

DEARBORN

Schools officials discuss busing, spl

By Katie Hetrick

For The Press & Guide

Split classes, class sizes and transportation rules all were among the reports presented to Dearborn Public Schools trustees at their October meeting.

Studies nationally and in Dearborn show students do not do any worse academically as a result of being in a split class where two grade levels share one teacher, school Supt. Glenn Maleyko told the Board of Education. In fact, in Dearborn students in a split class seem to do a tiny bit better than their peers, he said.

"We just wanted to get this out there," Maleyko said.

Parents are sometimes concerned when their student is assigned to a split classroom and worry that a teacher handling two grades will reduce how much their child learns.

His comments came as part of a report that looked at both class sizes and split classrooms.

"Any time you move out of traditional thinking or a traditional way of doing things,

it's a little nerve-racking," Trustee Roxanne McDonald said.

Two of her children were in split classrooms and developed new skills as a result, she added.

The split classes are financially necessary in elementary schools where the number of students in a grade is too high to divide neatly among teachers but too low to justify a whole additional class for just that grade, Maleyko said.

High school student Layal Mustafa told trustees she was in a split class in fifth grade and thought it was a "great experience."

She credited that year with developing her leadership skills. Split classes also encourage more independent learning, which means students will retain the information better, she said.

"I think there are lots of beneficial things in split and combination classes," she said.

Trustee Mary Petlichkoff said two of her children had split classes and the district simply can't afford to provide all the things parents would

like to see in the schools.

Maleyko said: "Usually, the teachers do a great job because they collaborate together."

The discussion came as part of a larger report on class sizes and concerns about moving students after the school year starts.

Jill Chochol, executive director of student achievement, said in the spring the district looks at projections for fall enrollment and sets classes for all the schools.

Problems arise when parents wait until August or September to register their children.

That's especially true for kindergarten where only one-third of the students already were enrolled in a district preschool program.

"We're a growing district," Maleyko said. "This is a positive thing."

But, he added, it causes hiccups when students have to be shuffled between classes weeks or months after school starts because another classroom was needed.

The district tries to keep class sizes smaller in the earlier grades. For kinder-

garten to second grade, administrators aim for 22 to 24 students per class. In third through fifth grades, the target is 25 to 28 per class. Sixth to eighth grade classrooms each have between 26 to 28 students and high school 28 to 30, Chochol said.