

RIVERSIDE: Foreign students could fund high school opening

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Alvord school district leaders say they want to study a proposal to open **Hillcrest** High School by recruiting foreign students who would pay out-of-state tuition.

An educator retired from the Alhambra Unified School District, backed by a group of businessmen, offered to recruit international students who would pay up to \$16,000 for the chance to study at the new school off **Indiana** Avenue and Pierce Street in Riverside.

Loretta Huang said about 200 foreign exchange students would generate more than \$2 million for the Alvord Unified School District to open the new school for about 1,200 students. The exchange students would also give local students exposure to other cultures, she said.



Stan Lim / The Press-Enterprise

The Alvord school district is going to consider a proposal to recruit tuition-paying students to **Hillcrest** High in Riverside.

Hillcrest High School was built with construction bonds and scheduled to open next month. But after three years of state cuts to operating funds, Alvord officials said in December they don't have the extra \$2 million it will cost to open the school. District officials say they don't know where they will get the money to open it even for the 2012-13 school year.

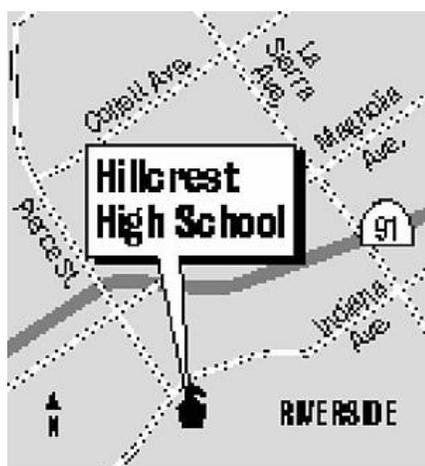
Board members have suggested a partial opening, maybe for career technical education classes or alternative education classes, instead of with ninth- and 10th-graders the first year as planned.

Superintendent Wendel Tucker asked Huang to submit the proposal in writing so district officials can study it. Tucker retired after the board meeting Thursday night. New Superintendent Nicolas Ferguson said Thursday night that he will look at the proposal.

Colleges and universities charge tuition to out-of-state and foreign students, but Ferguson said he's not sure if high schools are allowed to.

Huang said the proposal she made is similar to what several schools are doing around the country.

Board member Art Kaspereen said he is looking forward to reading her proposal. Board member **Greg Kraft** said he is too.



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"We need to be thinking out of the box," **Kraft** said Friday by phone. "We need to be creative."

He said he wants to be sure that the new school also benefits the local students for whom it was designed and that the plan is legal.

Voters approved \$196 million in construction bonds in 2007. Hillcrest was one of the priorities identified in the bond campaign, intended to relieve crowding at La Sierra High as well as accommodate new students from homes planned in the south end of the district.

La Sierra High was built for 1,500 to 2,000 students but has close to 3,000 from southwest Riverside, west Home Gardens and **east** Corona.

The bonds that built the new school for \$105 million cannot be used for operating expenses such as teacher and principal salaries, textbooks or supplies. Operating expenses come from the general fund, which has been hit by the state's budget crisis. **Kraft** said Hillcrest was designed for 1,200 to 1,500 students.

Huang, of Arcadia, retired as director of an adult education school in the Alhambra Unified School District. She was a professor of English and English as a second language in **Taiwan**, where she worked in education for 15 years before a 30-year career as a teacher and in school administration in Southern **California**, she said. Huang is president of the nonprofit East-West Eclectic Society.

She said the team of business sponsors with whom she is working can recruit students from Japan and other countries and provide students housing and transportation. The school could obtain nonimmigrant visas for students, she said.

"It's not a hard process," she said.

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