

Steiner option to be offered in state-run primary school

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By Miles Kemp

The controversial Steiner teaching method is to be offered at a South Australian government school for the first time.

Despite the protests of some parents and criticism that Steiner schools operate "like a religious cult", Trinity Gardens P-7 School is to enrol two classes of Steiner students next year.

The issue has divided the school community, with some parents fearing their school will be taken over.

At least four students are being pulled out of the school and during the last term of last year, one class chanted "Steiner sucks" in protest against the move.

Principal Vicki Stokes said most parents supported the optional curriculum and it had the support of the school council.

The school would form a working group this term to liaise with Steiner schools to see how the two systems could work together and there would be changes to the normal Steiner system which promoted alternative teaching methods, she said.

Adelaide Steiner Education Association chairwoman Barbara Baldwin said there had been strong demand from public school parents to have the Steiner curriculum in their schools. But Jim and Sophie Tsouflidis told The Advertiser they would take their children, Ross, 10, and Marissa, 7, from the school.

Mr Tsouflidis believes Steiner, based on Hindu and Christian values, has "cult-like" traits.

Mrs Tsouflidis objects to Steiner beliefs being part of her children's school because they discourage textbooks and computers.

"The State Government is wanting children to use computers from kindy - it's against their own philosophy," she said.

There are about 50 Steiner schools in Australia - including at Mt Barker and Willunga - and supporters last year were given Education Department approval to seek interest from schools in an optional Steiner curriculum.

Leonie McIntyre, chairwoman of the school's governing council, said she had opposed the project but changed her mind after visiting a school in Victoria.

"I am supportive of the school allowing the two streams but I wouldn't put my children through it - it is too alternative for me," she said.

Christine Papanicolas, a mother of two students, said if she had wanted a school with a religious focus she would have chosen the private system.

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