

# State law gives handicapped an early break in pre-school

By DARLENE STINSON

A yellow burlap sign hangs from the ceiling of Farrand Elementary School's northwest wing.

"Infant and Preschool Special Education Program" the sign shows in bold black letters.

Beyond are classrooms equipped with play pens, cribs and toddler toys, where preschoolers and even babies under one year old play and chatter each week.

The classrooms in the special education wing of the Plymouth elementary school are devoted to the education of children, ages one day to five years old, whose lives are complicated by mental, physical or emotional handicaps.

Before the Michigan Mandatory Special Education Act became effective in 1973, handicapped preschoolers were offered no special education opportunities.

As a result, says Mary Nutter, supervisor of the preschool program housed in Farrand, parents of many handicapped children were unable to give the special attention required for their child's development.

A parent of a child who cannot walk, for example, should continually bring the toys and materials needed for mental stimulation to the child, Mrs. Nutter explained. If the parent doesn't, secondary learning disabilities, caused as a side effect of the original handicap, could set in and damage the child's future learning potential.

But because of the Michigan Mandatory Special Education Act, dangers of harmful side effects are considerably eased. The law requires local school districts to offer special education opportunities to all handicapped young-

sters from the day they are born to their 25th birthday.

"THE PURPOSE of this program is to provide instruction to parents to enable them to work better with the child," Mrs. Nutter explained. "We work through the parent to the child. By getting the child early, we hopefully can prepare him for school and change his future outlook."

Children enrolled in the Farrand program range in age from 10 months to five years old. Most suffer from physical handicaps or speech impediments, and a few are mentally impaired.

The 36 children currently enrolled in the program are divided into two groups.

Fourteen preschoolers and their parents come to Farrand's special education wing one or two mornings each week to receive individualized instruction and evaluation.

The remaining 22 children are enrolled in the center's home study program. A teacher travels to the child's home one day each week and shows the parent how to best deal with the child's handicap and offer him the stimulation he needs.

In addition, program staffers discuss the children's handicaps. Staff members tell parents of the special equipment, such as wheelchairs or crutches that their children need as well as the toys that will stimulate the preschoolers' imaginations.

Information on specific handicaps and the possible physical side effects the handicap could produce are available in the center's library.

"The program gives parents a chance to talk about and share their common problems," Mrs. Nutter explained. "What's it like to have a physically impaired baby? A doctor often diagnoses the problem, tells the parents and leaves. We show the parent how to deal with the problem."

Mrs. Nutter calls the program "cross-categorical" because it offers

educational opportunities to children with a variety of physical, mental and emotional handicaps.

The program's 14-member staff includes a psychologist, a nurse, a speech pathologist, a media specialist and an occupational therapist as well as certified special education teachers.

## Board eyes Ten Mile

(Continued from page 1A)

it resisted making a firm recommendation.

Instead, it asked the board to look into all possible uses of school buildings in the northern portion of the district. The recommendation included Fairview and Eagle.

If it is decided that Eagle would be closed, the transfer of its orthopedic rooms would cost about \$160,000. A portion of this, amounting to about \$15,000, could be obtained from Oakland County, according to the force.

If the board decides to close Eagle Elementary, boundaries would have to change.

Students would be sent to Fairview, Highmeadow and Kenbrook schools.

In addition to the relocating of the orthopedic rooms, Fairview's music or resource room would have to be used to accommodate the expected increase in enrollment.

Highmeadow's special education

room would have to be relocated for the same reason.

IF THE BOARD DECIDES TO close Fairview, Eagle would be expected to take up some of the excess student population.

Kenbrook and Highmeadow schools would receive Fairview students, also, under the force's plan.

In considering which schools to close, the force took into account the location of the building, its age, the number of students which would be affected and the cost of transporting those children to another facility.

In transporting the students, the force was careful to avoid sending children across busy streets on foot.

They also considered the effects of too frequent transfers on students and tried to avoid breaking up friendship patterns.

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## Students win ensemble seats

Beth Knighton and Marianne LaVerre, of Farmington, have been chosen to be in the University of Michigan Youth Band Wind Ensemble.

The ensemble was organized in 1973 to provide a broad and stimulating musical experience for musically talented high school aged youth.

The youth band wind ensemble rehearses every Saturday morning throughout the academic year on the University of Michigan campus under the direction of Professor Thomas Dvorak. High school students come from approximately 35 schools in more than 25 cities throughout Michigan to perform each Saturday.

Membership in the ensemble is open by audition only to students who are recommended by their school music directors and who are currently enrolled in grades 9-12.

Besides playing opportunities in chamber wind groups and large

band, youth band members receive group master classes in instrumental performance from graduate students and faculty at the University of Michigan School of Music. A broad scholarship program involving advanced study at Interlochen and the University of Michigan, is also a part of the growing opportunities for youth in the ensemble.

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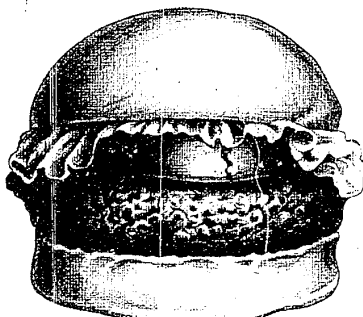
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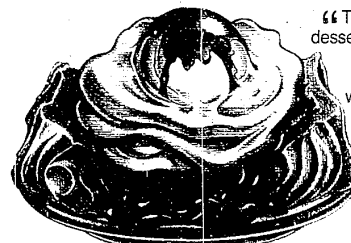


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