

Parents, teachers help

Children cope with disabilities

By RON GARBINSKI

A new special-education program in the Farmington School District is paving the way for successful classroom experiences for many area pre-schoolers.

Only in its first year, the district's preschool learning-disabilities program at Kenbrook Elementary School works with children at the nursery-school level helping them cope with learning development.

The primary function of this program is to take kids with certain learning problems and work with their specific learning difficulties," says Douglas Smith, director of special education for Farmington schools.

It is largely a preventative program where teachers try to work with the problem so when the child is ready to enter the first grade, he will have an easier time learning. If we can help the child to learn, there is a better chance of success for him later on in school.

THE PROGRAM responds to referrals from parents, doctors and other nursery schools about children with apparent disabilities. From there, comprehensive evaluations of the child are conducted. Psychological, speech, language, and motor skills and several other areas are tested.

The teachers involved in the program then prepare a plan of remediation for the child which could support or strengthen his development.

Speech pathologist Dave Robinson and learning-disabilities instructor Mary Lou Campbell are the two Kenbrook teachers who work with social worker Rozalind Wallace, psychologist Lynn Hamilton and speech pathologist Gwendolyn Johnson in the program.

According to Smith they work together as a team helping pre-schoolers with special problems they experience while learning.

There are six seven-week sessions of the program. After a student com-

pletes one block of the program, he is re-evaluated to see if he should continue in the same program or move onto some other area of special education. "A child may be in the program all year, or he may attend just one or two blocks at a time," explains Smith.

"After his time in this special program, he may be placed in Middle Belt School. At this school there is a specialty center for elementary students with learning disabilities, and a student may go there if he needs further help for his learning disability."

The program is conducted in the morning for about two hours, Tuesday through Friday. In conjunction with the learning-disabilities program, Kenbrook also is the district's speech problems center.

At the start of the learning-disabilities program, the teachers evaluate each child individually. The psychologist also evaluates the pre-schoolers and spends several hours with the children separately during the period he spends in the program.

"After the comprehensive evaluations, parents are invited to participate in the educational planning for the children," explains Smith. "The learning-disabilities team works with the parents in attempting to diagnose the child's primary problem. Then they work out an appropriate educational plan for the child."

"After this meeting, it may be determined that the child is eligible for some other special-education program, or that he should continue in the learning-disabilities program."

THE PRIMARY emphasis in the total program is to prevent failure in the early elementary years, says Mrs. Campbell.

"Parents are usually the first ones to realize the child may have a problem, and they are the ones who should contact us when they suspect something is wrong with the child."

"It is difficult for us to really determine if the child has a learning-disabilities problem during our initial

hour-long evaluation. Parents must help us because they are the ones who have knowledge of such problems," she said.

"Kids develop at different rates and it is hard to see if they have reached certain developmental milestones as compared to other children," adds Mrs. Robinson.

"Kids get tired quickly, and it's hard to determine what their problems may be. That is why we are conducting this program so we can work with the child over a period of several weeks and devote our time to each child's problem."

Mrs. Campbell and the rest of the staff start the classroom sessions with physical tests and then move into other problem areas. A child may have a mixed problem, for example, if his speech and language skills are hampered by his undeveloped motor skills. Then the staff must determine which special-education program is best for the child, explains Mrs. Campbell.

There are 10 preschoolers in the morning learning-disabilities program and 15 children in the afternoon speech-and-language session, also for preschool youngsters.

"At times it is really difficult to keep these kids interested in what they are doing," says Mrs. Robinson. "Keeping their motivation level high is really tough. Teaching them things that find difficult is even more frustrating because they always want to

quit when they have trouble."

BECAUSE THE teachers have the students for only a short time, one of the major goals of the program is to assist parents with activities and things they can do for the child at home.

Management in the home is one of the most important aspects of dealing with a learning-disabled child," says Smith. "Our learning-disabilities team has had many conferences with parents and has helped them direct and organize home activities for the child."

Parents also seem to be very open in discussing their children's learning disabilities with other parents who also are experiencing problems with their children, says Mrs. Campbell. "They are willing to share problems and solutions in an attempt to best help all preschoolers overcome their difficulties."

"And we have gotten a lot of referrals from these parents telling other parents about the program," adds Mrs. Robinson.

"We are just developing the program, and conceivably we could expand the program in the future if there is a greater basis for it to expand. But right now we have not reached the point of a waiting list. And we can't do that because we must keep the classes small in order to give each student the individual attention he or she needs."

Adat Shalom chooses rabbi

Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom will assume the duties as spiritual leader of Adat Shalom Synagogue of Farmington Hills on Sept. 5.

A formal installation service will be held during services on Nov. 12. The congregation voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Rabbi Rosenbloom to the post formerly occupied by Rabbi Jacob E. Segal who died one year ago.

The congregation also unanimously adopted a resolution proclaiming Rabbi Segal the founding rabbi of the synagogue. Rabbi Segal founded the conservative congregation in Detroit in 1946. It was the Northwest Hebrew Congregation, later Adat Shalom and still later Adat Shalom, which means "Congregation of Peace."

The congregation moved from Detroit to the new building on Thirteen Mile and Middlebelt in 1972. Rabbi Rosenbloom was ordained from the Jewish Theological Seminary in America in 1972 and was named to the position of assistant rabbi to serve under Rabbi Segal shortly after his graduation.

While at the seminary he was the recipient of prizes in Homiletics, Talmud and Bible and was named the outstanding graduate of 1972.

He is a vice president of Hillel Day School and serves on the board of trustees of the Fresh Air Society and the Jewish National Fund.

Since he first came to Farmington Hills he has been actively involved in making the synagogue a center for youth activities as well as building a large, strong membership.

He graduated from the University of Rochester in 1966 with a magna cum laude degree in philosophy and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

Rabbi Rosenbloom was recently married to the former Beth Anne Wolf of Washington, D.C. He is the son of Ruth Rosenbloom and the late Max Rosenbloom of Rochester, New York.

Physical fitness expert to speak

A consultant for the Physical Fitness Institute, Inc., Midwest Region, will speak to the Farmington Hills Kiwanis, Sept. 14 at 12:15 p.m.

The topic which D.C. DeRos will speak on is physical fitness. Among the things he will mention is that many serious illnesses can be directly or indirectly traced to the poor physical condition of the sufferer—especially in the areas of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, chronic back problems and obesity.

Dr. Ros states: "Medical authorities are also now telling us that many mental illnesses and the inability to cope with the stresses of modern living have a relationship to poor physical condition."

The Physical Fitness Institute, PFI, promotes fitness in many areas of society. It has developed programs for schools beginning in the lower grades, military units, develops rehabilitative programs for the injured, has implemented training programs for professional athletes and business programs on a new exercise concept called "Total Isometrics."

The program will be at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

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