

Farmington High's new class schedule making the grade

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Farmington High School's class schedule restructuring is getting high marks from teachers and students, who made a convincing presentation during Tuesday's school board meeting.

The restructuring, which features longer class periods as well as courses that meld different subject areas, was spotlighted to show how it continues to evolve and improve.

"Restructuring is a philosophy moving throughout the building," said Farmington High School principal Jim Myers, during the presentation at the Board of Education Administration Building. "We couldn't bring to you every restructuring program at Farmington because we were told we couldn't stay late in the night."

Most of the presentation was about the FHS "Publications and Processes" and "Principles of Engineering" programs.

"Publications and Processes" instructors Betty Martin and Dennis Zaleski talked about how the course hones skills in writing and page design, along with the need for students to be able to use modern technology to do these tasks.

"Students learn about a combination that is essential for a myriad of careers, including journalism. The hands-on course is a prerequisite for the advanced journalism class; students receive credit in both English and Technology Education."

'Longer classes are really essential. That really gives us time to get into our projects.'

Kari Berkesch
—FHS senior

"Principles of Engineering" instructor Liz Monson discussed how the course entails math, physics and technology in every class period. Students such as senior Kari Berkesch and junior Carrie May, who both spoke to the school board, participate in groups to solve problems they might face in the work world.

Over eight weeks, students must take on a problem, come up with a plan to solve it, and then devise a finished product. Oral and written reports are also expected.

Monson said the 85-minute class period — which took effect last year — is the key to the program's success.

"We couldn't do it without it," she said. "Eighty-five minutes is a necessity, because we need the flexibility during the day to do a number of things. Forty-five minutes is not enough for them to pull out materials and feel like they're accomplishing something."

Longer periods also strengthen teacher-student relationships, Monson continued. She added that the fact three teachers work with the students on a regular basis in the program improves motivation.

"With three teachers (math,

physics, technology), students are bound to make a connection somewhere."

Concurring with that assessment was one senior who is taking the program, Kari Berkesch. She called it her favorite class taken so far at FHS.

"Longer classes are really essential," Berkesch said. "That really gives us time to get into our projects."

School board members were impressed by the presentation.

"This isn't easy, wasn't easy," said Cathy Webb to the FHS contingent. "You made necessary and effective changes on how to educate children today and I want to congratulate you."

Board president Linda Enberg, meanwhile, applauded the high school for progressive thinking. "Major change takes time, and we appreciate your efforts."

Afterward, Superintendent Bob Maxfield said the presentation showed how FHS is headed in the direction of becoming a "learning community. Tonight, you saw examples that show the road we're walking down."

Maxfield also said officials at both North Farmington and Harrison high schools are discussing their own versions of block scheduling that are "promising."

But, he emphasized, "Until the strong majority of staff support a plan, we're not going forward."



Poly play: Team Farmington's Bob Cantlon, front, and the Farmington Police Officer Hilton Hyde struggle for the puck during a game last week at the Farmington Training Center.

Team F'ton, police squad match up

It was poly hockey at its best Tuesday night at the Farmington Training Center as Special Olympians Team Farmington took on the officers of the Farmington Police Department in two games of floor hockey. The term poly is a reference to all plastic equipment used.

"If given a chance, Team Farmington can surprise a lot of people by their level of skill," said coach Ted Stern.

Stern wanted his team challenged because they have swept past every other team in Special Olympics. In fact they are five-time defending state champs.

"They dominate the sport," Stern said. "This team has not lost against another Special Olympics team since 1991."

The Farmington Police beat them in the first game by a score of 4-0. The second game was a unified game, so called because both teams were mixed: members of the Team Farmington and the local police.

"So everyone won the second game," Stern said.

The officers enjoyed the games so much, they offered a rematch. Fans are welcome to watch Team Farmington play at 7 p.m. Tuesdays at the Farmington Training Center.

Kurzeja from page A1

performance: "I'd rather not discuss that. Dan Hobbs is not running for this seat. I am." She refused to provide a grade.

Thirty years of community activism has taught Kurzeja not to be hammy-pammy when discussing issues.

In addition to serving on the zoning board of appeals, Kurzeja has been on numerous ad hoc committees. She chaired the city's 10th anniversary committee. "That ought to tell you how far back I go," she said.

Kurzeja is also vice chairwoman of the Grand River Corridor committee.

Redevelopment of the southeastern part of the city, especially the Old Towne area, has always been foremost to her. The area is pedestrian-friendly, which has attracted five new businesses, she enthused. She gives credit to the Economic Development Corporation for its help.

Asked if she'd represent the interests of those outside the

southeastern area, Kurzeja is just as frank. "Of course I would," she said. "We're not the only ones with problems in the city."

Her six-month appointment to council was brief but insightful. Kurzeja hearkens to a more opinionated time, though, when she was a council watcher.

"I used to sit there and watch debates and I'd love them," she said. "They all didn't agree on everything, but they'd express their opinions and you could learn from the debate. They don't have that anymore. It's cut and dried."

Kurzeja's running a low-key campaign. She won't attempt to outstep her opponent, whom

she said are running as a slate.

Her signs are not seen on the city's busy thoroughfares, but she assures they do exist. "You're looking in the wrong spots," she said. "... I prefer to put my signs on residential lawns. I prefer to target the people I know are going to vote."

She'd be a voice for residents, she said. She'd be willing to debate council actions, which is evidenced by her even questioning the question on why she's running.

"The question should be, 'Why I'm the only one running?' With all the talent in Farmington Hills that would probably be good on council, why am I the only one running?"

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