

Anger at divided school

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A STATE school has banned award presentations and discos because of opposition from an alternative education stream, parents say.

Footscray City Primary School has been accused of turning its back on the parents of pupils studying the normal curriculum in favour of those enrolled in a controversial Steiner school program.

Parents said the mainstream curriculum had been "hijacked" by the Steiner philosophy, which did not support recorded music or competitiveness.

They said plans for a family film night last year also had met opposition because of what they said was politically correct disapproval of electronic media. About 40 per cent of the school's students are in the Steiner stream.

Parents called on Education Minister Lynne Kosky to resolve growing tension between Steiner and mainstream parents.

Education Services Minister Jacinta Allan is also considering a request to dissolve the divided school council.

But principal Winsome Warren said only a "small core" of parents were opposed to Steiner.

"They've chosen to bring their children to this school. They're under no compulsion to be at this school," she said.

Several angry parents have removed children.

Jenny Lans, who has a child at the school, said alternative streams such as Steiner, where children used colourful crayons instead of pens during their early years, studied the Old Testament and started to read about age seven, did not belong in secular, independent state schools.

"The public taxpayer system is supporting this stream and there's no research to say it's any good," she said.

A spokeswoman for Ms Kosky said Steiner should be an adjunct to the curriculum and not dominate.

An Education Department spokeswoman said new "comprehensive and rigorous criteria" were being developed for schools planning alternative streams.