

# Class sizes are prime consideration

By ERIN YOUNGMAN  
Post Staff

DALLAS — Members of Dallas School District administration ranked "zero space" and possible full-day kindergarten as top reasons to "realign" the elementary schools. The information was part of a proposal outlined to school board members and the public at Monday night's work session.

Dr. Michael Speziale, Assistant Superintendent, and Gilbert Griffiths, Superintendent, presented a comprehensive list of reasons why moving kindergarten through third grade to Dallas and grades four and five to Wycallis would not only benefit the district, but could be imperative.

Griffiths told the crowd of about 50 that the elementary schools are out of room. He said although state projections (provided for planning purposes) for student enrollment were 2,400, actual numbers are at 2,600. "That's an issue," said Griffiths who said he expects the numbers to continue to rise.

Griffiths attributed the robust numbers to housing growth and the movement of students from private schools.

"There are six housing developments on the drawing board, three are started. This is an issue that is not going to go away," Griffiths said.

If reconfiguration is approved by the board, the five-year site plan would include an approxi-

*"The only way we can accommodate growth right now is to increase class size."*

Dr. Michael Speziale  
Assistant Superintendent

mate \$800,000, 10 classroom kindergarten wing off of Dallas Elementary and a reconfiguration of the administration building for additional fourth and fifth grade classrooms.

Space is a concern as early as this fall, said Speziale in an interview Tuesday. He said projections for next year indicate the need for an additional section of third grade, and, he said, unless something is done class size will be compromised.

"We could probably get away with seven sections (the current number of third grade sections) but that's going to mean two to three more kids in each class," said Speziale. He said the additional numbers would raise classroom totals to 24 or 25 students per room.

"The only way we can accommodate growth right now is to increase class size," he said.

Speziale said the proposed reorganization plan would accommodate all the students the district has now and projects to have next year.

Griffiths said the possibility of

mandated full-day kindergarten is a major consideration for realignment. The change would require four additional classrooms in the already space-strained elementaries.

"Ultimately we do believe that kindergarten will move because obviously we have no space in the district to accommodate it," Griffiths said.

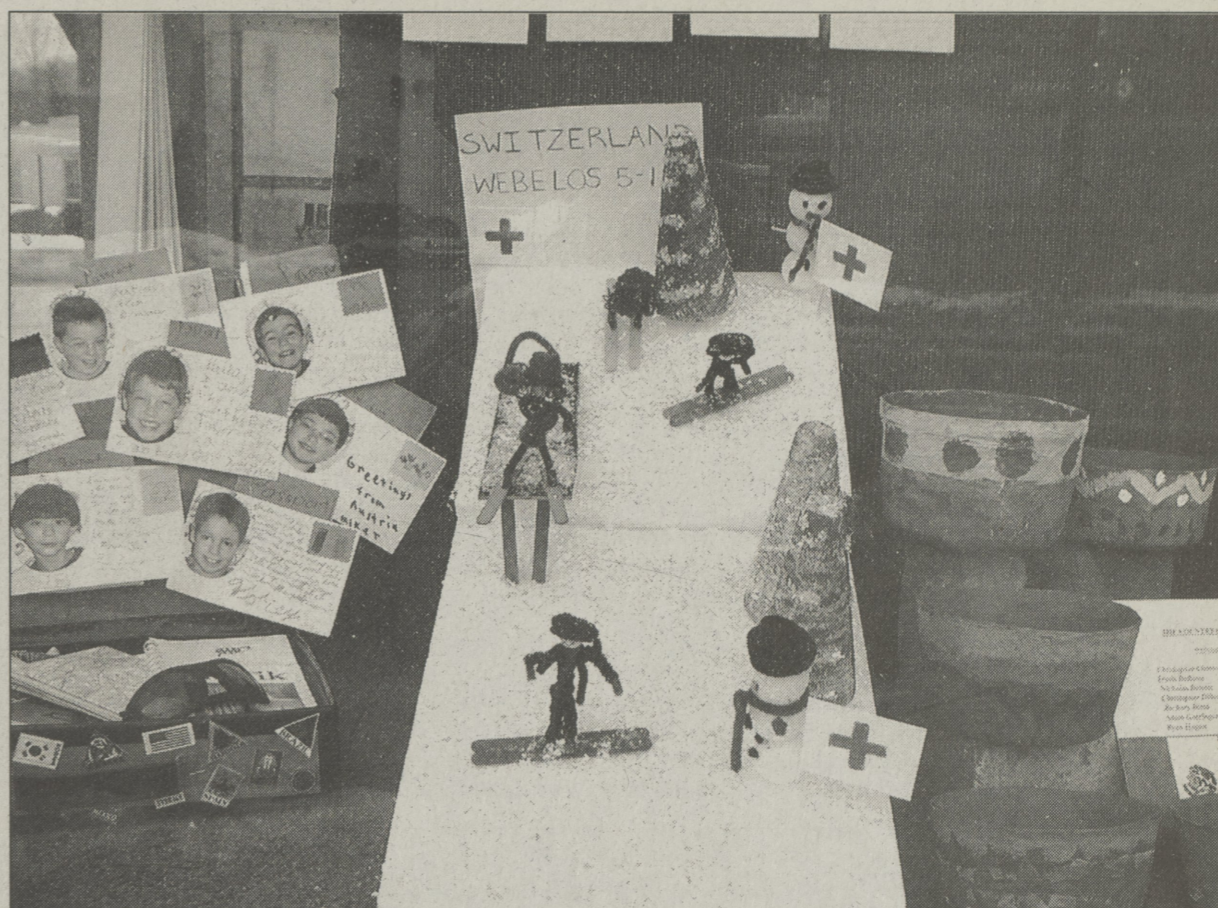
Centralized resources were also highlighted as a benefit to rearranging grades. Speziale explained that if the district had all the same grades in one building, there would be less duplication of resources. He said, for example, last year when the new science program was purchased, they spent a third more than they would have if the grades had been in one school.

"It's not that I want to spend less money, but we do believe we could spend the money better," he said.

Other benefits include more consistent education for all students, better tutorial support, and elimination of the need to transfer students to different buildings.

"For me the most pressing issues are one, space, two, efficient use of resources and three, full-day kindergarten," said Speziale.

Also at the meeting, the board approved a motion to issue a series of bonds in the amount of \$5 million. Almost all of the money will go to refinance two previous bonds.



## Pack 281 decorates window

Cub Scout Pack 281, Dallas, has its annual window display to help celebrate Scout month at Besecker Realty, Main St., Dallas. This year's theme for the Dallas Cub Scouts is "Countries of the World." The countries represented include the USA (Tiger 1), Italy (Tiger 2), Africa (Den 1), Guatemala (Den 2), Germany (Den 3), Poland, (Den 4), Russia (Webelos 4-1), Mexico (Webelos 4-2), Switzerland (Webelos 5-1), and Australia (Webelos 5-2). The theme highlights the fact that we are all part of a world community.

## Schools

(continued from page 1)

too," said Russ. Natitus said several board members felt as he did, and that he would work to have the policy changed.

Demetrius Fannick, parent of a child at Wycallis Elementary, asked if the purpose of the task force was to look into whether to realign or how to realign. Assistant Superintendent Michael Speziale responded that the purpose was to determine if realignment was something the board should consider.

"Why, then, isn't Kindergarten through grade five an option?" Fannick asked.

Another parent questioned why finding a way to keep the neighborhood schools together wasn't being considered.

"Under 'considerations' you brought up a lot of issues that were your arguments for a realignment. Isn't anyone looking at how do we address those and still keep the same structure? I think that would be a valid group to put together," she suggested.

"How do we address those (issues) — making the education better — and yet leave the smaller school environment that we've been accustomed to and re-

*"I'm not 100 percent sold on it but I think it offers a lot more flexibility."*

Dennis Gochoel  
Dallas parent

search shows is better for children?" she asked.

Speziale responded: "Not everyone in this district goes to a smaller school; there is only one. And that's the main issue in terms of looking at realignment."

Speziale added that he's not sure there are any other options other than the ones currently being considered.

Another question was about the logic of realigning when some children were just moved this past year. Some students were moved from Dallas to Wycallis to balance kindergarten classes. Under the proposal, they would go back to Wycallis for two years before moving up to middle school.

Speziale acknowledged that the first year would be difficult for the children. He suggested

the goal should be to look at how as a district they could help make the transitions go more smoothly.

A member of the parent advisory committee (PAC) relayed ideas that had come up in PAC meetings about how to ease the trauma of moving.

Others asked about the time line.

"I think logistically we couldn't do it by September," said board member John Litz, who said voting would be the easy part.

"It leaves the reconfiguration of the classrooms all of the stuff that was alluded to in the presentation and that would take much longer than we have before now and september," he said.

After the meeting parents gave their opinions.

"I think they made a pretty good case. I'm not 100 percent sold on it but I think it offers a lot more flexibility," said parent Dennis Gochoel.

"I personally don't have an opinion either way. I'm in the same boat as they are," said Trudy Clemson. "I think there is need for some type of realignment."

## Collegiate Conference On Women's Issues at PSU

The 2nd Annual Collegiate Conference on Women's Issues, funded by Penn State Wilkes-Barre's Student Activity Fee, the Campus Environment Team, and the Northeastern PA Diversity Education Consortium will be held at Penn State Wilkes-Barre on Monday, March 24 from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Junior and senior high school students and college age members of the community are invited to attend this second in a series of Women's Image Seminars on Enhancement (WISE). Keynote speaker, Elizabeth Brensinger, M.H.P., author, consultant, Vision Quest guide and founder of Red Road Enterpris-

es, will address this year's theme, "Looking Ahead to the Future."

Brensinger's remarks will be followed by a panel discussion featuring Teresa Thomas, A.I.A., architect with Bohlin, Cywinski & Jackson; Michelle Olsheski, program head for Administration of Justice at Penn State Wilkes-Barre; Sara Wheeler, musician,

Mach Speed Records; and Rebecca Bartuska, certified financial planner with American Express Financial Services.

Please call 675-9263 for more information or to register. Participants can also register on-line at [www.wb.psu.edu](http://www.wb.psu.edu) (click on Open House).

Space is limited and the deadline for registration is March 14.

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