

**BY LARRY O'CONNOR**  
STAFF WRITER

The kids are back.  
The Farmington Board of Education Building and Site Committee has recommended the kindergarten class return to Beechview Elementary for the next school year. The decision came Tuesday night at a special meeting with parents in Beechview's media center.

The committee will take its recommendation to the school board at its Feb. 1 meeting.

Don Cowan, director of Building and Student Services, said surveys and projections indicate enrollment has tapered off at the school, freeing up one to two classrooms that would allow kindergartners to return.

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Kimberley Subdivision fought the move, forming the group Concerned Parents Over Beechview Overcrowding. They welcomed the committee's recommendation.

"We thank you for at least listening and going with the option of having a kindergarten class at Beechview," said Mary Nicole, president of the Kimberley Homeowners Association. "What you're saying is school of choice. That's what we want. We don't want to tell our residents you can only go to one school."

School officials said the move was temporary when they made the initial decision last year. At the time, Beechview was 90 students over capacity.

In addition to sending the kindergarten class to Alameda, children living in Section 13 — north of 11 Mile and east of Middlebelt — were moved to Wood Creek Elementary.

A survey conducted by Alameda principal Gayle Zimmerman found parents of 63 kindergartners said they intend to keep

their children at the school for first grade. Of those, 30 are from the Beechview attendance area.

"If those people follow through, that will free up a classroom," Cowen said.

Also, Cowan noted enrollment appears to have peaked at Beechview. But he was cautious in his report to the Building and Site Committee.

Cowan said enrollment will still need to be watched closely. Also, he added, Alameda will have to be marketed as a school of choice for kindergarten and first graders. He

asked that one portable classroom remain at Beechview as a precaution.

Cowan said moving the kindergarten class was justified compared to building an addition — which school officials said the district cannot afford — or changing the boundary lines.

"With the kindergartners, the advantage is you only would be affecting them once . . . Then you can bring them back," Cowan said. "We're going to have sleepers that are going to occur."

Added trustee David York:

"We're going to have to look at no-cost solutions. I don't see us building at the elementary level. We don't know where the money is going to come from."

Other parents wanted assurances overcrowding wouldn't return. This year, class sizes are averaging 21 students and that has many parents content.

"Choice is healthy," said Mark Persitz, who served on the school's committee on overcrowding, "but not when it's at the price of overcrowding."

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