

Studies and Forward Steps

Community involvement have been key words during the year just past. It has been a period of exhaustive study in several directions with parents and students joining teachers and administrators in the search for new approaches to the educational experience.

A citizens' advisory committee addressing itself to the broad topic of family life education sought ways to deal with three main sub-topics: substance abuse, human sexuality, and minority understanding.

First to receive Board approval was the substance abuse program which dealt with the problems of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. The task group's report recommended appointment of a substance abuse co-ordinator, in-service training workshops for school personnel, and an opportunity for parents to receive information through the adult education department.

According to its objectives, secondary schools shall provide a minimal student program of two seminars per year in grades nine through 12 dealing with the subject of substance abuse.

Basic principles relating to human sexuality were set forth by the task group dealing with that subject. They suggested that parental and community awareness are obligatory and are essential to any program to be introduced into the public school educational system.

The well-prepared, well-trained and properly-motivated teacher is considered the core and central figure in any program involving human sexuality. Adequate training must occur, both generally and specifically for the teachers at all levels. In-service training on a continuing basis shall be provided.

Re-examination and reappraisal of this program on a continuing and on-going basis is mandatory and expected. This obligation and responsibility is to be shared by parents, school, and community.

Specific program content, materials, teaching aids used and concepts developed at any age level must reflect the ability of the students to grasp and understand the subject at their level.

Permission to be excused from particular subject areas may be granted.

Rights of parents in this sensitive area were affirmed including their right and obligation to teach their children the facts of life and, more especially, the meaning and significance of these facts; their right to receive assistance from the larger community in the education of their children in human sexuality; right of parents' access to books, group discussions, and other educational experiences designed to help them carry out their roles as the primary sex educators of their children; their right to be informed about the curriculum, concepts, and teaching materials used in the sex education of their children; and their right to withdraw their children from participation in sex instruction without incurring prejudice if after careful personal study they find their own personal values are being subverted.

Proposed methods for implementing the guidelines drawn up by the committee are still to be presented to the Board of Education.

Minority understanding was considered as it related to student attitudes, their exposure to minorities on the administrative staff, via the foreign exchange program, and in related school activities such as assemblies and clubs.

Other aspects of minority understanding were considered in relation to curriculum planning and development, the classroom teacher, personnel recruitment, and involvement of the parent community.

Another comprehensive study involving all segments of the community was that of the educational program for junior high schools.

A co-ordinating committee augmented by representatives from each junior high conducted a very thorough and detailed analysis of educational experiences as they now exist and proceeded to develop guidelines and objectives which could add relevance to future curriculum.

Springboard for the first such all-encompassing evaluation of junior high programs was an effort by the FEA to work toward development of a five-class-per-teacher

scheduling load. Maintenance of a high quality educational experience demanded a full exploration of existing methods and their alternatives.

Several exploratory committee sessions produced the agreement that the present curriculum has room for improvement though members were not sure what changes should be initiated. It was also agreed that presently no organized systematic procedure exists in the district for evaluating and implementing changes in educational program.

In most cases, curriculum changes have taken place as a result of teacher request, administrative suggestion, or a committee appointed to work in a specific area.

It was heartily agreed that the projected study should be conducted by those within the district who are most affected by the junior high program — students, parents, teachers, and administrators. It was further agreed that the entire approach should take into account available research knowledge related to the growth pattern of the adolescent, learning theory, philosophy, and psychology.

During the coming weeks, the committee will analyze the detailed surveys made throughout last year and develop recommendations for priority program development. These will be presented to the Board of Education for consideration. Members of their curriculum committee first having had an opportunity to attend as observers the final meetings of the co-ordinating committee.

What this all adds up to is that never before have so many segments of the school community been so actively involved in the decision-making process.

Curriculum Changes Win Student Applause

After a year of trial, changes in high school English, social studies, and biological science have won approval from both students and faculty. To quote an editorial from 'Blue and White,' the Farmington High School newspaper, "Some actions of the Board of Education have made school more enjoyable than it has ever been before."

Fuller explanation revealed that increasingly specialized courses made it possible for the student to concentrate on his areas of interest rather than attempt to absorb "a million years of history in one term" for instance.

Social studies programs saw a drop of sections on international relations and economics. Courses on specific continents were not as popular as those on ancient, medieval, and modern European history.

Vocational education moved ahead into exciting new areas made possible by expanded facilities in the high school additions. Industrial arts students, for example, built fiberglass canoes, dune buggies, and aquaplanes. Dramatics and graphic arts won spectacular popularity.

Participation by community experts in the vocational education areas added a valuable new dimension to the department as retailers, industrialists, and other specialists lent their experience and wisdom to existing programs.

For the coming year, a seminar in problem solving has been added to the mathematics department as has a course in trigonometry and topics in advanced algebra. Psychology has been introduced on an experimental basis because of an expressed interest on the part of students and faculty.

Music theory for advanced students has been made available and the year to come will continue a proving ground for these challenging selections.

DISTRICT DATA

Number of schools -- 26

19 Elementary

4 Junior High

3 Senior High

Enrollment -- 16,400

Certified Employees -- 850

Total School Employees -- 1298

Equalized Valuation -- \$293,

594,568

Tax Rate (for 1969-1970)

\$36.93 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation

\$29.93 for operation

\$ 7. for debt retirement

Area -- 35 square miles including most of Farmington Township, the City of Farmington, and a portion of West Bloomfield Township.



From the
Desk of the
Superintendent

Any panoramic view includes a wide composite of many things. Such a view of past, present and future of the Farmington Public School District would reveal a number of interesting facts and situations. Let's take a look at a few of them.

Rate of growth within the school district has declined from a high of 1000 students per year to approximately 150 students as we enter the 1970-71 school year. There are still many tracts of land available for residential development, and a sudden turn in the economy could bring a new upward thrust to school enrollment.

Even the modest increase of 150 students is the equivalent of five to six additional classrooms. The need could quickly return to an annual requirement of 25 or 30.

In the past three years, there has been an increase of approximately 1200 students. To accommodate these, some backlog before 1967, and anticipated needs for the immediate future, the following facilities have been constructed: Forest Elementary (1967), Power Junior High (1968), additions at Farmington High, North Farmington High, and William Grace Elementary (all occupied in 1969), Harrison High and Wood Creek Elementary (1970).

Future needs may vary according to development in the community, but the present students and pre-school age children can be counted even now. Attention of staff personnel and members of the Board of Education will be focused on their needs.

Significant changes have taken place in curriculum development. Such changes have been implemented for the sole purpose of improving instruction and making courses more meaningful to students. Attention has been given to English, social studies, science, and vocational education in the secondary schools. Improvement in services and additional personnel have been provided in reading instruction and library services in the elementary schools.

Resident students from Our Lady of Sorrows High School have been served on a shared time basis at Farmington High School, and at the same time, students from North and Farmington High have been served at Oakland Community College in special instructional areas.

1969-70 has brought about an increase in community involvement in school affairs. The splendid work of the Family Life Education Committee and the Vocational Advisors have been excellent examples of cooperative efforts.

What does the future hold? Many things quite unseen at the present time, but here are a few of the "knowns." More school-rooms and buildings will obviously be needed. The curriculum will be constantly evaluated and changes will be implemented to improve and strengthen. Community participation will continue or even increase both in terms of evaluation and suggested changes or new programs. The valuable by-product is better understanding for the community and an improved school district.

Finance is the big problem. Continued effort must be directed to the shift of educational finance away from local property taxes to a more equitable distribution. The cost of education will continue to rise as the general economy moves. Citizens will have to decide on the quality of education in terms of its importance and its cost to society.

Farmington Public School District will remain in business and will endeavor to serve the community effectively.

Roderick J. Smith.



Jim Lough, ninth grader at O. E. Dunckel Junior High, expresses some student opinions at a committee meeting devoted to evaluation of current educational procedures in the district's junior high schools. Seated with him are (from left) Jerry Morawski, administrative intern at Gill; John Pyne, O. E. Dunckel counselor; and Mrs. Lynne Hudson, counselor at East.