

# Starting school gets ever harder

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By Tim Smith  
staff writer

As many parents are finding out, there's much more to their children starting school than just turning them loose at the bus stop.

First of all there's enrollment procedures, immunizations and school supply shopping excursions. On top of all that is providing youngsters with yet another essential — encouragement that life in a classroom really isn't such a bad deal.

"She's pretty anxious to start school, she's ready," said Southfield's Lenore Hermiz, enrolling her daughter Diane at the district's registration office. "I tell her to be nice to other children, to share things."

At a Beverly Hills pediatrician's office, Bloomfield Hills resident Sharon Menton said she didn't think her 5-year-old son Keith would have much trouble starting kindergarten Sept. 4 at Detroit Country Day School.

"He's a go-getter, and he's interested in doing everything. It just comes natural," Menton said. She brought her son to the doctor's office to be immunized for diphtheria, tetanus and polio.

IT'S A VISIT every parent and child must eventually make, to ensure a healthy school atmosphere, said Dr. David Obudzinski.

"This is important to protect against disease," Obudzinski said, especially when they're starting school and are exposed to a lot of children.

Acceptance from the other students also is a consideration, at least as far as 7-year-old Edward Gill is concerned. He was at the Knorr store at Tel-Twelve Mall in Southfield shopping with his parents, stocking up for another year at St. Mary's Catholic School in Redford.

Edward weighed his options as to whether he preferred a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles lunch box or one sporting a cartoon of the Rocketeers. His mother, Debbie, made the choice for him — one featuring 101 Dalmatians.

Debbie Gill then dropped the item into the shopping cart, already containing a pencil pouch, spiral notebook, index cards and crayons. "I thought I'd better do it now, before everybody does it at the last minute."

ALL OF THE parents said they'd try to minimize any anxiety their children might have upon starting the school year.

"I don't think he'll have a problem adjusting," Menton said.

Hermiz said she wasn't overly apprehensive about her daughter, who turns 4 in September, starting preschool in late August at Child Development Center.

"Not really. I'll just have to get used to the idea of not having her around the house for a couple hours a day."

Before going shopping for notebooks and jumpers, Hermiz had to take care of business. She was required to provide Diane's birth certificate, a physical examination form and documents to prove residency.

Like most districts, the central enrollment office for Rochester schools provides parents of kindergartners with a packet of information, including an early childhood handbook, healthform and school calendar, said Carol Wright, supervisor of student enrollment. Unlike the majority of districts, however, Rochester holds an orientation session for first-time students the day before school starts to familiarize kids with teachers and classrooms.

Most Southfield and West Bloomfield elementary schools conduct such "kindergarten round-ups" for parents and children in the spring.

ALSO ENROLLING her daughter for the 1991-92 school year was new Southfield resident Laurie Hoffman.

She said the only advice she gave 3-year-old Lindsey was to get along with her future classmates and to do her best. The Hoffmans recently moved to the district from Detroit.

After enrolling, Hoffman and her daughter were going to spend a small fortune on wardrobe.

"She was going to a Catholic school before and she always had to wear a uniform," Hoffman said. "Now she's looking forward to going out and spending lots of cash on clothes."

Gill said she had another piece of important advice for Edward: "Keep his mouth shut and pay attention to the teachers."



photos by JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Bloomfield Hills resident Sharon Menton comforts her 5-year-old son Keith as he is about to receive an immunization shot,

which is required to attend school. Administering the shot is nurse Sue Rosen, a Farmington Hills resident.



Another aspect for starting the school year off right is finding the perfect lunch box. Helping their 7-year-old son, Edward, decide at Tel-Twelve Mall in Southfield are parents Debbie and Ralph Gill of Detroit.

## 1st day tough for Mom, too

By Liz Stevens  
staff writer

The first day of school for a child can be a traumatic time, for parents as well as new students.

But anxiety about the transition from home to the classroom is normal, and, according to the experts, parents should expect at least a couple of rough weeks in the beginning.

"Obviously the biggest fear is the separation anxiety they will have to deal with," said West Bloomfield psychiatrist Stephen Hawkins. "Mom isn't there for the first time."

Hawkins, a consultant to the Farmington school district, said parents can do several things to make their child's experience a healthy one.

"Play into the excitement, the fun, the newness," he said. "Talk to the child about what is going on . . . Focus on the positive."

PARENTS SHOULD find out what activities their children are participating in at school and play some of those same games at home, "to make the transition carry over to the home, so there's not such a distinct separation."

If a child seems overly anxious, "it might pay to make contact with the teacher" or even attend school with the child for a while.

The "clean-break" mentality is fading, Hawkins said. "It really isn't going to hurt the child to see a parent and teacher communicate."

The doctor stressed that parents should not feel pressure to send a child to school if they believe that he or she is unprepared.

The "stigma" of holding a child back "no longer exists," he said.

Automatically sending children to school when they are five years old has "become less and less the pattern. . . if you get a year late start, it's not going to hurt."



With her 4-year-old daughter, Diane, watching, Lenore Hermiz of Southfield fills out registration forms needed for the youngster to begin preschool later this month.

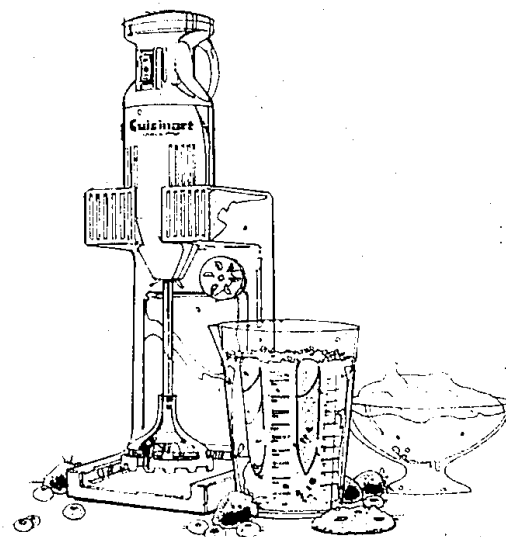
PARENTS WITH doubts about whether to start their children in school can have them tested to determine if the kids are ready. These tests are usually offered by school districts, as are preschool programs that help parents make their decision.

Separation anxiety in parents can also lead to problems for a youngster, Hawkins said. Some parents have a difficult time not being the primary influence in their child's life and slipping into a "secondary role" can sometimes cause mom or dad to feel worried or stressed.

"If the child reads a lot of anxiety and fear from the parent, the child is going to take off from that," Hawkins said.

Once the child has started school, Hawkins said it is "very difficult to pull them out" without causing them to feel a sense of failure. If a child still has trouble adjusting after a month or two, parents should start by consulting the teacher and school counselor.

"As a parent myself, I know that it is traumatic. You kind of have to jump in and see what happens."



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### YOUNG ENGINEERS

A Farmington Hills Mercy High School senior was one of 100 young women who recently participated in the 14th Annual Women in Engineering program at the University of Dayton.

Also, two Farmington Hills students participated in a similar pro-

gram at Michigan Technological University.

Jill Wright of Farmington Hills, a Mercy student, attended classes, met female engineers and spent a day at a local industry to experience an engineering work day at Dayton.

At Michigan Tech in the Upper Peninsula, Kathryn Dekovich and Stephanie Hapgood participated in the Women in Engineering program with 200 young women. Dekovich is a senior at Mercy where she is a member of the National Honor Society and the yearbook staff. Hapgood is a senior at Southfield Christian High where she is also an NIS member and a member of the school's German club. She also manages the cross country team and participates

in softball and band.

Both programs are designed to allow high school students to explore careers in engineering and to learn about college admission, financial aid and types of degrees.

### SPACE CAMP

Four Farmington-area youths recently attended the U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala.

George Adams of Farmington and Kimberly Freund, Keith Yanachik and Gavin Sy of Farmington Hills all attended the camp. At the camp, they were able to use special astronaut training simulators and go through other training.