Officials: Small classes help improve instruction

Teachers and school officials say a continuing trend toward smaller classes at Walled Lake secondary schools has helped the district's Instructional program. Marked Improvements in class sizes have allowed teachers to spend more time helping individual students, and officials hope to maintain the smaller classes despite some indications of pending enrollment increases.

Six years ago, 79 classes in the district's juriou nigh endounce ontained 34 or more students, said Carl Pacacha, assistant superintendent for secondary instruction. "We have none at that size now," he said Tuesday.

Tuesday,

A report that Pacacha plans to submit Thursday to the Walled Lake Board of Education underscores the trend. Among the statistics:

Broomfield votes to repeal new business tax

U.S. Rep. Bill Broomfield, R-Birmingham, was lauded by the country's largest small-business organization, the National Federation of Independent Business, for voting to repeal a new tax law that would have been a serious sethack for the nation's small businesses.

The U.S. House, by an overwhelming margin, voted to repeal the new law, IRS Section 99. If allowed to stand, the measure would impose

law, IRS Secton 93. If allowed to stand, the measure would impose costly and complicated tests on small-business owners to prove their employee benefit plans were not dis-criminatory, the NFIB said. "Section 89 was a solution in search of a problem," said Broom-field, whose district includes the Farmington area. "The federal gov-ernment cannot continue to burdens small business with unnecessary regsmall business with unnecessary reg-ulations which discourage job cre-ation and economic expansion and threaten health insurance benefits for workers."

for workers."

NFIB spearheaded by the Repeal
Section 89 Committee, composed of
65 business organizations, to urge
repeal of the law. The organization
has 570,000 members including
22,000 in Michigan.



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secondary schools contain more than 30 students. These classes include two at the junior high level and nine at the high schools.

a the nigh schools.
Average class sizes have dipped from 28.27 students in 1985-86 to 24.74 students in 1895-86 to 24.74 students this school year. Although a decline of several students may appear to have little impact, teachers point out that, the fewer students they have in class, the more time they have to spend with other pupils.
Some alternative the property of the propert

Some classes, such as music and physical education, tend to have more students than do general cours-

es such as English and math. However, schools have managed to main athin small classes and an effective curriculum for special courses such as gifted or remedial education, officials said.

"I think that's the strength of fice whiled Lake curriculum," said Central High School principal Richard Smith.

tral High School principal accounting the Teacher-pupil ratlos for the district's two junior highs and two high schools "are well below the collective bargaining stipulation" of 25 students per teacher. Pacacha notes in his report. The average number of students per teacher is 19.73 at Central High, 20.14 at Western High,

23.19 at Walled Lake Junior High and 23.20 at C.H. Smart Junior High. Pacacha said those ratios were obtained by dividing the number of pupils in each building by the number of staff. He reported that class sizes at the four secondary schools "are very favorable."

Bill Bell, president of the Walled Lake Education Association, agreed that major strides have been made to improve class sizes.

"We have more one-on-one contact with students now." Bell said. He added that it is difficult fer eachers to be effective at their jobs "when they've got 30 or 35 students to give attention to."

School officials cited two primary reasons for reduced class sizes. More teachers have been hired as the dis-

reasons for reduced class sizes. More teachers have been hired as the district's financial position has improved, and enrollment at the secondary level has dropped.

For example, Smith said Central High saw a 300-student drop in enrollment between the 1883-85 school year, when 1,500 students attended, and this year, which had a Fourth Friday enrollment of 1,300 pupils.

However, that decline could reverse, he said, noting that the school has 260 seniors but 360 freshmen—a strong indication of an overall enrollment upswing. Moreover, burgeoning enrollment at the elementa-

School officials said the continuing School officials said the continuing improved state equalized valuation of property — which means a better tax base for the Walled Lake district — should enable the district to meet future enrollment demands yet continue to keep class sizes and curriculum in check.

Smith underscored the importance of lower class sizes by comparing students to hospital patients and teachers to nurses. "If you've got too many in one room, somebody can pull the LV. help belt, but a teacher can only run so fast."

