

Schools spell out plan to boost reading

Teen
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BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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The need to read is there, say Farmington Public School officials.

And the district is taking action. Less-than-stellar scores on comprehensive tests such as the CTBS and MEAP have officials on the reading offensive.

A team, headed by assistant superintendent for Instructional Services Judy White, has put together a reading proficiency plan.

Early intervention with kids who have problems reading, requiring all buildings to include reading goals in school improvement programs until they reach 75 percent or more, and addi-

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Judy White
superintendent for Instructional Services

tional training for staff and faculty are some things called for in the plan.

Similar strategies were used to boost math skills, which included workshops and "family math nights" involving parents.

"We did a lot of stuff," White said. "As a result the kids really improved in math. It paid off. You could see it in the results."

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get it cooking again."

Though MEAP reading scores fell in the district at the elementary, middle and high school level, they were still above the state average.

Declines at the elementary level are a particular concern. MEAP reading scores were down at seven of 13 elementary schools.

The district has Reading Recovery programs in place, which gives intensive tutoring to stu-

dents. The district plan calls for increasing such services at "high-need" schools.

Some schools, like Hillside, have their own plans.

The percentage of fourth graders achieving "satisfactory" (75-percent or better) was down from 68.5 percent in 1993 to 56.0 percent this year at Hillside.

Hillside fourth graders performed well on story selection (88 percent scored satisfactory), but not on the informational part (55 percent scored satisfactory).

As a result, more informational text was made available for younger students in the library, Hillside principal Richard Rutter said.

Other long-term strategies have been developed.

Some of those include teaching kids how to look at text before they read it, having them talk to others before reading and discuss what it is they've read afterwards.

Hillside has focused on math and science in its school improvement goals (Hillside scored well above average in both areas on the MEAP).

Last spring, an emphasis was put on informational reading, Rutter said.

"It's a long-term, long-range kind of plan," he said. "We've started it right away."

members.

Superintendent C. Robert Masfield said the district would look into possibly providing bus service. Others speculated on what activities such a place could offer.

Y community relations director Mandi Skeegan urged caution, though.

"There's a structure that has to be in place, but it has to be an informal, invisible kind of structure," Skeegan said Friday. "Kids want to think they own what's going on."

All agree a teen program could do a lot of good, especially for an age group often left out of leisure activities.

Y and Hills officials cited a national study, which says the best time for intervention is in the middle school years. According to 1993 census data, 3 percent of the Farmington/Farmington Hills population falls within the 12-14 age group.

Power Middle School student Jeff Bazzi, 12, sees kids his age with little to do after school.

"They'll just go home and invite a friend over, and they'll play Sega Genesis or Super Nintendo," said Bazzi at the All-American Sports Center in Farmington.

"They play the same games over and over and they get bored."

"So, they'll just sit around and do nothing."

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Mandi Skeegan
director, YMCA
community relations

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