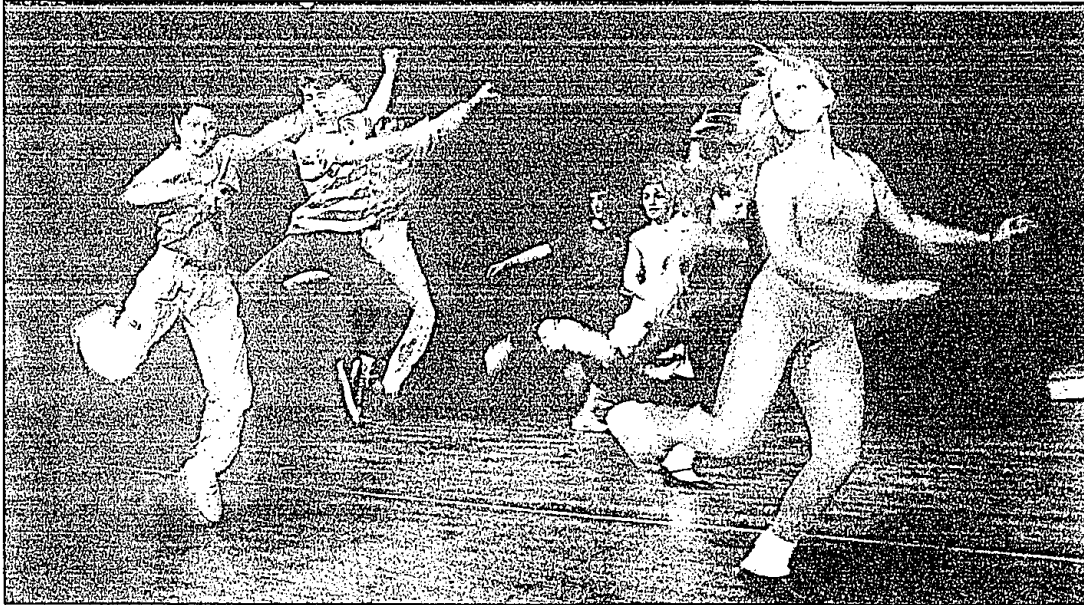


## Summer offers kids a college preview



DOUGLAS SUSALLA/staff photographer

Showing the motion to the music, young dancers rehearse for the Orchard Ridge summer arts program presentation of "West Side Story." Moving across the stage are Josh Bergasse, 18, of Oak Park and Kelly Meagher, 18, of Southfield.

By Louise Okrutsky  
staff writer

**F**OR THE FIFTH summer, students at Oakland Community College-Orchard Ridge look younger than their fall counterparts. Elementary and high school students can get acquainted with the campus during the Farmington Hills campus' summer arts and science programs.

Now in its fifth year, the Summer Arts Program aims at mixing education and entertainment without the pressure of maintaining grades. Although students who are at least 16-years-old can take classes for college credit, most of the courses try to encourage learning for the fun of it.

"During the summer we have tons and tons of empty spaces. Why not use it?" said program coordinator Bev Verselo. "Call it long term recruitment."

"Originally, it was a way in which we could do some outreach to the community," said Jamie Mason, program director. Although the programs grew out of the gifted and talented program, they eventually emphasized the visual and performing arts.

"We've had a positive response," Mason said. "Students are here to enjoy themselves."

Three three-week sessions give students 8-18-years-old a chance to attend classes within their age groups. The program is in its last three-week session. This summer, students 8-9-years-old could try their hand at such classes as beginning jazz,

ballet and beginning theatre as well as computers, science and origami.

Students 10-12-years-old could enroll in wilderness training, which discusses surviving alone with nothing but the clothes on their backs. According to instructor Dennis Graveldinger, boys and girls in the class learn to use shoelaces as snares and coils to weigh down makeshift fishing lines. Cooking without utensils is another skill.

"It gives kids a basic understanding of outdoor survival," Graveldinger said. "They learn to rely on themselves."

**GIRLS MAKE UP** half of the class. Many students repeat the class and it fulfills requirements for a Boy Scout merit badge. At the end of each three-week session the class attends a wilderness skills challenge weekend near Union Lake.

Students usually are at least 10-years-old but youngsters as young as 8 have been accepted "if they've proven themselves," Graveldinger said.

He also teaches a course called Today's Science, in which youngsters 8-9 years old get to pick the topics they'll discuss. Making kites teaches the class the rudiments of aerodynamics, physics and measurement. Stars and weather are also popular topics. When this session's class picked fossils, Graveldinger, a geophysics major at Michigan Technological University in Houghton, arranged a chance for the youngsters to meet a curator for the Smithsonian Institute and view his personal collection of crystals and gems.

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— Bev Verselo



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Cynthia Graveldinger of Waterford helps Christopher McVittie, 10, of Farmington, float on his back in the Orchard Ridge pool.