

# How kindergarten helps kids adjust to school

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Should children skip kindergarten? Some parents say yes. They believe that if little Johnny can read at the age of 5, he should move right along to first grade.

But Farmington public school administrators disagree. They caution that there's more to education than reading, riding and arithmetic, and they say kindergarten may be good for little Johnny even if he is a little whiz kid.

While requests to skip kindergarten are rare, school administrators consider the child's physical and social growth in addition to his learning ability when parents suggest a child should begin school in grade one.

"Parents may be looking at one aspect of the child's growth," says Assistant Superintendent Larry Freedman. "They may be only looking at his reading. The child could need help with comprehension or social development. We're talking about the whole child," he said.

IN ADDITION to giving children that first taste of formal education, kindergarten gives the child a chance to develop his social skills, according to Beechview Elementary School principal Norm Langer.

Children get a chance to try living and cooperating with their neighbors. Playing with others and sharing are part of the curriculum as much as learning to take directions, Langer says.

"I think kindergarten is necessary for children who have not had that kind of social experience before," he said.

Children who skip this first group experience could run into problems in the first grade, Freedman points out.

"If the child is thrown into the first grade, he may not be comfortable with a full day in school," Freedman said.

The child would be also faced with dealing with children who are slightly older, he added.

Kindergarten, the educators say, can be tailored to meet the individual child's needs. If the child is interested in reading or arithmetic, the teacher should be willing to help him with some basics.

"You work with the child, not the grade level," said Gill Elementary School principal Frank Kasun.

"Very few youngsters don't benefit from kindergarten," Freedman says. Grade levels mean little. What's important is, Are the child's educational and personal goals being met?

Children must be 5 years old on or before Dec. 1 to enter kindergarten, according to state law.

PARENTS OF SOME of the children who are born after the deadline send the kids to accredited private kindergartens or nurseries. If the teacher at the private school recommends the child be placed in first grade, 6-year-olds born past the deadline can skip public kindergarten, according to Farmington educators.

Without a certificate from a private nursery or kindergarten, administrators approach each case as an individual decision, based on results of tests administered by the system.

Preparation for kindergarten requires more than adding the child's name to the enrollment lists. Each spring, an orientation day is conducted for next year's kindergarten class. Future students are taken through a few activities to alleviate any possible fears.

To help some children better adjust to their new situation, teachers give parents a list of activities to go through to make the change easier on everyone.

Taking the child to see the building and to meet the school principal can ease the strangeness from the situation. Parents are also reminded to reassure the child that he will be returning home for lunch.

"We talk of the child going off to school but we seldom mention that he's coming back home," Freedman said.

SOME CHILDREN get the idea that their parents have left them with strangers because of the emphasis on only one part of the trip.

Parents should leave their anxieties at home when dropping off the child on his first day at school. Anxiety rubs off on children and the sight of a parent hanging around the windows of the kindergarten could upset the child, Freedman says.

If necessary, some children do stay for a second year in kindergarten. "No one flunks kindergarten. But we want to make sure that we're setting a decent foundation for the youngsters' schooling," Freedman said.

## Tennis buff follows mom by becoming champ

By CAROL A. CLAPP

Ten-year-old Kelly Davidson doesn't mind following in her mother's footsteps. In the 1950s, Nancy Daubenmeyer was clearly the best young tennis player in Dearborn. Now, her daughter is fast earning that same distinction in Farmington Hills.

On June 25, Kelly won her first 10-and-under state championship in Kalamazoo, the same place her mother won her first title. Since then, she has played about 30 days of tournaments this summer, winning everything she entered, including the Ann Arbor Junior Open and the Cranbrook Junior Invitational Open.

"I can hit my hardest with Kelly now, and she can hit it right back," says Mrs. Davidson. "She's not a challenge, but she's as good as any other woman to play with."

"She's not a challenge to beat me yet," Mrs. Davidson says that while Kelly

started hitting balls when she was five, she didn't start taking classes until she was eight. In the two years since, she has become good enough to win tournaments. Her mother didn't begin winning tournaments until she was 12, two years older than Kelly is now.

Glenn Daubenmeyer, Kelly's grandfather, once coached his daughter Nancy to win state championships. He says that Kelly is stronger now than Mrs. Davidson was then, and Mrs. Davidson has around 50 championship trophies to display.

Mrs. Davidson is still collecting them, having just won the Cranbrook Club tournament. Her and her partner have also recently defended their title in the Country Club of Detroit Invitational, winning it for the fourth year in a row.

"But I only play in Invitationals now," Mrs. Davidson says. "I don't have time for tournaments any more."

If it's true that "the family that plays together stays together," then this should be the most together family around. Grandfather Glenn Daubenmeyer is often at tournaments to lend his moral support to both his daughter and his granddaughter, who play against each other for pleasure and support each other in tournament play.

"I've got an 8-year-old son who's pretty good too," says Mrs. Davidson, "but he hasn't won anything yet."

### Help for first-home buyers

A bill has been reintroduced in Congress to give families saving for a down payment on their first home tax protection up to \$2,500 a year. A similar bill was defeated last year.

## Carrier of the Month Farmington



RANDY MILLER

Randy Miller, 13, is the Carrier of the Month of August. He started his route in April 1975. He lives with his mother, Mary, and father, Ray, in Farmington. An eighth-grader at Thomas Beehan Junior High, Randy maintains a B plus average and likes math, science and history. He plays basketball, baseball, builds models and collects coins in his free time. He belongs to the Revell Master Modelers Club and the Beechview Swim Club. Randy plans to major in accounting or engineering at University of Michigan.

## Plan launched for Temple Israel

The architectural firm of Tarantula, McMahon, Paulsen & Associates of Bloomfield Hills has released its rendering of the new Temple Israel to be constructed on a 23-acre site in West Bloomfield.

Construction of the 75,000 square foot building on Walnut Lake Road was unanimously approved by the township board recently, ending a four-year effort by the Detroit congregation to relocate in the suburbs. Temple Israel, organized in 1941 as the second reform Jewish congregation in the area, has been located at 1700 Manderson near Palmer Park since 1959.

It has grown over the years to its present membership of 1,600 families, making it the largest reform temple in Michigan and one of the largest in the nation.

Rabbi M. Robert Semy, who has been with Temple Israel since 1953, is spiritual leader and is assisted by Rabbi Harold S. Luss and Dr. Leon From, who was the founding rabbi.

According to congregation president Leslie R. Schmier of Birmingham, it is estimated that the move to West Bloomfield will take two years, with the opening of the new facilities anticipated by Rosh Hashanah, 1979.

Cost of construction of the building is budgeted at \$5 million. Major areas will include a 1,000-seat sanctuary, 600-seat school auditorium and theater, social hall accommodating 500, classrooms, nursery school facility, youth room, chapel seating 200, library multi-media center and administrative offices.

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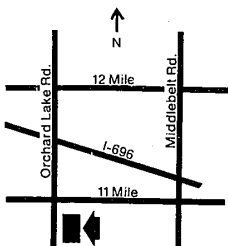
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