

Highmeadow extends hello to fall recruits

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and, of course, the buses that came rolling in about 12:50 p.m.

"THIS IS very special. The first day of school is always exciting, but this school in particular is special," said fifth grade teacher Bette Buckler, who most recently taught at Larkshire Elementary before moving to Highmeadow.

"The main point this week is going to be to make them feel welcome and part of the family, because we are a family."

Classrooms at the school were ready to go, halls had a fresh coat of paint, and many of the specialty rooms were being prepped for elective classes in science, art and music. The carpeted media center still awaited shelving, but books were being delivered Tuesday afternoon — probably the most hectic time for the staff.

They were still happy. "Don't worry, be happy — that's our theme," said newly appointed principal Janice Colliton, quoting a current pop tune. "The majority of the children have at least been to the school and met their teachers," she added.

The Highmeadow staff was busy preparing for this day long before Tuesday afternoon's "grand opening."

According to Colliton, they worked throughout the summer writing course descriptions and objectives, and readying their classrooms for the new year. "Teachers wrote curriculum all summer long," she said. "Behind each summary, there are hours and hours and days and days of work. Not just some of them worked, all of them did."

THE STAFF has planned a number of special things for Highmeadow students, in addition to the many elective courses that will be offered in the pilot program.

All students will be taught how to develop "thinking logs," a sort of personal diary of ideas. A student in each classroom will also be selected as "student of the week."

'The main point this week is going to be to make them feel welcome and part of the family, because we are a family.'

— Bette Buckler
teacher



When her bus didn't show up on time, third grader Lindsay Hamilton got a ride to school with Farmington Hills traffic officer Ed Fitzpatrick.

At 25, Highmeadow reborn with a twist

By Casey Hane
staff writer

It was 25 years ago this fall that Highmeadow School first opened its doors.

After years of service as a traditional elementary, parochial high school and community and adult education center, the school has come full circle to again house Farmington elementary students this fall.

This year's program at Highmeadow has a new twist, as the district begins a two-year pilot program in what officials are calling their "common campus" school — a non-traditional approach to education.

It is designed to offer students in grades 1-5 not only a core curriculum of basics, but choices in elective classes and integrated advanced classes for gifted students.

The 298 students were selected from across the district by a lottery system. The "common campus" program was prompted last January following widespread community



Fifth graders Mike Connor (left) and Maria Lesnick look at the iguana in the science room.

concern with proposed boundary changes that would have shifted hundreds of elementary students.

Superintendent Graham Lewis, who encouraged the new program, calls it a "fresh way to look at elementary education."

THE EFFORT was also supported by school trustees, some of whom would like to see a similar program throughout the district if it works well.

Lewis has said if the "common campus" concept is successful, he

would like to see it applied in the proposed new elementary school on the west side of the district. Voters will make a decision about whether to approve funding the new school in a special bond election Monday, Sept. 19.

A "Come As You Are Open House" was held last week, said Highmeadow principal Janice Colliton. "We wanted to have students and parents meet teachers... to lower the level of anxiety about coming to school."

Lewis said there "had to be over 1,000 people there, and I don't think we're bragging. It's one of those rare treats where people are off and running."

The school has three rooms each in the first and second grades and two rooms each for grades three, four and five. Other specialized rooms include art, science, music and a media center, which are all receiving finishing touches.

Each Highmeadow student will select four enrichment courses per term, including fall, winter and spring. These courses cover the areas of: language arts, social studies, math, science, computers, physical education, health art, creative movement, performing arts, music and instrumental music, and advanced study classes.

Class menu full of courses

The world's the limit for Highmeadow elementary students this fall when they choose elective classes.

According to district music coordinator Paul Barber, also a Highmeadow staff member, the selection book of 68 courses reads like a college catalog: computers, interpersonal communications, local history, soccer, architecture, astronomy, storytelling. The list covers a variety of learning areas.

Here's a small sampling of enrichment courses, with abbreviated descriptions. Not all are offered at every grade level:

● **Monsters! Monsters!** — Is there really a "nightmare in our closet"? Does a monster really "live under your bed"? What are you really afraid of? In this class, you will think, talk and share ideas with other kids about monsters. You may even find out that you're afraid of a monster that isn't really there at all!

● **Newspapers, Newspapers, Learn All About Them** — WANTED IMMEDIATELY — Students interested in learning about the newspaper. No experience necessary. Added options: activities about the local and national

news, sports, comics, classified ads and the weather report. Don't miss the scoop!

● **Investors in Training** — Have you ever wondered who made the first airplane or telephone? Find out who they were, how they did it and try inventing something yourself.

● **What Your Appetite with Graphing** — How long will it take for an Eskimo Pie to melt? Why does soda pop have bubbles? How much sugar is in bubble gum? Are all bags of M & M's alike in weight and color? Find out the answers to these questions and many more.

● **Coping With Stress** — Are you concerned a lot by what your classmates think of you? How easily can you make friends? Get along with people? When you are "upright," how do you relax? Join "coping with stress" for 12 weeks of interesting activities and discussion.

Educators see need to change

Farmington educators know if they don't keep up-to-date, they'll be left behind in an age of computers and instant information.

Teachers were busy last week looking at innovative computer software and deciding which would be most effective in their classrooms. Favorites included "Miners Cove," which offers a computerized version of science learning, and "Odell Lake," which teaches about fish and animal life.

"It's changing an emphasis, it's got to change what we teach," said Richard Strauss, math/computer coordinator for the Farmington district, who helped to organize last week's summer technology seminars for employees of Farmington and Birmingham school districts.

Pat Benefield, a paraprofessional at Farmington Training Center, was searching for special programs that could be used for students with learning disabilities. Educators in her situation need "something less frustrating for them, to build up their confidence," she said.

"This could be used once the book knowledge is introduced," said Dottie Harris, a fourth grade teacher at Forest Elementary who was working with palkeys and levers on a colorful computer screen. "It reinforces the book facts."

Teachers 'plunge' in to learn computers

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"This is not just a commitment to computers, but to updated technology as well," said Richard Strauss, math/computer coordinator for Farmington schools.

Desktop publishing, using video cameras in the classroom, previewing software programs and general computer introduction classes were all offered as part of last week's joint effort. Although both districts have held technology seminars in the past, this was only the second year they joined educational forces, and shared expenses and ideas.

PAT SCHNEIDER, computer coordinator for Birmingham schools, is excited about technology trends and their impact on education.

"This computer is so adaptive to everybody," she said, watching employees training on Apple hardware. "I love technology and where it's going. A board goal in both schools (districts) is to integrate computers into the curriculum."

In Birmingham, the Apple McIntosh is already widely used; Schneider predicts that it will soon be in Farmington. The Apple brand has made schools a main target market. The McIntosh has already found a

niche in the Farmington School/Community Relations Department and the print shop at Farmington High School. One has been purchased for use by student journalists at Farmington Harrison High School, where the award-winning Catalyst newspaper is published.

BOTH SEAHOLM and Groves high schools in Birmingham will also compose their school newspapers on the McIntosh this year, Schneider added.

Computer "network labs" are also being set up this year in both districts, allowing students to have a learning center and the manufacturer, which donates most of the equipment — to use the center as a demonstration center.

"It's a good deal for both of us," said Strauss. "We can learn and they can sell some equipment."

Despite all the education and user-friendly equipment on the market, however, there is still a technological fear, the educators said.

"I don't think we'll ever be past it, totally," Schneider said. "But a lot have reached a comfortable level."

Teachers realize the change is necessary, Strauss added. "People take the plunge. Overall, both of us see a lot of change going on."

He said direction has shifted away from computer programming, toward how the computer can be used in everyday life and integrate learning in all subjects.

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