

Attendance policy will change this fall

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Attendance procedures for Farmington high schools will be streamlined and made tougher this fall, following review of proposed changes by the school district's attorney and student and staff committees.

The Farmington Board of Education reviewed the matter Tuesday, with no trustees voicing opposition to the plan. No board action was taken, as none was necessary to change the Student Code, trustees said.

The previous attendance policy, formulated in 1981, was "somewhat effective, yet confusing," according to Lynn Nutter, assistant superintendent for secondary instruction.

"We've received a great deal of requests for change and review."

A committee chaired by Harrison High School assistant principal John Summerlee and comprised of three teachers and two other administrators was appointed to study the reported attendance policy problem.

"The policy . . . has worked to some degree," Summerlee said, "but there's a tremendous amount of du-

plication. The work was awesome."

Under the new procedure, parents and students will be required to sign a copy of the policy, showing they have read and understood it, before fall schedules will be issued, administrators said.

Under the new policy, excused absences are those "reported by parent or guardian within 24 hours of student's return to school." They can include illness, religious holidays, death in the family, a doctor's appointment or prearranged absence and school activities.

Each high school currently has a 24-hour answering service on the attendance line, to aid with the 24-hour timeline, administrators said.

Under the new policy, unexcused absences include a total of three unexcused tardies, oversleeping car problems, and any absences not reported by parent or guardian within the 24 hours.

"Unexcused absences seem to be the biggest problem," Summerlee told the board, noting the absences are not usually delaying, but during specific school periods.

THE CHANGE of three unexcused tardinesses equalling one unexcused absence should "curtail the tardiness problem," Summerlee said.

A student 16 or older may be dropped from a class, if he or she has four unexcused absences or excessive absences, the policy said. Discipline for unexcused absences is at the discretion of school administrators and may include "parent conferences, detention, suspension, placement in study hall, referral to Youth Assistance for counseling, referral to Juvenile Court for truancy, or prosecution of parents for neglect."

Teachers will shoulder the responsibility of noting excessive absence problems under the new policy. Disciplinary measures taken in these cases may include: "parent conferences, makeup time after school, student/parent/teacher contracts, or removal from class."

School board president Susan Renneis voiced concern about a child being "tagged" when "parents don't meet their responsibilities" of calling the school to excuse the student.

Nutter and Summerlee said enforcement of the policy would still be at the discretion of administrators and that parental problems would be taken into account.

COMMITEE MEMBER and North Farmington principal Don Cowan said due to the policy change, secretarial staffs would be freed from paperwork and could do more phone follow-up on absences.

Informational meetings will be held at each school, to advise parents and students, added Pam O'Malley, committee member and assistant principal at Farmington High School.

Students also have an appeal process through the grade-level administrator at the school, with further appeals continuing through the building principal, the assistant superintendent for secondary instruction (Nutter) then to the school board, according to the policy.

"It is important that students establish and maintain good school attendance patterns," the policy states. "Such patterns of behavior will benefit not only the academic status of students, but also their personal and professional development in years to come."

ministrator to the group's steering committee.

- Cable Television — wants to maximize use of this medium.
- Expanding Audiences — the committee will seek ways to reach other audiences, including non-parents, senior citizens and businesses, who need to know about the district.
- Community Survey — a survey, either written or telephone, is planned to assess levels of knowledge, needs and desires of the community.
- School/Business Partnerships — exploring opportunities for creative partnerships.
- Building/Department Meeting — a fall launch meeting, providing practical ideas to enhance the committee's efforts throughout the district.
- Employee Recognition — increasing this to help keep staff members motivated.

Community committee reports progress

Community relations is an important item on the Farmington Public School district's agenda for the coming year.

The district's Community Relations Committee reported its progress to the school board Tuesday, and gave a list of future ways to bring the message of the school district to the general public.

The committee was formed in 1982, with representatives from each school, and a 10-person steering committee comprised of various department administrators and par-

ents, according to committee chairman Lawrence Freedman, assistant superintendent for elementary instruction.

The committee's activities has served as a prototype for other marketing programs throughout Oakland County, according to Committee member Barbara Novatis, administrator for the district.

She discussed the district's information folder — used for an annual really breakfast — which is now being used in other areas including as a recruitment tool for colleges

and universities.

The Homes for Sale free real estate listings book carries an advertising message about the schools twice each year, Freedman reported, throughout the Farmington, Bloomfield, Birmingham and Troy areas.

The purpose of the committee is:

- To improve internal communications so that employees are well-informed.
- To develop newsletters, improved parent conferences and improved communication with students.
- To develop general public announcements to reach the community members who do not have children in school.

The committee targets an audience of parents, non-parents in the district, and business proprietors operating in the community.

"The public schools are supported by and maintain a strong responsibility to the community which it

services," the group's statement of purpose.

The committee has recognized 10 key areas it will address during the coming year. These include:

- Realtors' Orientation — the ongoing program for area real estate agents and personnel managers who have need of information about the school district. The group proposes a changed format for the 1987 program, including small group sessions and additional information.
- Key Parent Information Seminar — a seminar would be scheduled for each school, where parent leaders would receive information about the total district.
- Speakers Bureau — the project would identify people willing to take a video presentation of the district and give an overview of it at local service club meetings.
- Committee Member Expansion — addition of a middle school ad-

ministrator to the group's steering committee.

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Water prices to rise

Farmington Hills residents will pay more for water usage beginning July 1.

Farmington Hills City Council adopted a resolution increasing consumers' water rates by 76 cents per 1,000 cubic feet of water used.

The rate change is expected to increase the average Farmington Hills consumers' water bill by \$3.80 a quarter based on 5,000 cubic feet. The current \$6.75 charge per 1,000 cubic feet of water consumed will increase to \$7.51, with a minimum quarterly charge of \$12.02 plus meter service charge.

In March, the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department notified the Oakland County Public Works De-

partment of the planned rate increase.

Oakland County then recommended that the increase should be passed on to consumers on water used as of July 1. The price increase will be reflected in bills issued as of Aug. 1.

part of the planned rate increase.

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