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Declining enrollment plagues district

The projected Farmington schools enrollment for 1979-80 of 12,587, a loss of 687 students over last year, is expected to continue at the same rate for the next three to five years, according to an annual report released by Farmington School Superintendent Lewis Schulman.

"These figures are based on the birthrate in Oakland County. Even with the increase in new buildings in Farmington, we are only averaging one-half child per household," Schulman said. Even though there has been a slight increase in the birthrate, it is highly unlikely the birthrate will ever again reach the levels of the 1950s, the report claims.

Over the past 12 years, school enrollment in Farmington peaked in 1971-72 with 16,802 students. The downward trend has continued every year thereafter. Last year's enrollment was 13,252.

"The most important long range factor affecting the educational system has been the decline in the birthrate during the last several years," Schulman said.

"As the school district closes schools, the reuse of school space becomes an important issue. The school board has been circumspect in this area, keeping school rooms in reserve in case of a turn-around.

"In addition, there has been consistent effort to secure needed funds through rent or sale of school properties. Also, the board has been considering arrangements for community use of closed schools.

"IT IS STRONGLY recommended that the district continue to close schools in a deliberate manner, after careful review of current projections," Schulman also cited proper financing as one of the big problems facing the school district. The increase of almost \$90 million in state equalized valuation has permitted a small millage decrease this year.

But state support of Farmington

schools continues to decrease. It accounted for 31 percent of the budget in 1974, 18 percent in 1977, and 14 percent last year.

"We expect to be out of the membership aid formula in 1979-80," Schulman said in his report. "This means that the only state aid we can expect will be categorical."

Categorical aid refers to state funding of special expenditures, like special education, vocational education and transportation.

The district plans to have 219 elementary teachers in 1979-80, compared to 231 last year; 269 secondary teachers, compared to 284 last year; 80 special education teachers, compared to 79 last year; 44 administrators, compared to 47 last year.

A breakdown of teacher layoffs

over the past five years:

- 1974-75 — 60 were laid off, 7 were not called back.
- 1975-76 — 101 were laid off, 5 were not called back.
- 1976-77 — 102 were laid off, 8 were not called back.
- 1977-78 — 118 were laid off. They were all called back.
- 1978-79 — As of July 1, 108 were laid off, 33 have not been called back.

Being an "out of formula" school district that state support for high school completion programs and teen pregnancy programs (Marillac Hall) are curtailed.

Schulman capped the past school year as follows:

- Successful passage of millage renewal.
- Implementation of the bonding proposal.
- Development of curriculum for the middle school.
- Closing of two elementary schools.
- Sale of surplus property.
- Completion of a bus garage.

"This school district, with a cooperative community, a supportive board of education, and a gifted and able staff of teachers and administrators, has the opportunity to continue a tradition of excellence and to build for the future," Schulman said.

Superintendent lauds educational progress

All is not bleak in the Farmington schools despite a continuing trend of declining enrollment.

According to an annual report released by Farmington School Superintendent Lewis Schulman to the board of education, the district has made progress in several areas of education.

"Our high schools graduated 1,234 students this year, of whom almost 70 percent indicated plans for more education," Schulman said.

"However, we still have a number of students who drop out, even after substantial retrieval efforts. We look to the new Program 78 to buttress our efforts in this area."

The district has also made progress in the area of refurbishing and maintenance and repair. Even though it did not receive a grant this summer for clean up of grounds, the district hired additional people for the job.

Vocational education continues to flourish. In a follow-up survey of last year, 91 percent of students available for placement were employed. Some 52 percent of the vocational education graduates continued their education in the same field in their high school vocational training.

The State Department of Education

has approved plans for a health careers course at North Farmington and Farmington High Schools, and an architectural drafting program at Harrison and Farmington High Schools, both effective for the 1979-1980 school year.

THE ESTABLISHMENT of a career resource center at Harrison will be followed by a request for funding another such center at Power Junior High School.

The Farmington district continues to host the second largest special education component in the county (Pontiac is the largest). The past year saw the consolidation of preschool programs at Fairview.

The preschool developmental program survived a slow start and has developed into a program with strong potential.

There are now 645 students identified as "intellectually gifted." As the program continues, it is necessary to accommodate those children previously identified who will be attending senior high schools.

The success of the basic math program for secondary schools has led to a similar cooperative effort with Oakland Schools to establish a basic Eng-

lish course this summer.

Over the past several years, the district has been active in the field of community education. The high school completion component has shown remarkable enrollment increases — from 17 adults in 1971 to 126 in 1978.

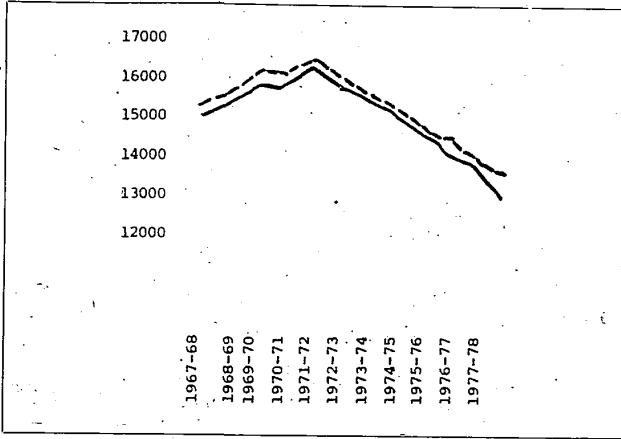
The department has enlarged its scope by providing training for adults in a number of job categories — medical assistant, clerk typist, etc.

"In recent days, there has been considerable challenge to the public school," Schulman said in the report.

"WHILE GRADE INFLATION and social promotion are unacceptable practices, the premise that young people are less than their parents is equally unacceptable.

"This school district supports enthusiastically individualized instruction, openness, concern for the dignity of the individual, and the offering of choices for students.

"The route to improve educational performance of students is through teachers and administrators. Parents must become aware that it is the right of the school, through its administrators and teachers, to set high expectations and demands for the students."



This table tells the story of the Farmington School District's declining enrollment since 1967-68. The bold black line is the decline of the general education population. The dotted line includes special education and part-time students completing their education. In 1967-68 the school population was 15,255. It rose to a high of 16,802 in 1971-72 and was 13,252 in 1978-79.

Jewish congregation gives tradition new twist

By MARY GNIEWEK
Tradition, Tevye was torn over it in "The Fiddler on the Roof."
He sang about it. He worried about it. Finally, the stubborn Russian Jew bent. Just a little.

Students preparing for bar mitzvah, the ceremonial coming of age for Jewish youth, incorporate a modern twist into the 800-year-old tradition at the Birmingham Temple.

The Farmington Hills congregation of controversial humanistic Rabbi

Sherwin Wine combines tradition with the age of superheroes.

The bar (son) and bat (daughter) mitzvah (of the commandment) ceremony signifies celebration of the 13th birthday and of several years of Hebrew and acquired Jewish knowledge.

"Traditionally, the student memorizes a section of the Torah (the holy book of Judaism) and chants a story from the old testament," said Betsy Kellman, a bar mitzvah tutor at the Birmingham Temple.

Mrs. Kellman and Mrs. Carol Fletcher spend six months preparing each mitzvah student.

"There was no creative part to the ceremony. Over the past few years, we've changed the program."

"The student selects a role model — someone who is Jewish or a humanist, or both — and researches that person's life."

"WE INCORPORATE Hebrew into the ceremony to keep our Jewish heri-

itage. And the student presents a 15-minute biography of the chosen model," Mrs. Kellman said.

From King David to Carl Sagan, Ann Frank to Arthur Miller, choices can be contemporary or historical figures.

According to Mrs. Kellman, most students choose living models and make an effort to personally contact them. They're not always successful. Mrs. Fletcher's child was disappointed when comedian, moviemaker Woody Allen did not respond to his letters.

And some role models are too busy. Like Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin who didn't respond personally but had his secretary send a letter to the interested mitzvah student.

For three students who recently completed the formal mitzvah ceremony, their half year of research led to real friendships.

Aaron Scott, 12, was bar mitzvahed a few months early to accommodate his grandparents, who attended the ceremony from California and didn't want to travel during the winter months. Usually, bar mitzvahs are scheduled as close as possible to the 13th birthday.

Aaron, who would like to become a doctor, chose cardiac surgeon Adrian

Kantrowitz of Mt. Sinai Hospital in Detroit as his model.

"Dr. Kantrowitz developed the balloon pump and was the first in the U.S. to perform heart transplants," Aaron said.

AARON'S SIX MONTHS of study included an interview with Dr. Kantrowitz at his Pontiac home and visits to Sinai's dog laboratory. He was also allowed to watch an open heart surgery operation in the laboratory.

"He really believes in the humanist philosophy," Aaron said. "Humanism is believing in yourself. If you have a problem, learn to work it out yourself instead of praying to God."

Josh Lieberman, 13, the son of a filmmaker, has a prized possession as the result of his bar mitzvah: an autographed picture of filmmaker Steven Spielberg ("Jaws," "Close Encounters of the Third Kind") and a T-shirt from Spielberg's new movie, "1941."

"I'm interested in filmmaking because my father is into it," Josh said. "I didn't know anything about him, but now I know how he makes movies and about his family background."

After Josh mailed Spielberg a copy

of his speech, Spielberg responded with a thank-you note.

Like Aaron and Josh, 13-year-old Julie Lynn said her role model was "definitely a humanist."

Julie chose Judy Blume, author of 12 children's books including "Forever" and "Are you there, God? It's me, Margaret."

"I'VE READ ALL her books, except 'Wish' (which is an adult book currently on the best-seller list)."

Though Ms. Blume gets an estimated 1,000 letters a month, she answered Julie's letter and the two have spoken on the telephone twice.

"I really like her books a lot. I read them over and over," Julie said. "Each time, I get a different feeling from them."

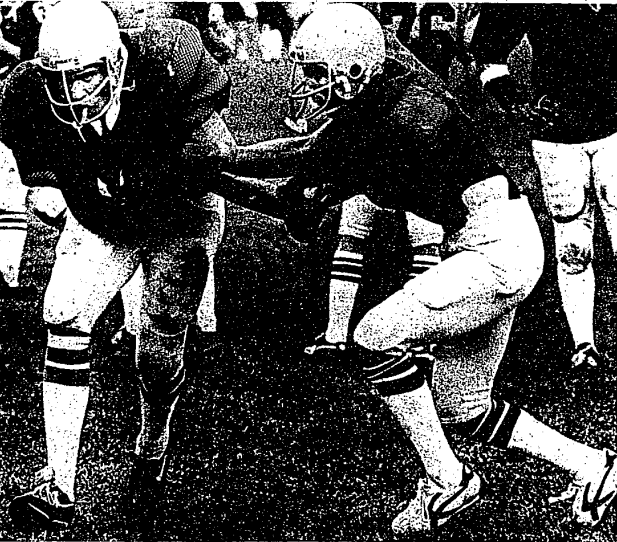
"She doesn't pull any punches. She deals with real problems teenagers face."

The mitzvah manual distributed to students states that the ceremony is simple and dignified.

"Although our past is important, we feel the present and future are equally valuable, and we encourage contemporary efforts and contributions," the manual states.

Adds Mrs. Fletcher: "I've been tutoring almost a year and have found, through my students, that only two role models were superb students early in life."

"The children learn that being a great student is not a prerequisite for greatness later in life."



Holland's Raiders

Coach Ron Holland and his North Farmington Raiders have hit the gridiron and are preparing for another season of football. Here Doug Shulte (left) and Greg Goldstein practice a handoff. The team's first game

will be against Flint Southwestern on Sept. 8. To read more about local football action, turn to Section B. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Book sale opens today

Where would you go to find a copy of your old high school annual — back issues of the Architectural Digest, a Hemingway first edition or a 50-year-old cookbook?

The 18th Annual Brandeis Used Book Sale, of course.

Michigan's largest used book sale, featuring more than 100,000 volumes, is an annual event sponsored by the Brandeis University National Women's Committee, Greater Detroit Chapter.

For the third consecutive year, the sale will be held at Tel Twelve Mall in Southfield today, Aug. 30, through Tuesday, Sept. 4, during regular mall hours.

The book sale serves a threefold purpose: It affords the public an opportunity to purchase good books at bargain prices.

It recycles unsold books by donating them to schools, community groups, prisons and hospitals.

Proceeds from the sale support and maintain the Brandeis University Libraries. Funds are used for materi-

als, staff and library operations at the non-sectarian, non-profit educational institution in Waltham, Mass.

inside

"IMMEDIATELY!"

Barbara Gorzcek told us she sold her couch and loveseat "immediately" after her ad appeared in last Monday's paper. But such quick response isn't unusual. After all, she used the only classified section in town that reaches more than 150,000 homes. Call us today to place your ad.

644-1070

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