

WL enrollment crunch leads to busing

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

Responding to massive enrollment projections for school year 1989-90, the Walled Lake school board unanimously approved Feb. 6 a plan described by district educators as "the most responsible" in relieving pending crowding next year.

Kindergartners scheduled for Maple Elementary will be bused 5 1/2 miles, to Loon Lake Elementary where four new classrooms will be constructed to hold them. And four new classrooms will also be added on to Oakley Park Elementary.

Maple and Oakley Park are the two schools most seriously affected by crowding projections. One hundred twenty new students are expected next fall at Maple in West Bloomfield and 100 are expected at Oakley Park in Commerce Township, which some township students attend.

Walled Lake Consolidated Schools includes northwest Farmington Hills.

"This is the most reasonable, the most responsible of all solutions," said Walled Lake superintendent James Geiser in addressing the more than 100 concerned parents who attended the meeting.

Typical were Barbara and David Goldman, who moved to West Bloomfield seven years ago because the township's schools "come highly regarded." The Goldmans, who have a son in first grade at Maple and a set of twins slated to start school in the fall, were attending their first school board meeting.

"ONE WORD everyone is concerned with is quality," said David Goldman prior to the start of Monday's meeting. He and his wife also said they are reluctant about busing kindergartners to Loon Lake.

Most parents expressed similar

concerns. Hugh Davies, assistant superintendent for elementary education who authored recommendations contained in the plan, addressed the problem.

"This (busing) is not offered as the ideal solution but as the most workable. It offers the best teaching/learning situation because kindergarten has the advantage of being a self-contained unit. It makes lemonade out of lemons," Davies said. Then he introduced Loon Lake principal Susan Winder.

"You are coming to a warm and caring environment," Winder said of the school. "We have the same values and academic expectations as you. We are committed to excellence in education."

Winder described educational programs this school year at Loon Lake, including mock presidential elections at the kindergarten level.

Following her comments, the Goldmans and others said they were

much more comfortable with the idea of busing to Loon Lake. "We're feeling much better about it," the Goldmans chorused.

SAAM WOLFE, an unsuccessful school board candidate who has a fifth grader at Maple, admonished board members for "management by crisis. I was very involved five years ago and we had a crisis then. We got a tax increase and resolved it. Now we have another crisis."

Geisler said the district is adopting a strategic planning model to "facilitate response to the community's growth, the high growth areas."

Between now and 1990, construction will begin or be completed on nearly 12,000 new housing units along the Haggerty corridor in the Walled Lake school district. Since 1986, student enrollment has already increased by 800 students.

Barbara Goldman asked board members if students bused to Loon

Lake for kindergarten would attend Maple Elementary in first grade.

Davies' answer was met with groans from the crowd. "It is quite possible, but it can't be guaranteed," Davies said, because of possible redistricting facing Walled Lake schools "twice within the next few years."

Under a proposal adopted by the board late last year, the district will construct three new schools and support facilities and renovate existing structures at a cost of \$70 million, providing voters approve a bond request during special elections next month.

"What if the bond is not approved by voters?" asked one parent.

"THIS BOND cannot not pass," said board member Joel Silverblatt. If voters fail to approve it, "we will be forced to cut programs or let teachers go and make classes bigger." The bond is expected to gener-

erate some \$47.8 million over 15 years.

In voting for the plan, school board president Sammy Rutenik said "no matter what, we will have unhappy parents. But speaking from 22 years (teaching) experience, the world of kindergarten is contained in the classroom and while this is not painless, it is the best possible way."

Board member Marc Belsky, recently appointed to the board, said "I'm making my decision on what I feel to be most educationally sound." In addition to Belsky, board members Silverblatt, Esther McInnis, Patricia Jackman, G. William Knight and Kathryn Mizzi also voted for the plan.

Prior to implementation next school year, Davies recommended formation of a committee of educators and parents to resolve such issues as location of the latch-key program for students who are bused.

Botsford hails consortium benefits

By Susan Buck
staff writer

Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills is one of six osteopathic hospitals that have agreed to form a consortium called Health Care Group Inc., to share services.

The other five hospitals part of the not-for-profit corporation are: Garden City Osteopathic Hospital, Garden City, Northwest General Hospital, Detroit, Oakland General Hospital, Madison Heights, Pontiac Osteopathic Hospital, Pontiac, and MCG Healesis Inc., parent of Mt.

Clemens General Hospital, Mt. Clemens.

"The advantages are transparent," said Gerson Cooper, president of Botsford General Hospital. "In southeastern Michigan, there are only 20 hospitals not affiliated with other consortiums or common ownership."

The Health Care Group incorporated Feb. 2. Corporate executive officers representing nine hospitals met in October. "Internal indecision" influenced the Horizon Health Group, composed of Detroit Osteopathic Hospital, Botsford Community Hospital, War-

ren, and Riverside Hospital, Trenton, to reconsider, Cooper said.

"IT'S AN opportunity to pool our resources," said Alan Breake, Garden City Osteopathic Hospital president. "It will optimize the strengths of each hospital and do things on a less-costly basis. The cost of health care is skyrocketing."

Under the consortium, programs like interns-in-residence medical education will be upgraded. Residents who usually spend four years at Garden City Hospital exclusively could, for example, divide their time among the hospitals, said Breake.

"This means greater exposure for them in surgery, pediatrics, etc.," he said. Services like printing, warehousing and food purchasing will also be shared.

"Health Care Group Inc. represents over \$425 million in gross annual revenues; 1,605 licensed hospital beds; a 1,113-member medical staff; 5,890 full-time equivalent employees; and 496 nursing home beds," said Dr. Paul Trimmer, president of the Pontiac Hospital Board of Trustees and board member to Health Care Group Inc. in a Feb. 3 press release.

"In total, our education programs will represent 274 residents and 120 interns."

THIS COMPARES to \$65 million in gross annual revenues if Garden City Hospital, for example, stood alone, Breake said.

The consortium presents new inroads in attracting capital, making it easier to borrow money, he added. Initial talks about forming the consortium began in April 1988.

Allstate purchases bonds to support Hills enterprises

The Allstate Insurance Group has invested \$5 million in bonds throughout Oakland County including Farmington Hills, according to Melvin Phifer, the company's regional vice president for the state.

Oakland County investments are part of the \$248 million in bonds held by Allstate in 35 counties in Michigan. The companies' investments in Oakland County include Farmington

Community Schools, \$845,000; and Oakland Community College, \$570,000.

"It continues to be Allstate policy to support the development of areas in which we do business by investing in local communities," Phifer said. "We are a corporate citizen in each of the communities in which our offices are located. Like all citizens, we will share in the progress of these communities and surrounding areas."

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