

# Enough already: Popular teacher says goodbye

There apparently wasn't enough room on Harrison High School science teacher Dennis King's already full plate for what likely will be heaped on during the next two years — bond issue construction and a proposed four-by-four block scheduling makeover.

So, as of July 1, the 53-year-old King left Harrison, where he spent all but one of his 28 years in the district. He waited until after students left for the year to inform principal Rande Horn and his faculty colleagues of his decision to leave.

"I'm kind of emotional," King said Monday, shortly after returning from a two-week vacation in the Upper Peninsula. "I didn't want to go through a real emotional time the last couple weeks of the year."

Although King said he is "not in favor of the four-by-four block, personally, the continuing controversy among Harrison parents about going to the plan in fall 1999 wasn't a real factor in his decision."

With four-by-four block scheduling, which is similar to colleges, students would attend four 90-minute classes in the first semester and four other classes in the second semester. But the concept so far has drawn the ire of parents and is now in the midst of what could be a

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*Dennis King  
—Teacher*

lengthy process before it is implemented. It is a different block plan from that now in place at Farmington High.

After letters were sent out to homes in May announcing the school's intention to implement the plan in fall 1999, parents became riled enough to bring up the subject at back-to-back school board meetings in June. Several said they weren't adequately involved from the start. High school officials did hold an informational meeting on June 23, after the initial wave of negative publicity.

Yet the proposal did have some effect on his retirement. King said he didn't think he could successfully tack on expected numerous meetings about the plan onto his existing heavy schedule.

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King admitted he reached "the maxi-

mum amount I could do. Basically, I didn't think my health could handle the 12-to-16-hour days and then to add to that the major changes in terms of block scheduling, all the meetings that would entail. It wasn't going to be an easy thing."

The bond issue projects at Harrison, including renovations to the science wing, would have added even more meeting time.

King insisted he wasn't pressured to leave Harrison because he was among faculty members who voted in May against pursuing four-by-four block scheduling. About 72 percent of the faculty gave administrators the go-ahead.

"There wasn't any pressure to leave at all," King said. "When I told Dr. (Bob) Maxfield (Farmington schools superintendent) I was going to retire, he said he'd take me to the Lark if I decided not to." The Lark is a five-star restaurant in West Bloomfield.

King left his legacy all over Harrison. Besides coordinating the science department's move to computers in the classroom in recent years, he was heavily involved in several endeavors. He coached boys tennis, oversaw the "Science Bowl" and "Physics Olympics" squads and sponsored the high school's National Honor Society. In addition, he coached girls tennis at Farmington High School.

King's influence did help students achieve some lofty heights. For example, over the last decade, six Harrison students were named to the Physics All-American team.

"I loved working with the kids of Farmington for the last 28 years," he said. "It's been great seeing them achieve such wonderful results."

He referred to a song called "The Wind Beneath My Wings," popular with students in past years.

"I've enjoyed being the wind beneath their wings," King said.

With Harrison behind him, King and his wife, Jean, who have two adult children, intend to build a second home in the Upper Peninsula, near Manistique. Jean King is retiring from a teaching job in the Wayne-Westland school district after the 1998-99 school year.



**Leaving: Harrison teacher Dennis King says he will miss his students and their accomplishments.**

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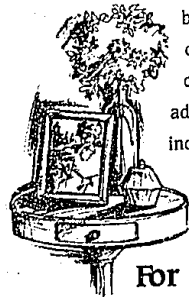


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The forum will feature candidates in the primary races for governor, including Democratic candidates Geoffrey Fieger, Larry Owen, Doug Roas and Republican candidates Gov. John Engler and Dr. Gary Artinian. Additional candidates included in the forum are Sen. Bill

Bullard and challenger Barbara Dobb in the Republican primary for state Senate District 16, which covers Farmington Hills and part of West Bloomfield.

The forum is sponsored by the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit, Hadassah, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Institute for Retired Professionals of the Jewish Community Center, Temple Shur Shalom and the Detroit Jewish News.

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