

Curriculum report could cause stir

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Michigan public schools are undergoing "a quiet but irreversible intellectual revolution" in their curriculum, according to a State Board of Education document.

But the fight may get noisy when the report, called "Core Curriculum Content Standards," is submitted to public hearings late this summer.

"It's magnificent work. It exceeds that done in every other state in the nation," said Dr. Robert E. Schiller, a consultant who is state superintendent of public instruction. Most board members agreed.

Two of the eight, however, say they're bothered by some departures from tradition. "Too much touchy-feely stuff," said board member Marilyn Lundy, R-Detroit, an advocate of Latin and penning of sentences.

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laws passed last Christmas Eve by the Legislature, the State Board is to update its core curriculum standards in reading, math, science, and such social sciences as history, geography, economics, American government and writing.

Thursday the board "accepted" the report, written by consultants and university professors. In August it's due to vote and send it out for yet-to-be-scheduled public hearings.

"I thought there might be room for devilry in the economics area," said member Gary L. Wolfgram, R-Hillsdale, a libertarian market-economics guru for the Engler administration. Instead he was highly pleased.

But Wolfgram raised an eyebrow at the reading standards. "There is no mention of the classics — what T.S. Eliot called the eternal ... There's nothing about spelling. There's nothing about grammar. You might expect to see something about diagramming sentences."

"Look at standard 7: 'explore, identify and use themes.' What the heck does that mean? Look at the second standard: 'Know language patterns in the mail.'"

Referring to student essays, Wolfgram, a Hillsdale College professor, said, "If a word is misspelled in every sentence, it disturbs the reader's train of thought."

"I think understanding is more important than diagramming a sentence," replied board co-president Annette Miller, D-Huntington Woods. "I'm concerned you're pushing us back to the 19th Century instead of forward to the 21st."

Referring to stories by her elementary-grade grandchildren, Miller said, "Children should be encouraged to write everything as they feel comfortable with the language. They will learn, as they

go along, to spell the words they're now sounding out. I don't want them to be inhibited."

Board treasurer Dorothy Beardman, R-Rochester, praised the report but feared it failed to address two problems she encounters in letters to newspapers and talk radio: (1) "Where are the basics — reading, writing, addition, subtraction? They're not here in words of one syllable." (2) "My gifted child is twiddling his thumbs while the rest are being brought up to speed."

Lundy, the board traditionalist, said, "The feeling I get is that we're more interested in getting youngsters to have opinions than in grounding them in tools ... Yes, you need to understand a theme, but you need to analyze the sentences and thoughts."

"We learned on the health curriculum (Michigan Model) about objections to 'decision-making' and 'problem-solving' areas. We don't teach them to ask, 'What's the law? What do my parents say? What does my church say?' We need to put it in writing that we're teaching basics."

Lundy ran smack into the chief objection that modern educators have to traditionalists. Said a math professor consultant: "We can err on the other side. We can teach how to factor polynomials, and the student has no idea what situation would require the factoring of polynomials."

Curriculum reflects alternative concepts

The state Department of Education's "Core Curriculum Content Standards" pushes the revolution going on in education.

As drafted, it says schooling in the last century was "based on dissection of learning into discrete facts and skills ... through lecture and recitation."

The new "constructivist" movement is based on research by cognitive psychologists, learning theorists and educators, "its roots firmly grounded in the work of John Dewey" (1859-1952, pragmatic philosopher, psychologist and educator).

The movement emphasizes "information processing, critical and creative reasoning" and "solving REAL problems. In other words, it is no longer sufficient to simply 'know' mathematical facts; learners must be able to 'understand' the concepts and be able to apply them to problems and situations in the real world."

Here is how the report compares the old and new approaches:

Traditional — "relying heavily on textbooks, workbooks and drill sheets ... a hierarchical and authoritarian structure in which students

work alone ... students memorize basic facts ... there is one correct answer to every question."

Constructivist — "emphasis on big concepts. Students learn how to use and apply important ideas ... exploration of student questions ... authentic tasks calling for problem-solving and critical thinking ... expressing divergent points of view ... dialogue in a learning community where students and teachers work cooperatively."

In the geography section, there is no mention of memorizing national capitals or rivers. Rather the student will "describe, compare and explain the locations and characteristics of economic activities, trade, political activities, migration and information flow."

The civics section doesn't mention the classical structure of government but says the student will "identify the purposes of national, state and local governments." In group discussions, students "will engage their peers in constructive conversation about matters of public concern by clarifying issues, considering opposing views, applying democratic values and anticipating consequences."

**GENERAL PRIMARY ELECTION
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
OAKLAND COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

To the Qualified Electors:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT A GENERAL PRIMARY ELECTION will be held in the CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS, Precincts No. 1-31, County of OAKLAND, State of MICHIGAN on **TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 1994**

AT THE PLACE OR PLACES OF HOLDING THE ELECTION IN SAID CITY AS INDICATED BELOW, VIZ:

Precinct 1 - Power Middle School
Precinct 2 - Farmington Community School
Precinct 3 - Woodview School
Precinct 4 - St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Precinct 5 - St. Alexander's Church
Precinct 6 - Larkshire School
Precinct 7 - Hillside School
Precinct 8 - East Middle School
Precinct 9 - East Middle School
Precinct 10 - Dunckel Middle School
Precinct 11 - North Farmington High School
Precinct 12 - Farmington Hills Activities Center (Marty Center)
Precinct 13 - William Grace School
Precinct 14 - Alameda School
Precinct 15 - Piuselli Center
Precinct 16 - Fairview School
Precinct 17 - First Presbyterian Church
Precinct 18 - Highland School
Precinct 19 - Forest School
Precinct 20 - Grace Chapel Church
Precinct 21 - Forest Park Baptist Church
Precinct 22 - North Farmington High School
Precinct 23 - Kenbrook School
Precinct 24 - Grace Chapel Church
Precinct 25 - Gill School
Precinct 26 - Hope Lutheran Church
Precinct 27 - Fire Department Headquarters
Precinct 28 - Faith Covenant Church
Precinct 29 - Piuselli Center
Precinct 30 - Gill School
Precinct 31 - Dunckel Middle School

ALL OF THE ABOVE POLLING PLACES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO VOTERS WHO ARE HANDICAPPED.

Any voter who requires assistance to vote by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write may be given assistance by a person of the voter's choice, other than the voter's employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter's union.

FOR THE PURPOSE OF placing in nomination by all political parties participating therein, candidates for the following offices, viz:

STATE GOVERNOR
LEGISLATIVE UNITED STATES SENATOR
COUNTY STATE REPRESENTATIVE
COUNTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Also any additional offices, if any, for which partisan candidates are to be nominated.

And for the purpose of placing in nomination, candidates participating in a non-partisan primary election for the following offices, viz:

Circuit Court Judge (New Judgeship)

And for the purpose of electing:

Delegates to the County Convention of the Democratic and Republican Parties.

Also to vote on the following local proposal:

Shall the City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan, borrow a sum not to exceed Six Million Dollars (\$6,000,000) and use its general obligation limited tax bonds, within the City Charter tax limit, in one or more series for the purpose of erecting, furnishing, equipping and developing the site for a new multi-purpose/ice arena to be located at Founders Sports Park.

Should this proposal be adopted? Yes ☐ No ☐

THE POLLS OF SAID ELECTION WILL BE OPEN AT 7 O'CLOCK A.M. AND WILL REMAIN OPEN UNTIL 8 O'CLOCK P.M. ON ELECTION DAY.

NOTICE - ABSENT VOTER BALLOTS

The last day to request an Absent Voter Ballot for mailing for the General Primary Election of August 2, 1994, is until 5:00 p.m., Saturday, July 30, 1994. The City Clerk's Office, 31568 Elmore Mile Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan, will be open on July 30th from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

KATHRYN A. DORNAN
City Clerk

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