

## Schedule from page 1A

6:20 a.m. to take required academic classes. This would free up later hours in the day for electives. No bus service would be provided for this early hour. These academic classes would also be offered at times later in the day for students not electing the early morning hour.

North Farmington parents have received information detailing the proposal, as have students at the school who Chlason said are excited about the option.

The one-year staff study was done as part of the school's North Central accreditation procedure, which occurs every seven years. Maxwell, who has served on several North Central committees for the school, called this year's study "innovative."

"The old method was just a bunch of shuffling paper," he said. "This is work for change, rather."

## Program is a take off from one at Holt High

The proposal to give North Farmington High School staff members a block of development time on Wednesday mornings was modeled after a program at Holt High School near Lansing.

Teachers at Holt currently use a full morning for development time each Wednesday from 7:30 to 11:30 a.m., with the school day starting shortly thereafter.

The school has just completed its second year with the program, and "it has made a significant difference in the way things are done," according to Holt assistant principal Nancy Haas.

"We have more ideas from the staff than we can handle," she said. "The level of professionalism is much higher."

It has been so successful, that the district has moved the staff development program into the junior high school and will likely move it into elementary schools in the future.

Holt students use their Wednesday morning time to do community service work, spend extra time in the school library, or take community college courses offered on site for credit. Others use it simply to catch up on homework.

Haas said it is also a mid-week "stress-reliever" for many students, especially those involved in sports where events run late into Tuesday night.

than looking good for a group of people who comes in. Overall, it's going to make us more professional, better unified and better teachers."

Clarke points out that the study was completed during a year when staff was cut back, class sizes increased, and some programs were reduced. "To go a step beyond and create this... is pretty incredible," she said. Other teachers involved in the study included Cathy Cunningham, Carl Glickert, Chris Gorman, Bev Schmitt, Kathy Summerlin and Lloyd Weppman.

Clarke stressed that, under the program, North Farmington teachers would be expected to work hard during the two-hour block on Wednesdays. "That time will be devoted to learning for teachers," she said. "It will not be for correcting papers. It won't be business as usual."

Other parents endorse the proposal, which is scheduled to be before the Farmington Board of Education on Tuesday, June 16.

"I don't dispute their goals," said Susan Ellis, who will have two sons at North Farmington next fall, and said teachers there are "doing a heroic job."

"But they haven't ironed out the problems with this. There's something to be said about good, old-

## Parents debate proposed changes

BY CASEY HANS  
STAFF WRITER

North Farmington High School parents are debating the merits of a proposal which would give teachers extra time on Wednesday mornings for staff development and offer early morning time for students to take an extra class.

The pilot program, part of the school's North Central evaluation, would take effect this fall.

Several parents said they were supportive, but were concerned about having students at home on Wednesday mornings and also having reduced classroom time. Several said they felt by proposing the project at the end of a school year, parents weren't being given enough opportunity to comment.

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"I don't dispute their goals," said Susan Ellis, who will have two sons at North Farmington next fall, and said teachers there are "doing a heroic job."

"But they haven't ironed out the problems with this. There's something to be said about good, old-

fashioned time with the teacher," she added.

Other parents like the overall idea, including booster club president David Haron. He believes parent concerns stem from a lack of understanding. "We, to a certain extent, have to accept the education's belief... that nine minutes (reduction in class time) will not change the educational quality," he said.

He called the teachers' choiring the committee the school's "superstars."

"These aren't people who want to get out of work," he said. "I'm excited when teachers say 'I want to try something.' They're incredible teachers - we've got to let them try something."

Parent Mary Jane Borich said she feels the "zero hour," proposed for 6:20 a.m., is too early and that if students don't choose to take the early class they will miss out on academic time. She said she was also concerned that not enough parents know what is going on with the proposal.

Parent Carole Wilson said she understands parents who feel threatened by the proposed changes, because her family has ex-

perienced the unknown with High Meadow Common Campus program and through various pilot classes in the district. She said her daughter, who will be a junior in the fall, needs the "zero hour" in the morning so she can fit in electives like music and language later in the school day.

"If you want the best, sometimes you have to take the risk," she said. "For the students who choose it, it can be great."

There were parental concerns at Holt High School three summers ago when that district proposed a similar program. The North Farmington staff has modeled its program on Holt's.

"We did have some community concern here," said Holt assistant principal Nancy Haas. "The strength of the argument is that teachers are working together - to better meet the needs of the kids."

Some of the North Farmington parent concerns raised at recent in-

formational meetings have prompted the school to fine-tune its program.

For example, the "zero hour" was originally proposed for 6:30 a.m., five days per week. After parents voiced concern over what students would do between 7:30 and 9:30 a.m. on Wednesdays, the school changed the proposal to having the class begin at 6:20 a.m., for four days per week.

In addition, the North Farmington booster groups have offered to set up a parent network to handle necessary carpooling or telephone calling networks which might be needed because of the change.

North Farmington principal Debbie Clarke said she recognizes the parent concerns, and wants their support. "We recognize it's an adjustment to their schedule," she said. "We're saying we want to try this for a year. We could leave things the same, but would it be the school that students really need?"

**■ 'We have more ideas from the staff than we can handle. The level of professionalism is much higher.'**

Nancy Haas  
Holt assistant principal

Haas came to the Lansing-area school this year from a position with the Michigan Department of Education because of the progressive program. She hopes the Farmington district will give it a try. "It's really an important step - I hope it at least goes as a pilot," she said. "It is a significant move."

The Farmington Public School District is already doing team teaching at a number of schools, including an interdisciplinary block at Farmington High School. In the fall, Harrison High School staff will introduce a similar block program for their students.

These concepts, and the North Farmington proposal, stemmed from a recent study on secondary education done in the Farmington district. The district is encouraging staff to develop programs which will change the way students are taught, including an increase in thinking skills.

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