

Coffee comments

Grades and outdoor education philosophy aired

Editor's Note: During the Farmington PTA's "Coffee and Comments" program last year, area residents were able to express their concerns about programs and activities in the Farmington School District.

These questions were presented to the district's administrators for their reply. Part X of the PTA questions and administrative answers series deals with grading systems and the outdoor education program.

This is the final part of the series, which has been appearing in the Farmington Observer & Eccentric since March.

Explains the Farmington District's elementary grading system.

Our elementary grading system, more properly referred to as a Progress Report, changed from the use of letter grades because of concerns, nationwide in scope, that the letter grade system for elementary-age children was not serving the purpose of reporting progress in relation to

the student's abilities and stage development.

Major criticisms cited in the professional literature on the use of letter grades include the following:

Grades, rather than learning, have become the goals of students. This has greatly narrowed the real curriculum of the school, encouraged cheating and discouraged desirable learning attitudes and habits.

Grades don't tell us anything specific. Since they are derived from a composite of many factors, we cannot tell, for example, whether a student who receives a "C" in English can express thoughts very clearly, but cannot spell correctly; whether the reverse is true; whether the child is strong in literature or weak in grammar; or whether he is average in all his English skills.

Grades have different meanings because of subjective factors.

For example, studies have shown that teachers generally tend to grade girls higher than boys, and middle class children higher than lower class children, for identical achievements.

Grades have different meanings because they are based upon different criteria.

In different schools, and even within the same school or classroom, a grade may represent an attempt to measure achievement in relation to one's classmates, in relation to national norms, in relation to each child's ability, in relation to pupil effort, in relation to teacher expectations, or a combination of some or all of these factors.

Low grades have serious adverse effects on some student's self concepts that not only interfere with learning, but have serious negative lifetime effects on personality and mental health.

The district's check list commentary:

parent conference format of reporting pupil progress has helped to alleviate these concerns. To a varying degree, it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure. Perhaps the most significant comment that can be made is that the new format better enables the teachers to relate to students as individuals.

Explains the elementary outdoor education program.

Outdoor education is the natural extension of the school classroom into the larger classroom of the outdoors. It provides an opportunity for boys and girls to see with their own eyes, to touch with their own hands, things about which they have read. In addition, it brings them into closer contact with the natural wonders of our earth.

The curriculum includes classes in geography, pond life, animal habitat, bird identification and ecology. Besides these

areas, students have the opportunity to participate in compass study, nature crafts, wilderness survival and nature scavenger hunts.

In addition to the academics involved, the social aspects are of equal importance. For the first time, children will be on their own to make a bed, set a table, help serve a meal and clean up afterward.

THE YOUNGSTERS work together, study together and live together. The learning opportunities available in this group experience are limitless.

The program for each building involved, based on the grade level and needs of the pupils participating, is developed cooperatively by the teachers and principals.

At present, the following buildings are participating in outdoor education: Alameda, Fairview, Forest, Larkshire, Longacre, Middlebelt, Shawnee, Ten Mile and Wooddale.

Facilities used are Proud Lake Outdoor Center, Walcott Lake Outdoor Center and Waterloo Recreation Area.

The program receives financial support from the school district in the form of bus transportation, teacher salaries and materials. Parents are asked to contribute the costs

of lodging, meals and supplies. If there is financial need within a family, funds are made available from PTA monies or private individuals to allow the child to participate.

Outdoor education programs have received enthusiastic acclaim from all parents whose children have participated.



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OCC graduates management group

The fifth annual awards dinner honoring 27 graduates of Oakland Community College's hospitality management program was held April 4 at the Sheraton Country Club, West Bloomfield.

Toastermaster Marty Bishop of the Superior Coffee Company introduced Richard T. Thompson, Orchard Ridge power, who welcomed the graduates and guests.

Stan Bromley, general manager of the Dearborn Hyatt Regency, was the guest speaker.

Elmer T. Winkler, executive vice president of the Michigan Hotel-Motel Association and chairman of OCC's advisory committee, introduced the evening 1976-77 chairman, Ed Miller, director of branch operations for the E.A. Harlick Co.

The hospitality management faculty presented each of the graduates with a departmental award certificate. Plaques for academic achievement were awarded to Margaret Park of Union Lake, Marilyn Petrovic of Southfield, Gary Miller of Farmington and Yerna Deletsky of Livonia. The department's "Oscar," The

Order of the Peppercorn, was presented to Carole Andrus of Ferndale.

Six scholarship awards from the "Ray Smircich Scholarship Fund" were presented to Susan Baier, Royal Oak; Karen Surpuzyn, Troy; Jill Rice, Troy; Lauren Faucher, Ferndale; Mark Dierzavski, Royal Oak; and Mary Lou Holstein, Southfield.

The Detroit Bakery Production Club awarded scholarships to Martin Geronowski of Rochester, Mike Knight of Westland and Bob Thomas of Southfield.

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MON. 7:30	TUE. 8:00	WED. 8:00	THURS. 8:00	FRI. 8:00	SAT. 8:00	SUN. 8:00	MON. 7:30	TUE. 8:00	WED. 8:00	THURS. 8:00	FRI. 8:00	SAT. 8:00	SUN. 8:00	MON. 7:30	TUE. 8:00	WED. 8:00	THURS. 8:00	FRI. 8:00	SAT. 8:00	SUN. 8:00	MON. 7:30	TUE. 8:00	WED. 8:00	THURS. 8:00	FRI. 8:00	SAT. 8:00	SUN. 8:00

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