

## Westmoreland

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money," said Ellen Smith. "We feel that getting the best possible education for our children is what's most important."

After the meeting Charlene Walter said the parents had given an excellent response. "We didn't receive one negative comment," she said. "We were a bit concerned because of the weather but we had a great turnout."

Her husband, Roy, is a Dallas graduate who went through the system when elementary students attended one or two grades in several buildings, getting used to a new building every two or three years.

"He's thrilled that both our children are in one building for six years," she said.

Baiamonte said more than 100 parents signed petitions to keep the building open and 100 more took petitions to solicit signatures. She also gave parents more than 150 pre-addressed, stamped post-cards so they could write to board members.

The PTO plans to present the petitions to the school board at its February meeting.

"We're doing this in the spirit of support and unity," said reading specialist Rita Mundy, who has done three years of research on smaller schools for her doctorate. "We want to make the administration aware of the research supporting the success of our present system of two smaller elementary schools rather than creating one gigantic school. We hope the board, administration, faculty and parents will work together to improve the district."

When Mundy described the district's two schools to her professors and fellow classmates at Temple University, "They all thought I was teaching in Heaven."

"Westmoreland is the type of school being written about today," she continued. "Educators have found that the large assembly-line type of elementary school doesn't work. The emphasis is on the smaller school, where all the teachers and students know one another."

"Our present setup works," said first grade teachers Dottie Philo and Elaine Moran. "If it isn't broken, don't try to fix it."

"What's best for our students is the present setup with two smaller elementary schools," Moran added.

Philo said there isn't any long-term research proving that large schools are better than smaller schools. "We can't take the chance that it might or might not work," she said.

Moran described a project which her first graders do every year with the fifth grade, in which the older students work on science projects with the first graders.

"My students were very excited," she said. "They felt very important that the 'big kids' came in and taught them. They're looking forward to being in fifth grade and doing the same work themselves."

The science projects teach the fifth graders responsibility, according to fifth grade teacher Priscilla Aldrow. "Of course they must know the material they'll be teaching," she said.

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**"What kind of a PTO would we have in a huge mega-school with 1,000 children?"**

**Susan Baiamonte**

Westmoreland PTO president

The fifth graders are very important in the building, working in the office, helping the kindergartners find their buses, reading to the first graders and serving as role models for the "little kids," Aldrow said.

"We have far fewer discipline problems," she added.

"There's a better feeling in a K-5 building," said fifth grade teacher Anna Tripp, who taught in a building housing fifth and sixth grades in 1973.

"When I taught in the fifth and sixth grade building there was constant rivalry between the two grades," she said. "There wasn't enough time for the kids to get to know one another as friends. Here they see one another for six years. The bigger kids look out for the smaller ones - it's cute to see the toughest fifth graders being so gentle with the kindergartners."

Another advantage for smaller schools is the quality and continuity of health care, according to school nurse Linda Burd, RN.

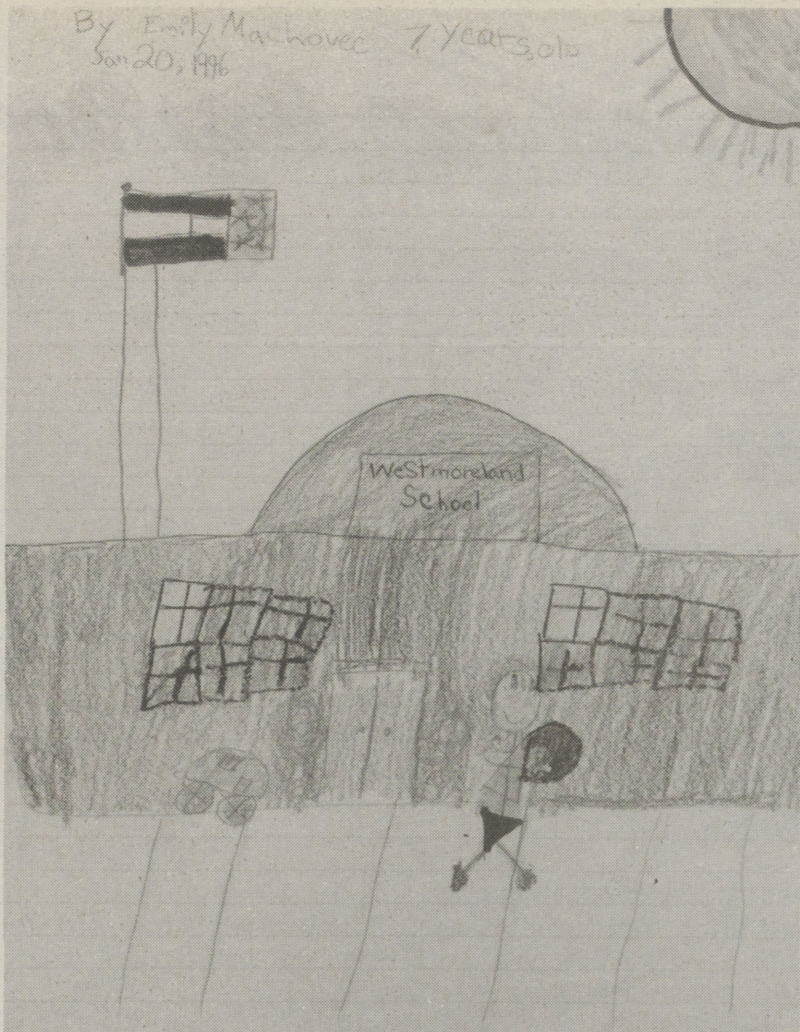
"You have a better opportunity to keep an eye on children with special medical conditions," she said.

Maryanne Gelso is a teacher and a Westmoreland parent. Her daughter is in first grade.

"I would love to see her here for the full six years," she said.

The students take pride in their building and keeping it clean, the teachers said. Every year each child and his parents must read and sign a list of expectations for the year, which principal Sam Barbose keeps on file in the office. Knowing what is expected of them teaches the students accountability for their actions.

The teachers are also concerned that housing all of the district's elementary students in two large, centralized buildings could make the music program unwieldy.



Emily Machovec, 7, a first grader at Westmoreland Elementary School, sent this drawing to The Dallas Post to show her affection for the school.

**"What's best for our students is the present setup with two smaller elementary schools."**

**Elaine Moran**

First grade teacher

Beginning band and group instrumental lessons start in fifth grade. By combining all the fifth grades in one building, the band teacher would have 200 students in the band - all trying to learn how to handle their instruments, read music and play together as a team. There wouldn't be any time for the instrument lessons for classes of six students.

The chorus would face similar problems, the teachers said.

"I believe in the present K-5 system," said Mayclaire McCarthy. "we have a wonderful building and faculty and an excellent rela-

tionship with our students and their families. We recognize the value of what we have."

Kindergarten teacher Peg Collett said older students come to visit her room every day because they feel comfortable there.

"There is such a comfort zone here at Westmoreland," she said. "It's a feeling of belonging that exists for the most part for six years of a child's school experience. When this consistency is there and children feel this security for so long, it naturally enhances the whole learning process."

## For one family, it will be Westmoreland or home

By GRACE DOVE  
Post Staff

**KINGSTON TOWNSHIP** - Ellen Machovec taught her daughter, Emily, at home for kindergarten. When it came time for first grade, she debated continuing the home schooling or enrolling Emily at Westmoreland.

She had notified the district of her plans to home-school Emily for the first grade, but after meeting with principal Sam Barbose and speaking with about 10 Westmoreland families, she was convinced the school was the best for Emily. Neither Ellen nor little Emily have regretted the decision.

"Everyone was so positive about the school's climate," Ellen said. "I can't say enough about how happy we are."

Emily loves her school so much that she asked her mother to "go to the meeting and save Westmoreland," Ellen said after Thursday's meeting. The possibility of the district changing the configuration of the elementary schools from two smaller K-5

buildings to two large schools housing 1,000 students concerns Ellen.

"I couldn't in good conscience send Emily into a situation like that," she said. "I would strongly reconsider either returning to home-schooling or sending Emily to a private school. You want what's best for your children."

Emily drew a picture of herself, sporting a huge smile and a purple backpack, going to the Westmoreland school and sent it to *The Dallas Post*.

Her friend also drew a picture of the school and wrote a letter to accompany it.

**"To: whom It May Concern**  
Hi, my name is Autumn Guzzy. I'm in 5th grade. I've been going to Westmoreland since kindergarten. The reason I like Westmoreland is because they have the best teachers and #1 principal. I hope you don't close Westmoreland School.  
Sincerely, Autumn Guzzy  
11 years old"

### KT extends Xmas tree pickup

Kingston Township announces the annual Christmas tree collection is suspended because of the excessive snowfall. Road department crews will collect the trees once snow removal operations are completed.

Residents who have already placed the trees at the curbside may leave them there. Residents should wait two or three weeks before putting trees out, if they have not yet done so.

For more information call the township office at 696-3809.

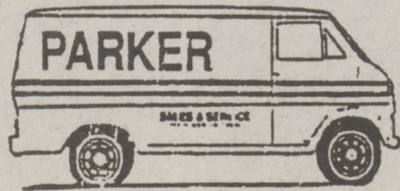
### Heating bill help available

Help is available for Pennsylvania Gas and Water Company (PG&W) gas customers who may be concerned about meeting their winter heating bills. Funding for Pennsylvania's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is now available for a limited time. PG&W suggests that customers seeking financial assistance apply for a LIHEAP grant as soon as possible.

PG&W will keep its business office open on Thursday evening, Jan. 18 and Saturday, Jan. 20 to help customers. Cash grants are available through LIHEAP for PG&W customers who meet the eligibility requirements.

For more information concerning financial assistance programs, call your local PG&W office or dial 1-800-432-8017.

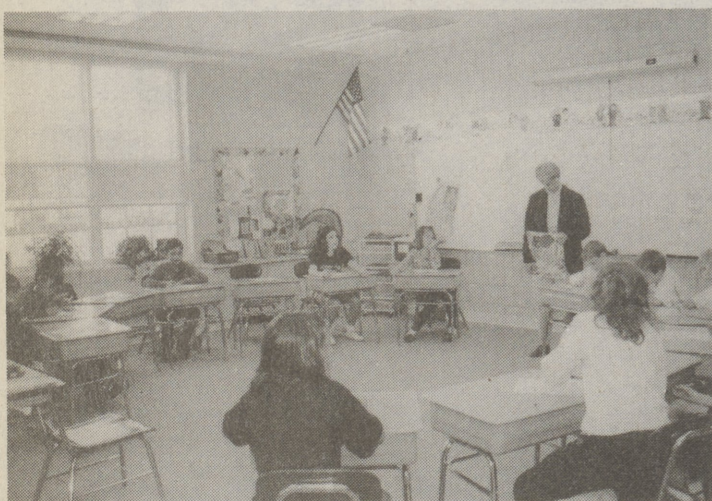
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