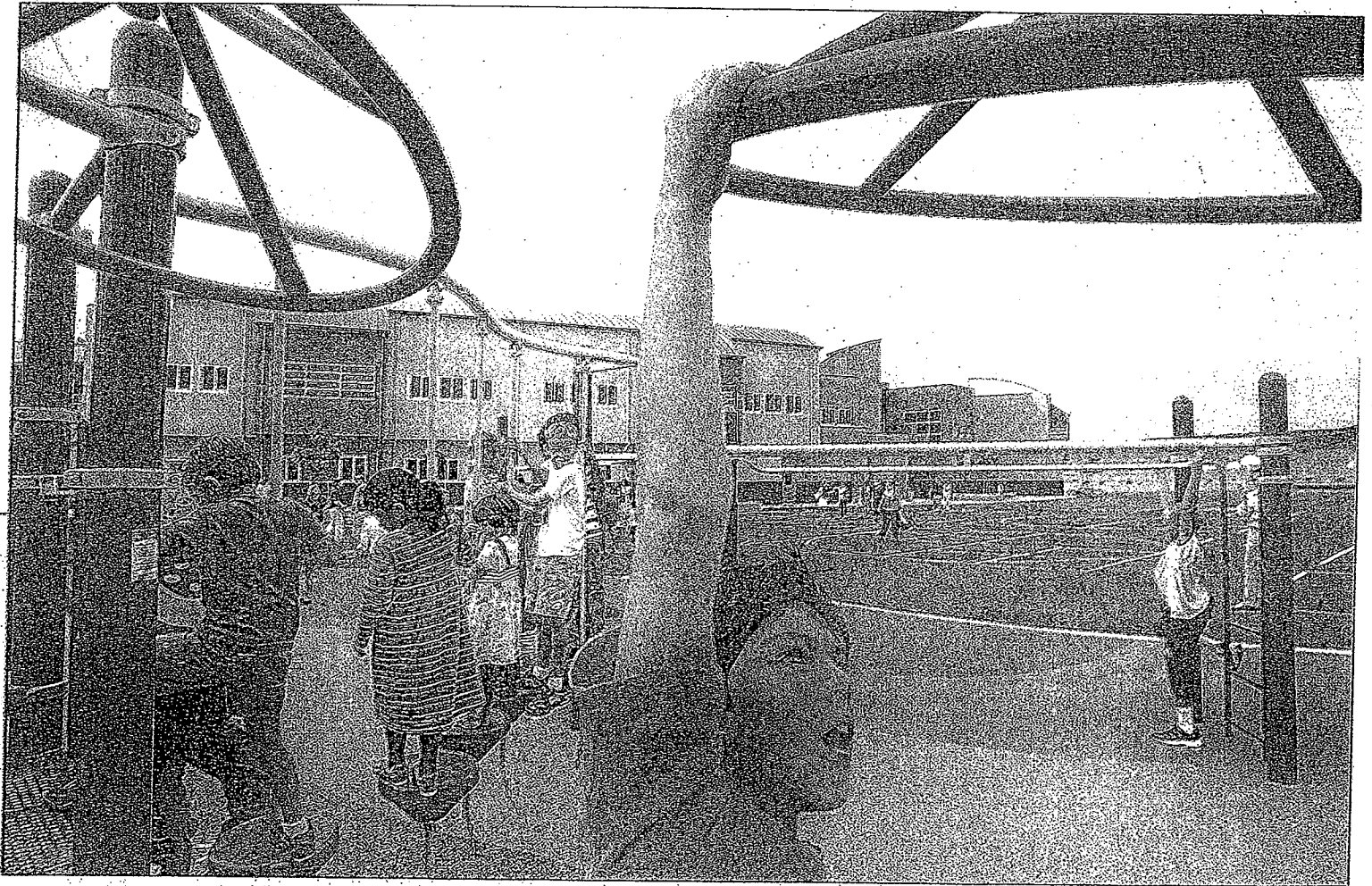
11.1 "School in a class by itself", Union Tribune, August 25, 2007

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The San Diego Union-Tribune. Saturday, August 25, 2007

CARMEL VALLEY | 'WHIMSICAL AND FUN'

School in a class by itself



John DeVito (foreground), 8, swung on the monkey bars yesterday at Ocean Air Elementary School in Carmel Valley. The eighth and newest campus in the Del Mar Union School District will open for classes Monday with about 550 students. Sean DuFrene / Union-Tribune

New campus boasts unusual architecture

By Bruce Lieberman
STAFF WRITER

Take a walk onto the Ocean Air Elementary School campus and you'll see immediately that this isn't your average public school.

A stone path representing a stream meanders from the front gate to the

main two-story, curved classroom building. Columns that hold up a shade structure outside kindergarten classrooms are shaped like crayons. The exteriors of the buildings are painted in shades of white, red, blue and yellow.

The multipurpose room has wavy ceiling panels that evoke clouds in the sky. Hanging lights held in cylindrical shades are arranged like stars.

"I wish my elementary school looked like that," said Frisco White of Westberg + White, the San Diego ar-

chitectural firm that designed the campus. "I'd want to stay in elementary school my whole life."

Ocean Air, at 11444 Canter Heights Drive, is the eighth school in the Del Mar Union School District. On Monday it will open with about 550 students, but it has the capacity for 200 more. It will ease overcrowding primarily at Torrey Hills Elementary.

White said Del Mar Union officials gave him significant latitude, within state education guidelines, to design a

school that's different from many others.

"We just wanted to make it whimsical and fun and use different shapes that children might use, and not be constrained by (boxlike) architecture," said White, whose firm also designed the popular Elementary Institute of Science on 51st Street in San Diego.

One feature he's particularly proud of is the library's roof, which is shaped

like an open book.

"The whole idea was to make a fun environment for learning," White said.

All of the school's students — except kindergartners, who have their own wing — have classrooms in a single two-story building. That will create a close-knit community where children of different ages will more readily interact with one another and teachers will collaborate more easily, fourth-grade teacher Natasha Rosario said.

"To be honest, I think it's better" than a one-story campus that's more spread out, said Rosario, who moved to Ocean Air from Torrey Hills. "We'll see everyone a lot more."

The main classroom building is curved, with wide hallways and large classrooms with windows that face outside as well as the interior hallway. Numerous conference rooms provide teachers and students with quiet places to work and consult with one another.

The school doesn't yet have playing fields, but it will share a park with the city. School officials said they expect the park, which will have a recreation

center, to be completed within the next year.

"It looks beautiful," said parent Joy Lazo, who visited the school yesterday with her 6-year-old daughter, Wendy, who will begin the first grade at the school Monday. "Everyone is very excited."

The campus, built over about 10 months, was budgeted at \$37.7 million, but the actual cost will be \$36.5 million because money set aside for contingencies will not be needed,

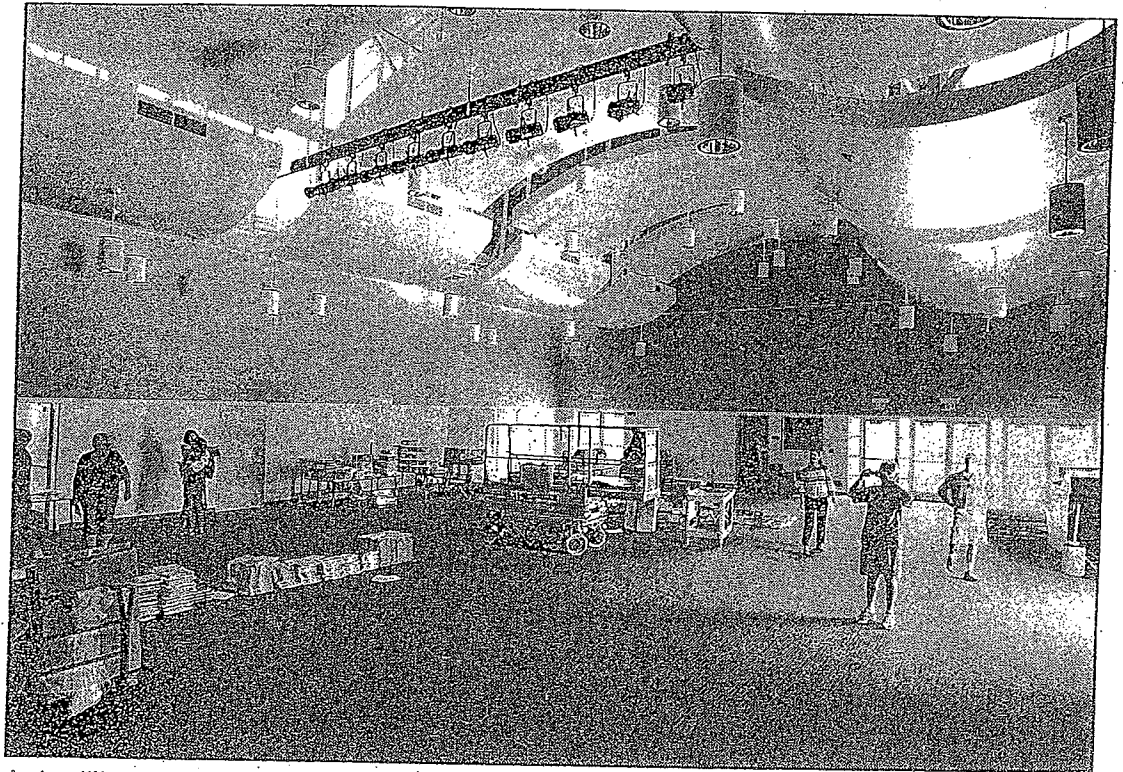
said Rodger Smith, the district's director of facilities, planning and human resources.

Ocean Air was paid for by two special tax districts that cover Carmel Valley, Smith said. The North City West School Financing Authority is taxing 7,827 parcels between \$900 and \$1,245 annually for the next 35 years to help pay for the school. An additional 1,543 parcels in Community Facilities District 95-1, which covers the immediate area around Ocean

Air, will be taxed between \$1,200 and \$1,400 a year for 35 years.

The school is badly needed in the high-density Carmel Valley area, which has grown quickly in recent years. Torrey Hills Elementary is only a few miles away, and Sage Canyon Elementary is about a half-mile away.

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A cloudlike structure, one of the more unusual architectural aspects of Ocean Air Elementary School in Carmel Valley, lines the ceiling of the multipurpose room. Sean DuFrene / Union-Tribune