

# Testing isn't all it's talked up to be, say educators

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"It's very wrapped up in the idea of communicating with the public," Bauer said. "The goal is to say, 'hey 85 percent can do this or that.'"

How many of Oakland County's local school districts use competency and proficiency tests for grade promotion and graduation is anyone's guess, Bauer said. For the most part, the school districts don't report these

statistics to the intermediate district, he said.

Much of the opposition to strict standards for promotion and graduation in Farmington stems from district officials' reaction to the national educational reports that have appeared in recent years.

UNLIKE MANY districts in the country which felt short of standards suggested in the reports, Farmington

officials felt the district was pretty much on the ball.

"We were on the path long before the report came out," Schulman said.

Even though the standards suggested in these reports "were not unusual to us," Schulman said, "they caused us to look into things."

In a report issued to the school board in January, Schulman said that "We cannot cope with academic deficiencies by mechanically raising requirements."

"And, rather than lower standards to accommodate those who are not going on to college, we are scrutinizing the content of the curriculum. Increases in expectations — and we subscribe wholeheartedly to this, must be accompanied by careful examination of courses and skills across all grade levels."

Before the appearance of "A Nation at Risk" (a report critical of the state

of American schools prepared by the National Commission on Excellence in Education), the district raised the credit requirement for graduation to 21 credits, the second highest in Oakland County, Schulman said. In addition, the math requirement was increased to two years while the physical education requirement was reduced to 1½ years, he said.

Since that time, Farmington has also witnessed a continuing increase in academic course selection and a drop in study hall enrollments, Schulman added.

Out of 924 graduates in 1984-85, 584 had more than 21 credits, Schulman said in the district's annual report. Fif-

ty percent of the graduates completed three years of English and 53 percent completed three years of social studies, according to the report.

In the high schools, 73 percent of the students are enrolled in science and 93 percent in mathematics. In addition, advanced placement enrollment in the three high schools increased to 181 from 90 the previous year.

Efforts are being made to increase computer instruction as well as foreign languages, particularly in middle school, Schulman said. Maintaining an excellent vocational education program in the face of increased national emphasis on academics is also a district goal, he added.

# Math and preschool get special attention

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Lewis said. Developmental kindergarten is offered at Fairview and Alameda.

"It gives the child a chance to mature and get basic skills so the child is not just sitting in a waiting position," Lewis said.

"It's much better to hold them back

at this age," Schulman said.

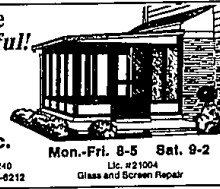
Holding back an older child when friends are being promoted can cause damage to the self-image.

"Presently, it's a voluntary program because we don't have transportation," Lewis said.

Parents of about 40 of the children eligible for the program have decided against it, Lewis said. But officials are uncertain whether that's because of the lack of transportation.

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Everyone is welcome.

If you have not been involved, and want to catch up on what people are talking about, stop by the library and look through the "Downtown Development" collection.

Building owners, and tenants with long term leases, who are interested in

rehabilitation loans at low interest should contact Robert Schultz at City Hall, 474-5500.

DEVELOPMENTAL kindergarten children are not locked into the program, Lewis said. If a teacher determines there's no need for a child to be in the program, they can be sent to kindergarten.

"We can only validate that (the assessment) by seeing the child in action," Lewis said.

The developmental kindergarten program was started in 1981 with 30 children. This year, 90 students are eligible for developmental kindergarten.

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