

Diversity goals praised during new-school forum (10.14.05)

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Diversity and busing logistics were two issues at the forefront of public discussion Thursday as the Green Bay School Board held the first of three public forums to gain input on a proposed fifth district high school and related redistricting.

About 150 people attended the forum in the auditorium at Preble High School.

After a 45-minute introduction and review of the proposed plan, based on work by the Green Bay School District's East Side Task Force, members of the public got their chance to weigh in.

First among them were several members of Justice Organization Sharing Hope and United for Action, an organization consisting locally of several area churches. About 40 JOSHUA members stood as those speaking praised the district's goals of incorporating diversity into the plan for a fifth high school.

"We are on the threshold of a marvelous opportunity," said the Rev. Steve Hartman, pastor of First Baptist Church in Green Bay. "The opportunity for students is closely linked to a commitment to diversity."

Several other JOSHUA members also spoke in support of the plan, including Franklin Middle School teacher Julie Srenaski, who said she sees the importance of diversity every day in her teaching.

Ensuring a socioeconomic balance at each district school was one of the four objectives for the new attendance areas established in the task force recommendations.

Though many attendees of Thursday's forum spoke in favor of the plan, several area residents said switching schools would mean unnecessarily long bus rides for their children.

Patty Voigt was one of several town of Eaton residents to voice opposition to the plan, which would send Eaton students to Green Bay East.

"We are the furthest point east going to the furthest point west," Voigt said.

Prior to the public forum portion of Thursday's meeting, District Superintendent Daniel Nerad said he's aware of busing concerns. However, the plan as presented involves shorter bus rides for some district students, while meaning longer rides for others.

Two additional public forums have been scheduled before the School Board considers action on the recommendations Nov. 7.