

C'ville schools to throw book at class skippers

BY MARIE CHESTNEY STAFF WRITER

Clarencville High's new attendance policy should curb a problem — the skipping of classes — which mushroomed during the last school year to the point teachers reached out to parents, seeking their help.

Selectively skipping classes even got so rampant at the high school that administrators talked about forcing students to stay in school during the lunch hour.

Students skipped because they faced no real penalty. But those days are now gone.

Come fall, Clarencville High students will be penalized if they get more than four unexcused absences in any one class each semester. The penalty will be an "F" grade and a loss of credit for the class unless there is a successful appeal.

"We had a looser attendance policy last year and it didn't work well because there was no penalty," said Superintendent David Kamish. "So we decided to develop a stricter one. Now

there is a penalty. The students are well aware of this."

The school board Thursday approved the new attendance policy. The policy spells out nine excuses the high school will accept for missed classes. Any absence not fitting these nine categories will be unexcused.

Acceptable excuses are:

- Illness of the student or family member.
- Death of a family member or close friend of the family.
- Medical or dental care.
- Legal business.
- Suspension.
- Emergency child care situations.
- Exceptional and unexpected transportation problems.
- Pre-planned absences when approval has been obtained in loss of credit for the class unless there is a successful appeal.
- Excused tardiness beyond 10 minutes.

On any school day last year, administrators said up to 80 high school students skipped morning or afternoon classes. They'd either skip in the morning and come in after lunch.

Report card flunks, changes planned

BY LARRY O'CONNOR STAFF WRITER

Revisions are being made to the new elementary student report card, which was given a failing grade by some Farmington school parents.

The changes are the result of a survey done after the first school year using the revamped report cards.

"That's why you pilot," said Judy White, assistant superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development for Farmington Schools. "So you can get feedback as to what else you need to do to help people understand."

The new method of reporting student progress was needed in

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Patty Alspach Hillside parent

order to be more closely tied with the district's curriculum.

Some parents complained the new cards were vague, marking a child down as either needing more time or demonstrates skills in reading, writing and mathematics. A student also receives a plus, a check or slash under behaviors and attitudes.

"It's like going from Fahrenheit to Celsius," said Patty Alspach, whose two children attended Hill-

side. "You need more of an explanation."

The category, excels, has been added to go along with developing grade level skills and demonstrating grade level skills in the descriptive codes.

Also, for the first time, the district is developing a parent-teacher manual to help explain the codes and categories more thoroughly. Pamphlets describing the curriculum for each grade level

are being updated as well.

"These will be available to parents at open houses and during report card time."

"In some ways, it's interesting that our attempt to give parents more information than they have ever had led to some accusations they weren't getting enough," White said. "When in fact they are getting more."

"I think it's a matter when something changes or shifts and people see something different than they have ever seen before, then there almost needs to be some training with it, which is what we're going to try to do."

Doug Swiatkowski, founder of Parents for a Traditional Education, favors the traditional letter grading for children starting in the third grade instead of the sixth grade. He said it is more realistic, instilling a sense of competitiveness early on.

"I can recall very clearly pulling a 'D' in math," Swiatkowski said. "A person always needs to know when they fail."

Said White, "We do not want to do that. We do not feel it tells you more. We feel it tells you less."

Under the old system, children were marked as either needs to improve, making progress or high achievement. The elementary curriculum has been rewritten since those cards were developed, according to White.

The new report cards are also more in line with the district's established student learning outcomes goals, she said.

Glossary of school buzz words

Here are a glossary of some buzz terms used in education circles.

■ **Student learning outcomes** — Attributes a student would ideally possess graduating from Farmington Public Schools. They include being a collaborative team member, an effective communicator, a healthy individual, a knowledgeable thinker, a lifelong learner, a quality producer and a responsible citizen. These goals were established by the Farmington Frameworks Committee.

■ **Whole-language approach** — A multidisciplinary method of instruction that includes using a variety of materials to teach such things as reading. The process involves children in storytelling and writing stories and reading a variety of stories. Reading, writing, listening and speaking are used to achieve goals of the curriculum.

■ **Inventive spelling** — Based on research on the

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Judy White

way children learn, the process allows for inventive spelling through sounding out words. "We look at this through kindergarten and first grade," said Judy White, director of curriculum and staff development. Kids are told to go ahead and write what they are thinking in order to promote writing. Once they are ready — end of first or second grade depending on the child — teachers go back and work on accurate spelling.

Panelists tour Rouge Riverwalks

Farmington-area Beautification Committee members Donna Damon, Sandra M. Shelly and Rosemary Fitzpatrick of Farmington, and Farmington Hills members Lincoln Avery and Elsie McKown attended the quarterly meeting of the Beautification Council of Southeast Michigan recently in Wayne.

They received a tour of the newly completed Riverwalks, through the woods along the Rouge River. This led them to the new Amphitheatre where they heard music in Goudy Park and viewed an outdoor art display.

The Farmington-area Beautification

Robbery from page 1A

Police are investigating, but have no suspects. Detectives are waiting for a report from the Oakland County Crime Lab on evidence taken at the scene.

Two men were spotted driving the Ford Probe by Redford Township police shortly after the robbery. A brief chase ensued before they abandoned the car at Olympia and Clarita, near Beech Daly and Seven Mile.

They fled on foot. A search,

feet-9 and 175 pounds, sporting a crew cut. The second perpetrator is described as a light-skinned black man, 5-feet-9 and 175 pounds.

which involved tracking dogs, was called off an hour and a half later. A TV and stereo equipment taken in the robbery were found in the car. Jewelry and an automatic teller card were also stolen.

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The random nature and boldness with which the robbery was committed has police concerned. The case has been given top priority, Goss said.

Police have a composite of one of the robbers. One is described as a black man with dark skin, 5-

feet-9 and 175 pounds, sporting a crew cut. The second perpetrator is described as a light-skinned black man, 5-feet-9 and 175 pounds.

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THE PROPER PILLOW

Excellent advice on proper pillows comes from antiquity. Genesis 28:11: "and Jacob lighted upon the place, and rested his head, and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down to sleep, and he dreamed..."


The story identifies the qualities for a good pillow. First, it must be firm, rock firm is not an extreme statement. Second, the pillow should be flat, again like many a stone.

Why firm and flat?

This combination places your neck in the best position. The pillow's rise if correct, places your cervical spine in line with the rest of your back bones, as you lie face up to the ceiling. This rotation, called the neutral position, minimizes pulling forces on the neck muscles as you sleep.

Since the cause of most morning "neck aches" is neck muscle strain, using the proper pillow provides the best chance of avoiding such pain. When you sleep on your side or stomach, the position of your neck follows the curve of your back, and your head does not need the pillow for support.

Beware of advertisements for colorful pillows or slumber pads though they promise you a good night's sleep. You are more likely to find a proper pillow and without great cost, by your own household search.



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