

Action delayed on middle schools

By CARL STODDARD

The time is now upon use to decide if we will go ahead with the middle school system. Supt. Carl Hassel told the Southfield Board of Education last week.

At least four school board members disagreed, however, and plans for extending the concept to the district's other two junior high schools were delayed.

The subject of middle schools came up during presentation of a final report by the Middle School Implementation Task Force. Comprised of 24 parents, teachers and school administrators, the task force was established last year to set guidelines for the new school concept. This fall, the group monitored the success of the program at Birney and Lederle middle schools and came to the conclusion that Thompson and Levey junior high schools should be converted this coming September.

Board members accepted the report, thanked the committee for its work, but stopped short of launching the middle school concept at the two junior highs.

"I'm not in the habit of deciding on opinions," Robert Thomasian, board

member, said following a presentation of the report. "I need some hard facts."

Thomasian and other board members said they wanted information on enrollments, school boundaries and other specific facts.

Kenneth Larsen, board president, called for a study session to look at the effects full implementation of the middle school program would have on the district. No date has been set for that school board session.

THE WHOLE IDEA concerning middle schools was born out of a report by an earlier committee that studied student enrollments in the district. The citizens' group, after several months of study, recommended the district close six elementary schools in an effort to consolidate the shrinking school district. The committee also recommended the change would be a good time to convert to the middle school concept.

Middle schools were begun last year at two of the four junior high schools. Each of the two schools housed students in grades six, seven and eight.

Children in the sixth grade were to have the most structured program with a home-based teacher. By eighth

grade, a more independent program of departmentalized instruction was to be offered.

According to the middle school task force, the initial phase of the new concept has gone fairly smoothly. Some problems were discovered and noted in the final report.

•More attention needs to be given to the fact that students learn differently.

•Although different styles of teaching and learning do exist, most students and/or parents did not have the opportunity to make a choice.

•In addition to sports, should be expanded.

•More support services are needed at Birney due to the large population.

•Birney's library should be expanded; only 30 of the school's 1,000 students can be seated in the room.

•Community talents should be used to a greater extent for teaching or assisting in mini-courses, montime activities and field trips.

THE TASK FORCE failed to find any glaring problems in the two middle schools.

"Although there is room for further development and the need for modification in some areas," their report

concluded, "the schools are to be commended for their efforts to date."

"Based upon our present evaluation," the report added, "this committee strongly recommends that it would be educationally sound to implement the middle school concept at Levey and Thompson junior high schools, together, in September 1977."

Throughout their report, the middle school committee found many things to praise in the four-month-old middle schools. Teacher in-service programs were offered last summer to help teachers make the transition to the new system. Students were encouraged to become more adept at decision making, to handle independence and to assume more responsibility within the school community, the report said.

In addition to basic courses in language arts, social studies, science, math, creative and practical arts, and physical education, an extensive selection of enrichment courses were offered.

At Birney, students were able to select mini-courses each 10 weeks. At Lederle, enrichment opportunities have included a school ethnic festival, field trips and other projects, the report said.

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Budget shifts OK'd

A number of changes in the 1976-77 Southfield Board of Education budget were approved last week by school board members. Most changes were caused by adjustments in salaries, but were offset by other changes in the \$25.4 million budget.

Reasons for the salary changes, school officials said, were due to replacement of individuals, settlement of contracts after adoption of the original budget, and delays in filling certain positions.

The budget includes a \$10,000 increase in special education salaries, a \$37,000 increase in administrative salaries, and a \$41,000 increase in the business office operations, also due largely to salary changes. All increases were balanced by decreases in other areas of the budget.

Part of the increase came when teachers changed from Blue Cross Insurance to the higher cost of MESSA insurance, school officials said. This created an additional expense of \$39,000.

Achim women meet

Sisterhood Institute Day is planned for the Sisterhood of Congregation Beth Achim at 9:30 a.m. Feb. 28.

Registration will be followed at 10 a.m. by a session featuring Richard H. Lohenthal, director of the Michigan Region Anti-Defamation League as guest speaker. His topic will be "Anti-Semitism—The External Enigma."

Lunch will be served at noon with meetings following. A panel discussion will explore the theme "Crime in the Suburbs—The Criminal Versus the Victim."

Panel members include Undersheriff John Nichols, Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson, Judge Norman Feder of the 46th District Court and Judge Benjamin Friedman of the 45th District Court. Panel moderator will be Rabbi Milton Arm.

Donation for the day is \$5 which must accompany a reservation by Feb. 21. For reservations call Beverly Hacker at 353-5146 or Fredell Whitman at 356-1864.

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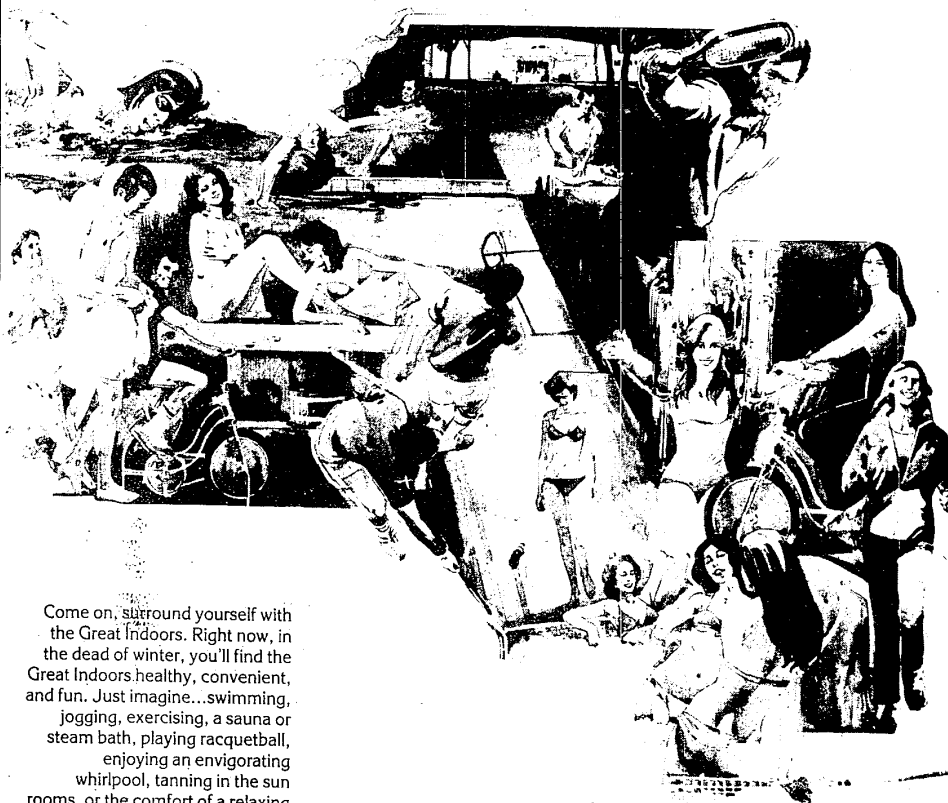
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