

# Farmington Observer



## hallways

A page of Farmington-area school news

## Schools, Headlee disagree

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HEADLEE SAID his Farmington Hills company, Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of America, would receive a tax increase of about \$10,000.

Deputy superintendent for Farmington schools, Michael Flanagan, explained the district's philosophy. He advocates spreading the debt because the use of the new building and improvements will also be spread "over a number of generations."

Ironically, Flanagan added, the district could have levied its full operating millage and done the projects in 3-4 years without voter approval, but felt it was a project that should be bonded through voter approval.

School officials also believe they should hold at least 10 percent of the district's budget as a cash on hand to be used as a buffer.

This year, the district has a surplus, or a fund equity, of \$8.5 million. In addition, the district has about \$1.5 million not yet committed from the \$34 million sale of 38 acres at 12 Mile and Drake to Little Caesar Enterprises in 1985, Flanagan said.

Farmington school officials have voiced concern about the looming threat of school finance reform, which could erode the district's operating money — another reason for a surplus.

"My great concern is we've got to get done what we've got to get done, because there may not be a tomorrow," said district treasurer Jack Inch. "I am deathly afraid of a change in school financing."

TRUSTEE JANICE Rolnick turned the tables on Headlee, an insurance executive, likening the district's financial policies to that of an insurance policy.



THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer

Richard Headlee talks school financing with the Farmington school board Tuesday night.

"A fund equity is an insurance policy — we are paying as we go," he said. "We're investing taxpayers dollars in . . . leadership for this nation."

"I don't feel a 10 percent fund equity is even enough protection for some of the things that could happen."

But Headlee said, "If there's any surplus to be had, then it ought to be in the pockets of the taxpayers and not in the pockets of govern-

mental institutions."

Former school trustee and attorney Michael Shipple said he supported the bond issue, and questioned whether the district could use any of its fund equity money for capital work, as Headlee proposed.

Shipple also called Headlee's approach to the board just 13 days before the election "a little unfortunate. These issues would have been more appropriately raised six months or a year ago."

## 'Free market' principle suggested for schools

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

AFTER PROMOTING a theme of "change and progress" during the past 2½ years, the Farmington Public Schools chief is aiming for more of the same.

In a recently released year-end report, superintendent Graham Lewis advocates students, and their parents, be given more choices about which schools they attend.

"We will move with caution," he said. "Hopefully, we will demonstrate no one need be confined to artificial boundaries. Families should have available schools of their choice, in the same way they have choices of services in a free market system."

He sees "a two-year window of opportunity" for the district, including alternative programs, new definitions of gifted education and special education, more effective schools and a re-emphasis on vocational education. Lewis is also reviewing school administration, in light of a state mandate requiring top administrators be recertified every six years.

THE 27-PAGE report gives factual updates about the district, outlines achievements from the past year, and gives an overview of short- and long-term goals.

"We will work out solutions and not react as an unyielding bureaucracy," Lewis promised, "or let narrow, self-interest impair our vision toward what is good and proper for the total community."

Lewis has held the district's top post since July 1986, when he restructured the administration and set new policies and goals.

During his tenure, he has pro-



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— Graham Lewis  
superintendent

motivated changes, including a new staff development department, curriculum revisions districtwide, a new alternative program at Highmeadow School plus an "open enrollment" policy at low enrollment schools — which this year include Harrison High School and Warner Middle School.

ACCORDING TO his report, Lewis said the future focus will be on several key areas:

- The district will work to define who are gifted students in all areas. "We educate the handicapped in ways today undreamed of as late as 10 years ago. We will give equal attention to the education of our gifted children," he said.

- Next year, selected students from the district's two special education facilities will attend Farmington secondary schools for the first time. The district will continue in this trend and encourage other districts using Farmington's special ed-

ucation programs to do the same, when possible. "We must allow families and their children to be accepted in a normal school environment to the greatest possible degree," he added.

- Administrators will attend workshops to examine their roles in the district and allow them to be recertified. This will be done through the district's staff development department.

- Taking the cue from Gill Elementary and Farmington High School, other schools in the district will be trained in the Effective School Model during a November in-service training day. The model allows school staff and students to get involved in planning to make their school better through a grass-roots movement.

- Lewis advocates ridding the district of the "caste system . . . between those who pursue academia and those who select vocational education."

## inkwell

Inkwell provides news and information about Farmington-area primary and secondary students. The column appears monthly throughout the year as part of the Observer's "School Page." Send news items to: The School Page, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. Include a telephone number where a contact person can be reached during the day.

### YOUNG WRITERS

Three Farmington students were among 11 statewide winners in the 1988 National Council of Teachers of English Promising Young Writers Program.

Yuan Chong and Sarah Edford, both of Power Middle School, and Ruthe Rott of Dunckel Middle School were winners in the contest for eighth graders.

Students submitted one sample of their best writing and did an impromptu piece on an important influence in their lives.

The statewide program is coordinated by Farmington teacher Barbara Rebbeck, also a Farmington resident.

### YOUTH PROGRAM

Four Farmington Hills students recently participated in Michigan Technological University's Summer Youth Program in Houghton.

Jay Stone, Matt Black, Heather Armstrong and Jackie McKelvey participated in the 16th annual program held in July and August at the Upper Peninsula school.

The program focuses on career exploration and development of new skills through laboratory, classroom and field experiences. Each area was directed by a Michigan Tech faculty member or specialist in that area of study.

### FOOD BIDS

Lansing-based Schaefer Bakeries was recently awarded the bread bid for Farmington Public Schools. It was the lowest of two bidders at \$5,360. Invitations to bid were sent to nine companies.

The lowest of three vendors for ice cream product bids was Seymour Storch & Co. of Detroit for \$8,670. Five vendors were invited to bid.

### MEETING DATES

The regular meetings of the Farmington school board are usually scheduled on the first and third Tuesdays of each month.

Meeting dates for the new year are as follows: Sept. 27, Oct. 4, Oct. 18, Nov. 1, Nov. 15, Dec. 6, Dec. 20, Jan. 10, Jan. 24, Feb. 7, Feb. 28, Mar. 14, Mar. 21, April 4, April 18, May 2, May 16, June 6 and June 20.

### AT CAMP

Two Farmington Hills students explored the future of space travel and experienced astronaut training activities at U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala.

Kay Rodgers and Molly Mutz each visited the camp this summer.

### SCHOOL SPIRIT

Students and staff at Flanders Elementary are starting out the new year with a growl by holding their "School Spirit Day" Friday, Sept. 9. Everyone is encouraged to wear something supporting the Detroit Tigers.

Also in September, Flanders is beginning the BABES alcohol awareness program for third graders, having a Ronald McDonald Reading Encouragement assembly and getting ready for Michigan Education Assessment Program testing at the end of the month.

### SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE

Farmington-area high school students can apply for the U.S. Senate Youth Scholarship Program through the Michigan Board of Education. The deadline for applications is Oct. 5, according to information from Lansing.

Two juniors or seniors who currently hold elective office in a public or non-public high school will represent Michigan in Washington, D.C., from Jan. 29 through Feb. 4 as guests of the U.S. Senate.

Each student will receive a \$2,000 college scholarship in addition to the all-expenses-paid trip to Washington. Eligible students can find applications at their high school office.

### MAKING PROGRESS

A joint committee of the state Senate and House continues to inch forward this month toward a final agreement on revamping school finance reform in Michigan.

Lawmakers are also inclined to try and cut the size of school classes.

The committee, so far, has agreed on the outlines of a plan to propose raising the sales tax from 4 percent to 6 percent, cutting property taxes by almost \$1 billion a year and providing another \$610 million for schools. Lawmakers have specified the committee will act by the end of

September, with the Legislature delaying a vote until after the November election.

While state lawmakers continue their yearlong debate, local officials watch, and wait.

"We have maintained a close watch on the political scene, so as to assert the proper response in light of our district's financial security," said Farmington superintendent Graham Lewis in his recently released year-end report.

Farmington schools will be affected by any state plan that involves a shift of property tax revenues because it is more than 80 percent funded by local property taxes. The district receives little state aid under the distribution formula.

Farmington school officials have said they believe equalizing funding is necessary, but they hope to see as small an impact as possible.

"It is critical the equity issue be solved — soon," Lewis said, adding that the neighboring Clarenceville school district had to significantly reduce its budget this year. "We do not have to look far to see the other side of the coin. We cannot — and should not — be financially worlds apart."

### NEW NAMES

The former Ten Mile School takes on a new role this year, as it becomes the Administrative Annex to Farmington Public Schools' Lewis Schulman Administrative Center.

Housed in the building are all special education services, staff development, curriculum development, bilingual education, music department and Farmington Youth Assistance.

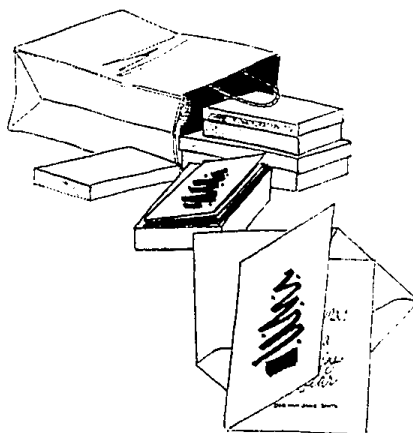
Also newly named is the former Shiawassee Center, which has become Farmington Community School. This will house all adult and community education programs, Head Start, community preschool and the district media center.

### DISTRICT STATS

The Farmington school district remains the third largest in Oakland County, according to information from the superintendent's year-end report.

Enrollment last year totaled 15,783 for kindergarten through grade 12. Another 628 students are involved in early childhood education, and 3,000 are enrolled in community education, continuing programs and summer school.

The district has 1,904 employees.



### PERSONALIZED GREETINGS

*This time, you'll be ready for Christmas! By ordering your personalized greeting cards now, you'll receive them in plenty of time for pre-holiday addressing . . . and enjoy special savings at the same time. To take advantage of this offer, orders must be placed by Saturday, September 17.*

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