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Twenty-five cents

School chief hopeful despite fewer students

By Tom Baer
staff writer

The yellow buses are rolling again now that 10,500 Farmington-area youngsters have somewhere to go mornings and afternoons.

The Farmington Public Schools opened its doors last week with approximately 900 fewer students to educate than last year at this time. About 80 percent of Farmington's pupil population rides buses to and from school, officials have said.

Despite the steadily declining enrollment, a reality in most Detroit-area districts, Farmington Superintendent Lew Schulman is optimistic about the coming school year.

"We had a very good opening," said Schulman, who begins his eighth year as Farmington's superintendent. "Our projections in terms of enrollment are pretty much on the money. The outlook is for a very good school year."

The drop in enrollment didn't surprise Schulman. "We anticipated that," he said. "We've been losing about

500 or 600 kids every year.

"The drop in enrollment in our elementary schools has leveled off. Now it's starting to hit the junior and senior high schools."

The Farmington District has an operating budget of \$44,319,000 and levies \$3.7 mills. Voters in that district will be asked to renew five mills in a special election set for Sept. 20, a Tuesday.

PART of Schulman's optimism about the 1983-84 school year stems from the fact that the district won't be

"hit by a teachers' strike. The teachers' union agreed to a one-year extension of its contract, which now expires July 1, 1984."

Farmington's Board of Education is negotiating with its custodians, administrators and bus drivers.

"We're negotiating with these groups," Schulman said, "but at least everybody's on deck."

Something new in the Farmington District this year is the Task Force on School Properties, which will study

ways of more effectively using school property.

Recently approved by the board, the task force is headed by Bill Priak, an assistant superintendent, and includes staff members as well as people from the school community.

"The task force is going to review all of our (school) property in terms of future projections to see whether we should hold on to the property, sell it or expand," Schulman said.

The task force will hold its first meeting at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Sept.

15, at the District's central office on Shawwassee Road. The public is invited to attend.

Farmington also has two new staff positions — an elementary science consultant and a part-time English writing coordinator who will work with secondary students.

The new positions were implemented as a result of the board-approved Curriculum Development Fund, which was established "to encourage and stimu-

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The buses are back on the road which is a sure indication that school is in and summer vacation is out. More than 10,000 Farmington School District students returned to the classroom last week.

RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

Walled Lake is just fine, says report

By Patricia M. Bowling
Novi-Walled Lake News

Farmington Hills residents, in an ongoing boundary dispute with the Walled Lake school district, claim their children could receive a better education in Farmington schools.

Not true, according to a 1981 study conducted by a University of Michigan education professor, who found Walled Lake schools "more exciting, more interested in positive change, and more interested in children and the community" than Farmington schools.

Farmington had about \$38,000 state equalized valuation behind each pupil in Walled Lake's \$45,000 in 1981.

CURTIS VAN VORHEES, professor of educational administration at the University of Michigan, completed the study in October 1981.

Voorhees said Robert Brody of Country Ridge Home Builders Inc., Troy, commissioned the review of the two districts.

"The purpose of this review was to determine the feasibility of requesting a transfer of Section 6 (of) the city of Farmington Hills from the Walled Lake School District to the Farmington School District," Van Voorhees wrote in his report to Brody.

"If I were to send my own children to one of the two schools, I would, without hesitation, send them to Walled Lake," Van Voorhees said.

Brody's subdivision, Country Ridge Estates, occupies about one-half of Section 6 and contains about 340 single-family lots, according to Farmington Hills City Planner Richard Lampi. Brody said he thought a transfer of the area to the Farmington school district would facilitate the sale of home sites in the subdivision.

But when the results of the study were evaluated, "we decided to drop the transfer request," Brody said. Now, when people interested in purchasing a lot in Country Ridge Estates ask about the schools, he shows them a copy of the professor's report.

IN HIS REVIEW, Van Voorhees examined facilities, curriculum, staff and administration in both school districts.

"I have been unable to justify the property shift," he said.

"If I were to send my own children to one of the two schools, I would, without hesitation, send them to Walled Lake."

— Curtis Van Voorhees
U of M professor

Teaching staff in the two districts was found to be "about equal" in training, degrees and experience. Farmington, however, captured the advantage in (1981) salaries, which averaged about \$2,500 more per teacher.

Middle school and junior high school curriculum also was found to be "about equal," but Walled Lake schools pulled the advantage in elementary curriculum and a "distinct advantage" in high school curriculum.

Van Voorhees described Farmington's elementary program in 1981 as "quite traditional," except for a program for the gifted. Walled Lake, on the other hand, "has a strong basic program," but includes strong programs in art, music, outdoor education and exchange student programs, Van Voorhees said.

On the high school level, the professor reported "Walled Lake has a distinctly broader curriculum in nearly every area."

"While I examined many areas — leadership included — I was unable to prove that Farmington schools were better than Walled Lake schools."

"I have been a teacher in grades 7-12, a junior high and high school principal, a counselor and head of testing K-12, and a college professor. If I were to send my own children to one of the two schools, I would, without hesitation, send them to Walled Lake."

BRODY SAID he thought the professor's report was favorable to both school districts. But because it did not clearly favor Farmington, he decided to dismiss the notion of requesting Section 6 be transferred to Farmington.

One year after Brody dropped the

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Kind of boring, they say Students rate sex ed class

By Dan Vecchioni
staff writer

It may take a larger vocabulary these days to get through sex education classes, but students in the Clarenceville School District don't seem to be complaining.

The sex ed program was replaced in Clarenceville a few years back by the reproductive health and family plan-

ning program. Despite the wordier name, the new program is basically the old sex ed program with the addition of birth control instruction.

In a recent district survey, 271 of the 295 students in last year's program responded that they benefited from their participation. But getting them to agree on the program's positive points was another story.

"It's good for you to learn — even if

it is boring," one seventh grader remarked.

"Fifth graders think they know it all. They have a lot to learn," a sixth grader said in recommending the program be offered to future sixth graders.

"You learn how you look on inside and outside," another sixth grader commented.

THE NEW PROGRAM is patterned under the guidelines established in 1978 by the state Board of Education, according to Patricia Vickery, administrative assistant for instruction for the Clarenceville district, which includes portions of Livonia, Redford Township and Farmington Hills.

The program is offered to Clarence-

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Arson suspected in house fire

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills fire officials suspect flammable liquids were used to start a fire early Thursday morning in a house that was under construction in the Meadowhills subdivision.

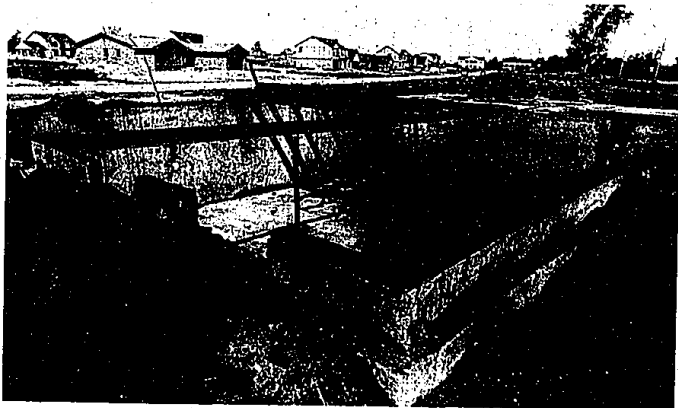
"Right now it's classified as suspicious," said Lt. Richard Marinucci. Samples from the house have been sent to the Michigan State Police Crime Lab in Northville to determine what caused the fire.

Italo American Building Corp., which fire officials say owned the house on Glenwill, could not be reached for comment. But Marinucci said the builder estimated the house suffered \$50,000 worth of damage.

Neighbors in the unfinished subdivision near Halsted and Nine Mile called the fire department at about 5:30 a.m., Marinucci said. The house had been burning about a half hour before firefighters arrived at the scene, he said.

"By the time we got there it was a giant ball of flames," Marinucci said. "There was nothing standing."

The house was "at a pretty good stage of construction" with the roof and walls already up, and plumbing and electrical units installed. Twenty firefighters from stations one and three responded to the fire with five pieces of equipment. The fire was out within a half hour after fire fighters arrived on the scene, Marinucci said.



RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

Officials are investigating a blaze which leveled subdivisions of Farmington Hills. This nearly completed home in one of the newer

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