

It's 'best and worst of times' for schools

By Casey Hans
staff writer

The news is both good and bad. In a recently released annual report on education in the Farmington Public Schools, superintendent Michael Flanagan sums up the current state of the school district with a quote from Charles Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities."

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

Although the district faces financial uncertainty and cutbacks, he said, students in the district have reaped many rewards during the past year.

"We are entering a new era in public education," said Flanagan in the district's annual report for the fiscal year 1990-91.

"It is a time to be creative and find ways to do more with less while trying to keep up with the accelerated pace of life and learning in our world."

MICHIGAN PUBLIC Act 25 of 1990 required all public school districts to file annual reports this year. They must be distributed to the public by July 31 of each year, according to Nancy Haas of the state Department of Education.

Reports also will be required for individual buildings; those were compiled and presented to parents during May and early June. All the reports were presented to the school board and public on June 18.

The reports allow comparisons of schools in testing and a number of other areas.

For example, they show that parental attendance at parent/teacher conferences declines into the middle school and high school years, which school trustee Cathleen Webb called "kind of disappointing," but she said she found the overall report encouraging.

"We've had some negative things put out to the community," she said. "This speaks well for our schools — it's something to be proud of."

Trustee James Abernethy said he noticed individual school reports had recurring themes: the staffs wished for more time to do more things.

SCHOOL OFFICIALS admitted they were concerned the state mandate would be

a "paperwork nightmare," especially in light of added workloads and budget cuts.

"We all shuddered and shivered," Flanagan said. "This has forced us to focus on what we have to do in dealing with outcomes."

Pamela O'Malley, assistant to the superintendent who coordinated the reporting process this year, said her department viewed the reporting process as a sort of "report to stockholders."

"We took the opportunity to make this something special to the community," she said. "It's given us the opportunity to paint the whole picture." Written reports for the district will be put in schools, senior centers, libraries and other public places, with heavy concentration on distribution this fall, O'Malley said. School trustees Jack

Cotton and Susan Rennels asked that reports on individual school buildings also be placed in the Farmington Community Library system for the public.

This is the first year districts have been required to do the reporting, which must cover seven areas: School improvement, core curriculum, student achievement, student retention, accreditation status, specialized schools and parent conferences.

Trustee Helen Frutkin, who also sits on boards for the Oakland Intermediate School District and the Michigan Association of School Boards, said she fully supported the state legislation that required the new public reporting.

"I did realize it would mean extra work," she said. "But I was excited about P.A. 25. I was up in Lansing pushing for it."

'Safety City'

Vicki Palmer of A Child's Garden daycare center give tips about not going with strangers to youngsters Amy Sprague (left), Luke Barchie, Ryan Cavanaugh, Danielle Gantcher and Tegan Sprague during the "Safety City" presentation in downtown Farmington. "Safety City" was part of the Summer Fun Series, sponsored by the Downtown Development Authority. The program continues Wednesdays in the Farmington Center parking lot through Aug. 14.



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

East Lansing import to be new school finance chief

By Casey Hans
staff writer

In these times of financial uncertainty in education, a CPA with 10 years of school finance experience will take the helm in that key area at Farmington Public Schools.

Bruce Barrett, a 39-year-old finance director for East Lansing Public Schools, will become the assistant superintendent for finance in Farmington Aug. 1, replacing the retiring Mary Lou Ankle.

In the \$83,665 per year position, Barrett will oversee all financial operations for the district, and also monitor state-level changes in school financing and tax reform.

Barrett said he expects the position to be a challenge, both internally, where he said there is a "good, highly skilled people" in place, and externally, because of people like high-profile tax fighter Richard Headlee who live in the community and keep a close eye on district finances.

"Close scrutiny? I'm very comfortable with that," he said. "We have a lot of professionals in our community here (in East Lansing) who... have a lot of diverse opinion. We hear about it, and we get it in writing."

SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT Michael Flanagan called Barrett "the example of a right brain, left brain" person, whose diverse background in both finance and the arts is expected to bring a lot to the district.

"Anyone who is a music major undergraduate who went on to be a CPA is unique," Flanagan said, in introducing the new administrator. "He has really brought some strength to East Lansing because of his background."

Flanagan said he felt fortunate to hire Barrett, because Barrett had been offered a similar position with another Oakland County district when Farmington called.

In East Lansing since 1981, Barrett supervised all financial operations for the 4,100-student district and 8-person department, including long-range strategic forecasting and budget development and administration. He also oversaw daily business functions, was responsible for pupil accounting and reporting, and was part of the district's negotiating team.

In Farmington, he will oversee many of the same functions with staff and student populations more than double the size. But, he said the districts are similar as out-of-formula types, and similar in other financial issues they face. One area of "vital responsibility," he said, will be following the state finance reform area and its impact on Farmington.

"I have confidence I will be successful in it (the new job)," he added. "My management skills can be transplanted in Farmington easily, and the people in place are good and highly skilled at what they do."

HE SAID HE has high respect for Flanagan as a superintendent and leader. "I know him by reputation and by acquaintance," Barrett said. "He really has the ability to be a leader. I can compliment that."

Prior to his educational career, Barrett was a CPA with Martin H. Ross CPA in East Lansing, and was an accountant with two other Lansing firms.

Barrett holds a bachelor of arts degree in accounting and a master of arts degree in educational administration both from Michigan State University. He is past president of the Central Michigan School Business Officials, chairs the Employee Relations Committee for the Michigan School Business Officials, chairs the Recruitment Committee for the Michigan Out-of-Formula District Association, and belongs to a number of other professional groups.

He currently lives in East Lansing with his wife, Susan, and two sons. The family plans to move to the Farmington Hills area.

Vacationers offered tips on how to protect home

By Kim Kemske
special writer

Thinking of taking a vacation this summer? Ready to relax at the beach? Before you go, think about what you're leaving behind: your empty house and most of your possessions.

Use the following suggestions to help reduce your chances of a burglary while you're away:

• Ask your neighbors to watch your house. Ask them to report any suspicious persons or activities to the police immediately. Make sure they have a phone number where you can be reached.

• Arrange for a friend or neighbor to pick up newspapers and other deliveries rather than cancel deliveries. Avoid telling strangers of your upcoming trip.

• Ask a trustworthy neighbor or hire a lawn service to maintain your yard, cut the grass and pick up handbills. Arrange to have a trash can placed at the curb on trash day and have a car parked in your driveway occasionally.

• Install timers or sensors on exterior lights to provide security lighting from dusk until dawn. Lights left on day and night are a signal to burglars. Keep in mind that



exterior lighting is an important part of crime prevention every day.

• Ask a close neighbor to hold a key instead of hiding one outside. Never leave a note on the door to indicate that you are not at home or when you will return.

• Engrave your valuables with your drivers license number. Engravers are available for loan, free of charge, from the Farmington Hills Police Department's crime prevention section. Place expensive items such as jewelry, cameras or coin collections in a safety deposit box or safe place.

• Remove expensive theft-prone items such as VCRs from view from windows and doors. Adjust the blinds and draperies to make the house appear occupied or ask a neighbor to come in and change them occasionally.

• Put interior lights on timers. The areas that should be lit are the ones that are normally lit when you are home in the evening, including at least one bedroom. If you don't normally leave a light on all night when you're home, don't do it when you're away. A radio on a timer, especially one tuned to a "talk" station, may also be helpful.

• Check and double-check to see that all windows and doors are properly secured, including garage doors and windows. Place a heavy curtain or shade over each garage window.

If someone can see into your garage they may be able to tell that you're not home. Expensive items kept in the garage should be secured with padlocks, for example.

• Schedule a free home security survey by calling the crime prevention section at 473-9640.

Kim Kemske is a crime prevention technician with the Farmington Hills Police Department.

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

TO STAND TRIAL

A 36-year-old former Detroit resident will stand trial on one count of first-degree murder in Detroit Recorder's Court in connection with the death of a 30-year-old Livonia woman whose partially nude and decomposed body was found in an empty Farmington Hills field Feb. 7.

William Doll, also formerly of Redford Township, was bound over to trial June 19 by Judge William Hathaway of the 36th District Court following a preliminary examination on the felony charge, according to Sgt. Charles Nebus of the Farmington Hills Police Department's detective bureau.

Doll stood mute to the charge at his earlier arraignment in 36th District Court. A plea of not-guilty was entered on his behalf. No bond was set. He remains in the Wayne County Jail awaiting trial, which has not yet been scheduled.

If convicted, Doll faces mandatory life in prison without parole.

During the preliminary examination, Dr. Robert Kurtzman, Oakland County assistant medical examiner,

testified that Kristine Albert was smothered to death, Nebus said.

Albert's body was found on a Goldsmith Street resident as he drove by an open field on the dirt road just north of Eight Mile, east of Halsted.

Albert's father, Ronald Bekkala of Livonia, reported his daughter missing Dec. 21, 1990. Albert was last seen Dec. 15, as she left the Toy Box Bar on 6 Mile and Telegraph with her boyfriend, Nebus said.

Police believe Albert was killed in a house on Worman Street in Detroit. Her body remained in the house 6-7 weeks before she was dumped in the Farmington Hills field, the night before the Goldsmith Street resident found her body, Nebus said.

THEFTS REPORTED

Approximately \$1,250 cash was reported stolen from the Brass Pointe restaurant, 24234 Orchard Lake Road, during a breaking and entering, June 17-19.

DAMAGE REPORTED

An estimated \$600 in damage was done to the Cloverdale Training Center, 33000 Freedom, June 14-17, according to Farmington police. During the weekend, someone entered the school, slashed an exercise ball used by students, and cut the tops off of two trees in the school front yard. Items were also strewn throughout the school.

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