

Williamsville School District's population trends forecasted

Audit reports 'good standing'

by JESSICA L. FINCH
Associate Editor

After a few years of large classes the population in the Williamsville School District is expected to decrease — which is good news for some middle schools on the brink of capacity.

Representatives from Hezel Associates, LLC in Syracuse, told the Board of Education at the Nov. 14 meeting that over the next 10 years there will be a slow but steady decrease in enrollment.

"For the next five years the enrollments are projected to stay in the 10,000-student range," the report, explained by Steve Grossman, stated.

Each year an enrollment prediction is made, and estimates for 2006-07 were off by only 1.2 percent. Williamsville currently has 10,702 students.

For many of the schools, enrollment has not been a concern, but large classes moving through Mill and Transit middle schools has

caused Grossman to recommend that the district monitor enrollment.

Mill has 914 students, with a capacity of 900. Projections indicate a decrease to 880 next year.

Two other middle schools are also being recommended for close monitoring — Transit has 990 students with a capacity of 1,000; and Casey has 823 students with a capacity of 850. Heim Middle is not a concern at this time with 624 students and a capacity of 800.

Overall, class sizes are expected to decrease as graduating classes are replaced by smaller kindergarten numbers.

The board will review the information provided to them and make any changes deemed necessary Superintendent Howard S. Smith said.

He added that for several years the district has been projecting enrollment compared to the building capacity study.

Some recommendations include closing open enrollment for some buildings and also re-opening some that had been closed to open enrollment, such as Country Parkway and Maple East elementary schools. Decisions will be made following School Board discussions, he added.

The previous enrollment predictions have been within 1 to 3 percent, and the district will use the report on a five-year projec-

tion to consider any changes to open enrollment or to change feeder patterns, Smith said.

He added that overall, Hezel Associates recommended that the district make no changes for the next year due to the prediction of a small decrease.

The board also heard an annual report from representatives of Lumsden & McCormick, LLP that showed the district to be in good standing. The only recommendation was improving the recording of money generated by the various district clubs.

"The audit showed we are in a solid financial status," Smith said. "We have solid reserves and a good long-range financial plan."

He credited Thomas Maturski, assistant superintendent for finance, and his staff for an outstanding job in working to not only build the budget but implement it.

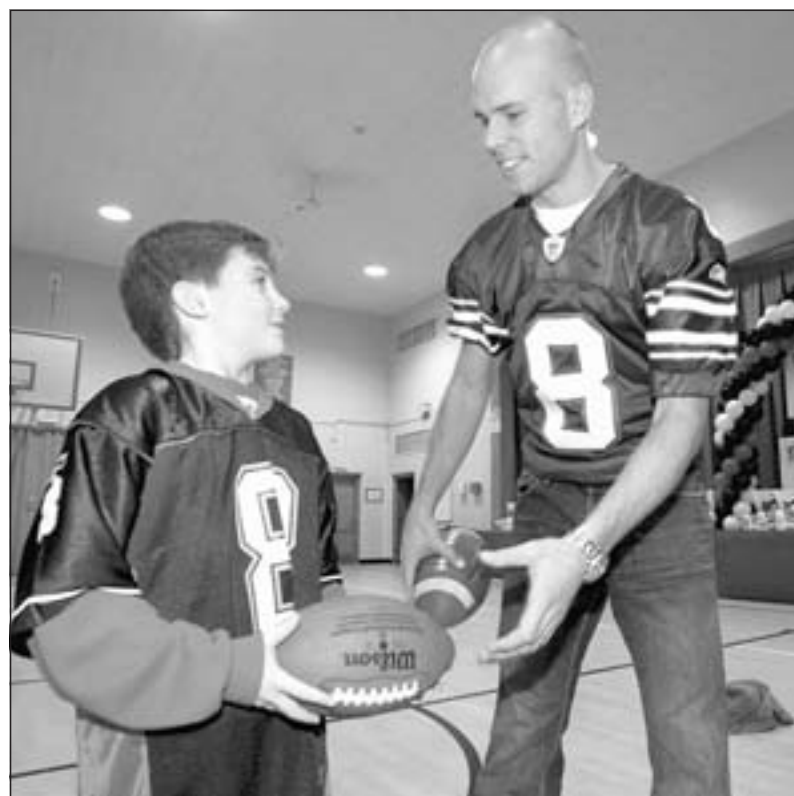
Smith said in response to the recommendation to review club money that Maturski is coordinating a meeting with the district principals and advisers to review in detail how the incoming money is handled.

The report showed that state aid had decreased a couple of hundred thousand dollars in the district. However, the district was praised for continuing with its capital projects as compared to other school districts, which had trouble getting approval or waited until buildings were hazardous.

In another matter, a special program for parents on "Cyber Smarts" will be presented by Katie Koestner from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5 at the Casey Middle School auditorium, 105 Casey Road. The program, not

open to students, is a crash course on the troublesome world of the Internet and gives parents tools to protect their children.

e-mail: jfinch@beenews.com



TAKE A PLAYER TO SCHOOL — Jack Seminara, a fourth grader at St. Gregory the Great School, selected for the "NFL Take a Player to School" contest chose to take Buffalo Bills punter Brian Moorman to his school on Nov. 14. Moorman surprised Jack at home and escorted him to school in a limo. The NFL star also spoke to the students about the importance of in-school and after school education, and offered basic football instruction.

Photo by John Rusac

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