ENROLLMENT

EROM PAGE A1

student is better than letting seats sit empty, parents protested at two public hearings on

to as two puote nearings on the issue.

School officials tried to address concerns from the first hearing, two weeks ago, in a QSA "fler. Committee member and William Grace principal Mark Morawski spoke to a few of the concerns, including whether this was a fiscally responsible program.

Confusion has developed over the difference between the district's \$10,000 - per-student cost of education and the lower amount program students would bring in. Officials have explained elassrooms and buildings operate on a scale of economy, administrative and staffing costs are fixed, whether or not all the desks are filled.

The actual cost of providing materials for an out-of-district student would be much less than \$10,000, said board member Frank Reid.

"Districts we contacted said it helped them maintain programs," Morawski said.
"Districts we contacted said it helped them maintain programs," Morawski said.
"Bottom line, it won't cost the taxpayers money." Morawski said a cautious approach might make everyone feel better about the program. Delaying it would put the district at a competitive disadvantage because so many other districts have opened their doors.

More than 50 elementary students who live within FPS boundaries are open-enrolled at other schools.

In answer to questions about other cost-cutting measures, Morawski said the district has aggressively purrued several options in the face of declining revenues, including \$4 million saved with changes to the employee health plan and enhancing revenues, including \$4 million saved with changes to the processed before any out-of-district students would be noted through a letter trequestar evenue. be placed through a lottery, so no preference would be given to students who were gifted athlet-ically, another parent concern.

PARENT CONCERNS

Parent Susan Kahn disputed the district's claim of a 24:1

In fact, in a majority of classes, the number regularly exceeds 24, she said, noting there were 28 or 29 children in her doubters geography and there were 28 or 29 dimen in her daughter's second-grade class. "You also need to look at where you're going to draw stu-dents from," she said. Neighboring West Bloomfield





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and Bloomfield Hills families weren't likely to send their students here, Kahn added.
Assistant superintendent for staff and community services Sue Zurvalee addressed a "common misconception" about class sizes. The 24:1 ratio, she said, is a district-wide average that's used for overall staffling needs and has nothing to do with actual class sizes.
Early elementary and uppergrade class size maximums are 26:1 and 29:1, respectively, she said. 'Things don't work out even all the time," Zurvalee said. 'It gets confusing for people.'
A number of parents suggested officials were just ducking a tough decision and should just proceed with closing a school. 'If this sin't going to solve the problem, then why put off a decision you're going to have to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to have to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to have to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to have to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to have to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to have to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to the control of the problem, then why put off a decision you're going to have to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're going to make anyway?' parent Robert Blaire asked. 'You're go

community. Neighbors who don't receive local newspapers and don't have children in the schools aren't aware of the issue, she said.

Bruce was also concerned that parents with negative attitudes toward out-of-district students would color their children's attitudes as well, leading to problems within the schools. "William Grace has become the school of choire when it comes to each and every new program that comes down the pike," said Mike Leeds, pointing out in-district schools-of-choice requests don't often amme William Grace.

Citing all-day kindergarten, computerized hunch payments and special faculty training that necessitated high use of substitutes, Leeds had a suggestion. "Maybe wed be doing these kids at William Grace a favor. Send them to other schools, where MEAP scores are 90 percent," he said.

Leeds also asked that residents be surveyed.

agreed. She said kindergarten enrollments at both William Grace and Flanders had

Grace and Fianders nadiincreased this year.

"William Grace is a hidden treasure. I feel our school is being targeted for things."

CONSERVATIVE, MODEST

CONSERVATIVE, MODEST

Supt. Bob Maxfield addrassed an unmber of specific questions parents raised and stressed the program proposed was only a pilot, which could be discontinued if a review committee found it didn't work after the first year. While no committee has been formed, he suggested it could include parent representatives from each school in the district. Officials knew parents opposed the idea, which is why the program is offered as a pilot. "We think it's in the best interest of Farmington kids across the board and particularly for the kids at William Grace and Flanders," he said. Board member Priscilla Beguillette said she has lone

Board member Priscilla Brouillette said she has long

supported computerized lunch payments, because of cost savings and because kids who receive free or reduced lunches are often embarrassed to show their cards. "If we have automated systems," she said, "they eat lunch." She and other board members called the pilot "conservative and modest." Brouillett said the could not support the call to close a school without ethausting every other option to keep William Grace and Flanders open.

Board member Frank Reid called the program a "stop gap before taking more drastic measures – the way a doctor exhausts all treatment options before amputating a limb. "This pilot is needed to understand how this program will work in Farmington," Reid said. "We worked very hard to create an atmosphere of mutual trust with our staff, and we will rely heavily on their feedback." If the time comes for closing a school, he said, "I believe we will make that tough decision. We won't expand

schools of choice as other districts have chosen to do. I think that's a mistake.

The lone voice of opposition came from 25-year board veteran Jack Inch, who said his reasons were not the same as those of the parents who spoke. He expressed concerns about state government and reiterated his long-standing opposition to the Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests, which, he said, were not originally proposed as a way to measure schools, but have become exactly that.

This is a modest proposal, he said, were not originally proposed as a way for many form the said, were not originally proposed as a way for many form the said, were not originally proposed as a way for many form the said of the said way feeling is, I don't want Lansing to start thinking we'll start consolidating districts. I don't want Lausing to start determining what district is what and where you go.

Board member Gary Sharp urged parents to transform their passionate opposition to this issue into continued district involvement.

Ton't get mad and go home, he said. 'Get mad and get involved.'



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