

Closed elementary school to reopen as child-care center

Huntington campus has been empty since 1985

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HUNTINGTON BEACH — An elementary school closed in 1985 because of decreasing enrollment and dwindling district funds soon will reopen as a child-care center.

In a lease agreement with the Huntington Beach City Elementary School District, National Pediatric Support Services of Irvine will use the Burke School campus for its Step-By-Step Early Learning Enrichment Center. The company will pay the school 20 cents per square foot for the 10,600 square feet of classroom space. After the first six months, the monthly rent will increase to 30 cents per square foot, said Gary Burgner, assistant superintendent of business services for the district.

The agreement was approved at Tuesday's meeting of the Huntington Beach City School District Board of Trustees. District officials said they hope to have the center in operation by January.

The child-care center will provide developmental programs for as many as 160 infants, toddlers and preschool-age children, Pediatric Support officials said. It also will offer vacation programs for school-age children, including enrichment and summer classes.

Pacifica Community Hospital of Huntington Beach also has been working with Pediatric Support to provide child care for its hospital employees. The hospital will help the organization pay the estimated \$50,000 start-up cost for the program at Burke School, said Philip Gustafson, executive director of the hospital.

"Our interest is to provide day-care alternatives to some of our technical employees, particularly nurses," Gustafson said. "They can be much more involved with the hospital and their work if they

have child care available."

When Burke School closed in 1985, the school district established a citizens' committee to recommend uses for the campus, said Diana Peters, district superintendent. The committee recommended that the school be used as a library or as preschool/day-care center, she said.

"We're pleased that we can provide what the community asked for," Peters said.

When the child-care center opens, a licensed vocational nurse will be on hand to supervise "Rainbow Retreat," a day-care program for children ages 2 to 12 years who are mildly ill.

"Rainbow Retreat is the program we have for children who are sick with a cold or the flu," said Gail Gonzalez, vice president of health services for Pediatric Support. "They are not really so sick that they need medical care, but they can't go to the regular program."

Pediatric Support operates child-care centers in Newport Beach and Pasadena, distributes its own line of child-care products and consults with businesses that want to develop child-care centers for their employees.

In other action Tuesday, the school board:

■ Heard a report by Becky Turrentine, assistant superintendent of educational services, on 1986-87 California Achievement Test scores. In 36 of the 41 areas that generated the district-wide scores, students scored significantly better in 1986-87 than in 1985-86. The five areas with poorer scores were: kindergarten reading; fourth-grade spelling; and eighth-grade spelling, math and science.

■ Approved an agreement with Sandy Blazer, an elementary physical-education specialist, to train the Eader School teaching staff in the physical-education goals she developed.

