

Study of year-round schooling continues

By Casey Hans
staff writer

A pilot program to educate elementary students year-round could begin as early as July 1992 — if Farmington-area parents want it.

How or where such a program is developed will depend on parent and school board reaction to it, said Mary Lou Somerville, principal at Fairview Early Childhood Center who chairs a district study committee on the issue.

School officials stress such a program would be voluntary for students and staff.

School officials believe a year-round program would better utilize current school buildings by extending learning into summer months, and is another way to offer students and parents a "choice" — a hot topic in education across the country.

"With all the talk about choices these days, it's important to discuss them," Somerville said. "Farmington has had a

great track record with schools of choice, and this community seems to support those things."

FARMINGTON CURRENTLY has several choice options for youngsters, including open enrollment at the high school level, an alternative enrichment curriculum at Highmeadow Common Campus Elementary, and a choice between home school and centralized kindergarten programs.

All were prompted by pupil overcrowding, but educators have found such programs are beneficial to students as well. Year-round education was proposed for much the same reason, although Farmington Superintendent Michael Flanagan has cautioned it should be supported "for the educational reasons. If we're able to save space in buildings, that's just gravy."

Year-round schooling can take different shapes, depending on a school district and its needs. Students still attend school for 180 days, but they are spread over the entire

calendar year with lengthy vacation breaks. Some districts put groups of students on staggered, year-round schedules, while others have only one "track," or schedule, for all year-round students.

Such a program could be housed in one school, or spread over several buildings. Those involved say year-round programs can house up to one third more students in a district.

THE CONCEPT was first raised in Farmington by a task force which reported on building usage in the district last fall. Year-round education was proposed at that time as a way to make better use of space. School board members voted to continue study of the concept, and asked administrators to return to them with cost options before approving it.

In the fall, Somerville said, her group plans to do parent and staff surveys on the topic and hold informational meetings for the public. Based on information gathered,

the group plans to bring a recommendation to the board in December or January.

FARMINGTON IS not the only district to look at a year-round concept. Consultant and retired elementary principal Fred Forsythe said some 500 districts in 20 states currently offer year-round programs.

The Huron Valley School District in Oakland County has a success story with its year-round program, which was started in 1972 because of overcrowding problems. Today, the elementary level program serves 580 students — about 15 percent of the district's elementary population — and is a viable option, said Bruce Bendure, an elementary principal and year-round program coordinator at Huron Valley.

Other districts have experienced short-term successes with year-round programs. In the Plymouth-Canton school district, a

mandatory year-round program was in place for about five years years in all elementary and two middle schools because of overcrowding.

It got a mixed reception. "People either swore by it, or swore at it," said community relations director Dick Egli. "It worked well for its purpose. But it does not save money, because there are additional maintenance and utility costs."

Plymouth-Canton had an "opt out" safety valve, allowing students and families who did not like the program to opt for traditional school and provide their own transportation.

Egli said he sees year-round education coming to all school districts in some form, even again someday in Plymouth-Canton. "It served us well," he said. "I could work long-term, but for it to work it would have to be in the entire district (at all grade levels.) I wouldn't say we would never do it again."

Cops, kids have date at movies

What could be better than a morning at the movies... especially if you're a kid and the whole morning, including pop, popcorn and a souvenir, is all paid for by a police group?

The Farmington Hills Police Officers Association took 50 children to

the movies Saturday, April 20, as yet another community project designed to help less fortunate residents in the city.

Parents dropped the kids off at the United Artists Theater, on Grand River, west of Middlebelt, early Saturday morning and police officers

chaperoned. Each child received free admission, a drink, a box of popcorn and a T-shirt with the police association logo.

The association credits the following agencies and businesses for helping with the project:

- Salvation Army/Neighborhood House, director Cheryl Carter, which helped identify children to participate in the Saturday event.
- The Head Start program, director Loretta Zahn, which also helped identify children to participate.
- McDonald's restaurant, 10 Mile and Orchard Lake Road, manager Sherry Summers, for cups and lids for refreshments.
- United Artists Theater, manager Bob Cooley and district manager Jim Hayden, for arrangements, admission and refreshments.
- Police chaperones: Tim Connor (project coordinator), Bert Cook, Ross Luttrell, Pat Comini, David Loe, Matthew Keehn, Gary Bradley and Jeff Anderson.



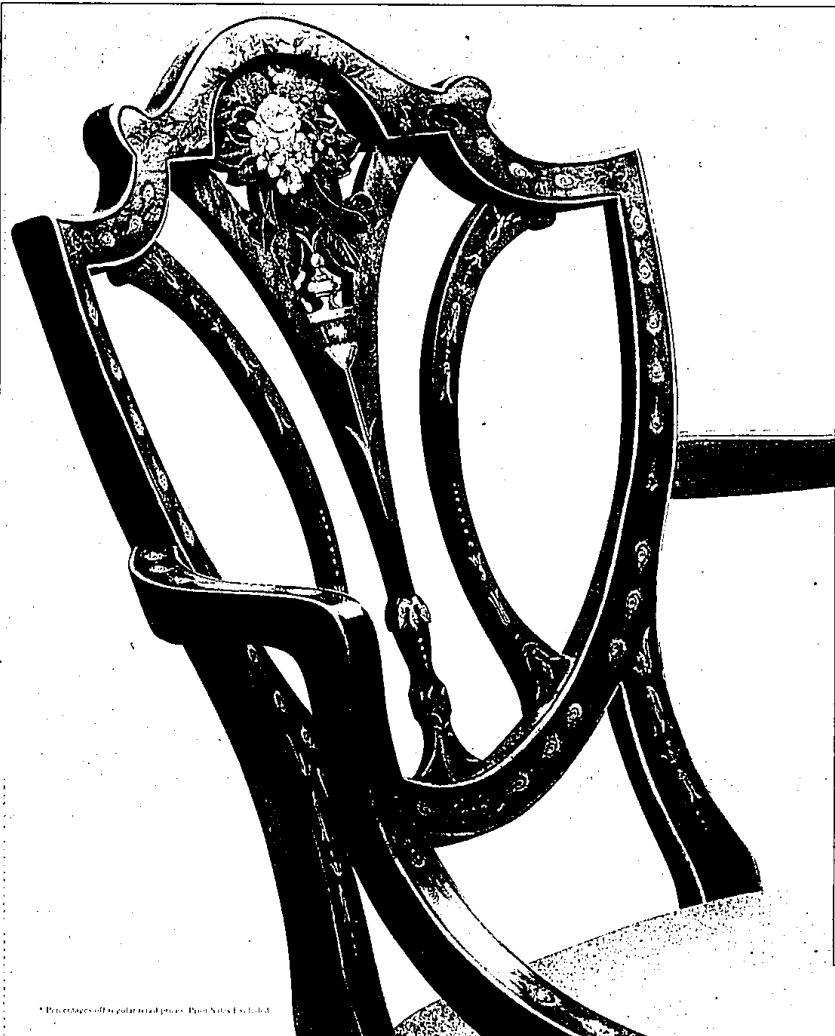
Youngsters (from left) Joanne Evans, 9, Krysta Evans, 10, and Rachel Berger, 10, all of Farmington Hills, can tell you what a good time they had Saturday morning, April 20, thanks to members of the Farmington Hills Police Officers Association who treated 50 kids to the movies.



Taking a hike

A group of walkers start on their trek during Sunday's 15-mile (25 kilometer) March of Dimes walkathon at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. They were among the 15,000 Detroit-area residents who walked to raise \$1.4

million for the charity through its annual Walk America/Team Walk. The event was held at several locations, including Farmington Hills, where 1,250 walkers raised \$125,000. The local course started and ended at OCC.



A·N·N·I·V·E·R·S·A·R·Y S·A·L·E

Sale Of The 18th Century

40% OFF

IV DAYS ONLY
Save up to 40% on all Drexel Heritage 18th Century furniture and furnishings. The finest for every room in your home. 30% to 40% savings on ten classically beautiful collections, from casual oak and pine to formal cherry and mahogany. • Ming Treasures • Herldoms • Vintage Cherry • El Cetera • Devon Court • Carlton Cherry • Country Manor • Chippendale • 18th Century • Chatham Oaks. Plus 30% to 40% savings on all traditional upholstery over 1500 custom order fabrics. This special offer ends Sunday at 5:00 p.m. And remember, during Gorman's Anniversary Sale you can save 10% to 40% storewide.

Open House Of The 18th Century

III DAYS ONLY
While you're saving on Drexel Heritage 18th Century collections, you'll be treated to refreshments and period entertainment. There will be a beautiful show, explanation and sale of 18th century art reproductions. And you'll have the opportunity to speak with a representative from Baldwin Brass — fine traditional brass lamp and accessory manufacturer. This special event is happening Saturday and Sunday only.

Art Show & Sale: Saturday 1-5 Fairlane, Sunday 1-5 Troy
Baldwin Brass Representative: Saturday 10-6 Troy, Saturday 10-6 Fairlane

GORMAN'S DREXEL HERITAGE SHOWCASE

Troy: W. Hip Beaver at Crooks • Phone: 649-2070
Dearborn: 291 Town Center Drive • Access from East on M-10 • Phone: 336-0343
Open Daily 10-6 Monday, Thursday & Friday 10-9, Sunday 12-6-6-9

* Percentages off regular prices. Price Not To Exceed.