

Maxfield still getting top marks from school board

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield gets more than passing marks from his bosses.

Board of Education trustees are reviewing the schools chief, who joined the Farmington district in 1994. Maxfield's reviews have been positive in the past. This year's is no different.

Maxfield joined the district from Berkeley schools in 1994. A board subcommittee and Maxfield went over a portfolio of his accomplishments Feb. 5. The group plans to meet again within the next few weeks to go over goals for the next year.

From there, the two parties will likely discuss a pay raise. He's received 3-percent increases in 1995 and 1996 as well as an additional year on an ongoing three-year contract that runs through 1999.

Maxfield's salary is \$128,941. The trustees are very happy with the job he's doing, said

Dave York, board president.

"We feel that continuity is a very positive and a proactive style and a very nurturing style to the district," York said. "He sets clear objectives. There's no doubt as to what is expected."

Goals for next year will be revamping instruction and improving student performance, York said.

After several years of increases, district scores dropped on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests this year. Board members are not judging the superintendent's performance solely on test scores, though.

"Obviously we'd expect to see (improvement) in proficiency tests and MEAP tests," York said. "The concern is we don't want to get locked into test scores."

"Our belief is if we're doing everything right, the test scores are going to follow."

Maxfield called the session upbeat and positive. The board



Global emphasis: Berta Curtis, originally from Panama, instructs students Marcus Gibbs, left, and Kristin Woodhouse on where to put the syllable emphasis on Spanish words at the International school in Farmington Hills.

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garden (full day) through grade four, and \$8,000 for grades five through eight.

"This is going to be a lovely facility," said Faxon, who stepped down from the Senate three years ago. "We moved in a very short time (two weeks). It has to be the seventh wonder of the decade."

The retired lawmaker — hardly known for understatement — has big plans for the new home.

More classroom space will be available next school year as the rest of Lubavitch Center personnel moves out, Faxon said.

Future expansion plans include a 10,000-square foot addition to the 15,300-square foot facility with a new gymnasium, playground and soccer field. School officials will apply for grants. Until then, most of those plans are what Faxon calls a wish list.



In tune: Music teacher Eileen Ror, sings with kindergartners Sharlymar Khoury, left, and Farrah Frick.

The International School grew faster than anyone could have predicted or wished.

The school was founded in Detroit in the aftermath of the 1967 riots. City School of Detroit started in 1968 with a French language program, but has grown to include others.

Success is partly due to the 7-to-1 student/teacher ratio. Many children sit around a circular

table in the classrooms, speaking solely in the foreign language.

In one classroom, second graders take turns reading an illustrated book in French about a fisherman's uncanny luck.

That prompts one boy to tell other kids at the round table — in French — about the large fish (le grand poisson) his uncle caught recently. He spread his arms wide.

language in public schools tends to be analytical, taking the sentences apart and studying grammar, Faxon said. People are puzzled when children are not fluent speakers.

"It would be like if you took a piano lesson once a week and be expected to play Beethoven's sonata," Faxon said.

"With immersion, we're not teaching the language; we're teaching in the language."

Teacher Pierette Simpson asked others if they think he's exaggerating (il exagère) a bit. Children giggle.

Studies show young children have an easier time picking up new languages, said Simpson, who formerly taught at Farmington's Harrison High School.

"As far as absorbing the language, definitely and without a doubt, children absorb it naturally," Simpson said. "They don't need to repeat it. They repeat it naturally in their minds."

"Young kids absorb the language like you and I absorb our native language."

"It's exercising the mind," Faxon added. "When you learn how to ride a bike or learn how to skate, later in life you can always go back and ride a bike or go skating. It's very difficult to start learning those activities later on."

Those students usually return and excel in their native schools, he said.

Others include Americans whose parents want them to know more than one language. Some have later sent their children to learn abroad.

"We have seen children do well in both circumstances," Faxon said.

Student skills in English don't appear to suffer, either. They take the California Achievement Test and score well beyond their grade level, Faxon said.

Through knowing the another language, they appreciate the difficulties of English.

"They see the intricacies of English," said Teresa Carlson, educational director. "Unless you study another language, you don't see it."

4 life-savers honored by Hills

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Fire Chief Rich Marinucci made a point of recognizing one of the city's greatest resources last month.

Marinucci presented awards to four people who took action on their own that made a difference and saved lives.

"There is some lag time before we get there," he said. "We rely on citizens to do something in the meantime so that people will suffer less while waiting for us to respond."

Marinucci and Sgt. Jim Cheyne, a former firefighter of the year, made the presentations to Richard Durham, Dr. Matthew Dennenberg, Larry Siedell and Leo Del Bel.

■Durham, an Ameritech employee, saw a person inside a house on Pheasant Run Street lying on the floor and called for help. He also helped firefighters from Station 4 get into the apartment.

■Del Bel was driving his family home on Oct. 22, 1996 when he saw a heavy fog that turned

out to be smoke from a garage fire in the city. Del Bel checked the home and was able to awake the resident and get the woman out of her house. After learning there were family pets, Del Bel re-entered the house and safely rescued them, saving the lives of the woman and her pets.

■While driving south on M-5 near Grand River in the early morning hours of Nov. 9, 1996, Siedell noticed headlights of a vehicle that had left the highway. He stopped and found that the driver was unconscious. The Hills resident and FBI agent dialed 9-1-1 to report the problem and then assured an open airway while taking precautions against spinal injury. Siedell continued to care for the patient until firefighters and Community EMS paramedics arrived.

■Dr. Dennenberg was dining at the Sushi Ko restaurant in 12 Mile when he noticed a man choking. He applied the Heimlich maneuver and was able to dislodge food from the man's

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CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME
This condition occurs when the nerve to the palm of the hand is pinched. The nerve enters the middle of the palm surrounded by the tendons going to the fingers, with both nerve and tendons squeezed together by surrounding wrist bones and ligaments. Anatomists gave the name carpal tunnel to this area, and physicians call the problem caused by compression of the nerve, the carpal tunnel syndrome. Features of the condition include numbness and tingling of the thumb, second, third, and half of the fourth finger. Keeping the hand at the side at night makes the numbness worse, while raising the hand, or shaking the wrist relieves the discomfort. At times the pulse will go up the arm rather than down to the fingers. The problem may come on during the day if you are using a cutter on your nail, or holding a telephone receiver for a prolonged period. Initial treatment consists of avoiding use of the hand that puts strain on the wrist. The next step is the use of a wrist splint at night to keep the hand up and extended. In some individuals, injection into the carpal tunnel provides relief. If the hand pain or numbness persists despite the above measures, surgery that opens the tunnel or relieves pressure on it is indicated.

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