

# Preschool draws on diversity

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

As always, several different activities were going on simultaneously in the Achieving Preschool Excellence classroom at Farmington Community School.

This time, they all had to do with holiday candles. There was Sara, vigorously stroking streams of different-colored paints on an easel. Austin was seated at a table, matching laminated paper candles to corresponding spots on a chart.

At another table, APEX instructor Leanna Dutton and classroom assistant Rebecca Gennette were helping some of the youngsters as they made multi-colored "candles." Glue was applied to cardboard rolls, which in turn were rotated through a mix of cut-up yarn, ribbon, paper and sequined material. Yellow construction paper "flames" were then affixed to the top.

"Every culture seems to have candles in their holiday," said Dutton, adding that "all the different colors represents the diversity" that is prevalent throughout Farmington and Farmington Hills.

The state-funded APEX program also reflects that diversity. There is room for 18 children, who don't necessarily have to live within the Farmington Public School District.

But, currently, there are 15 youngsters in Dutton's class, from 12:30-3 p.m. Monday-Thursday. All children must have turned age 4 by Dec. 1 to enroll into the program, Dutton said.

According to Dutton, APEX helps give a preschool experience to qualifying children who might not otherwise have been able to.

"This is for kids who are not poor enough to be in Head Start



STAFF PHOTO BY BETSY MITCHELL

**Touch up:** Sara, 4, paints a rainbow of candles as part of state-funded Achieving Preschool Excellence program offered at the Farmington Community School.

(another program, for those ages 3-4) but who don't have enough money to pay for (private) preschool," explained Dutton.

Dutton said APEX is a play-based program that attempts to stimulate children's thinking skills. "We don't formally say 'We're going to teach you how to count to 10 today.' We do it through a play-based program, by reading books and asking questions."

There is a computer in the classroom, where two youngsters were trying to find different letters of the alphabet by pointing and clicking. Children also go to a regular science lab, and partic-

ipate in structured physical activities.

Countless other activities are available for kids to sample whenever they want. For example, Mark was busy practicing "riffs" on a plastic, white guitar. Sara put down her paint brush and picked up pompons, to work on a routine.

"So far, so good," Dutton said.

"I'm very satisfied," she said. "The kids are getting along nice, making some friends, extending their friendships to home. And when they get to kindergarten next year, they'll know somebody in that room. That will definitely help with that transition."

## DPW offers to roll out the barrels for residents

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Some 50-60 barrels are placed

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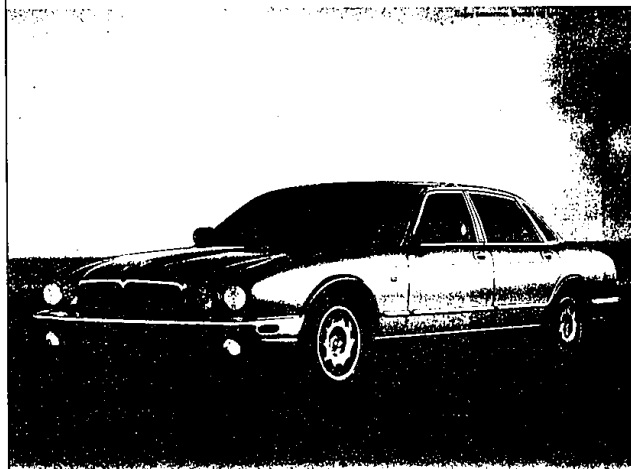
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