

Educare's adding up for kids, parents

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Some pretty typical "kindergarten" stuff takes place every afternoon in Fairview Early Childhood Center teacher Geri Bresnahan's classroom.

At first glance, one sees youngsters drawing, reading, playing—even sounding out the letters of the alphabet while creating personalized Valentine's Day cards for their parents.

But kindergarten it's not. It's Educare.

"It's an enrichment program that meets the needs of people who feel their children are ready for a full day or who have child care requirements," said Bresnahan.

Fairview Principal Mary Lou Somerville said the program, which costs \$2,000 per student for tuition, is not part of district curriculum, nor should it be viewed as "full-day kindergarten." But teachers, paraprofessionals and Educare team leader Barb Bennett decided on a complementary program, with emphasis on reading and writing.

"It is an opportunity for children to practice and extend what they learn in kindergarten," Somerville said. "It's not a duplication."

The "market driven" program must be succeeding, in part because parents like the fact they don't have to transport

their children from school to a day care facility at lunchtime. A child in Educare can take the bus to-and-from school, although he or she can also attend YMCA-offered "Prime Time," which offers play-based activities both early in the morning and after the day's final bell sounds at 3:37 p.m.

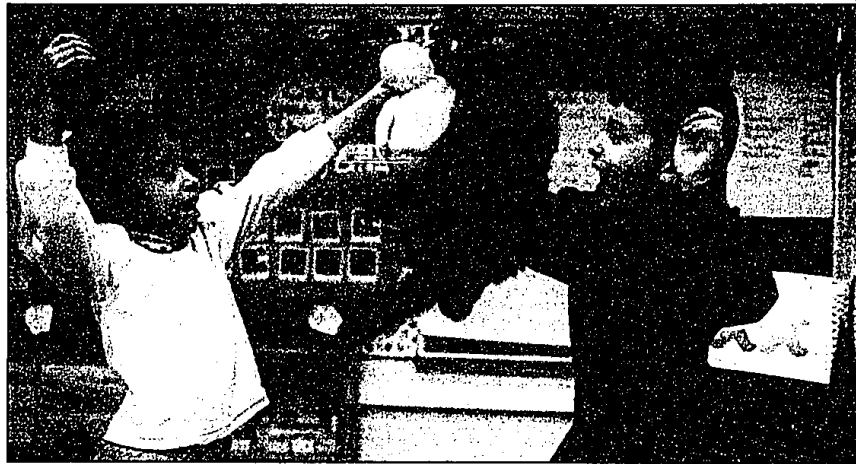
Further proof of Educare's success is the Farmington Board of Education's recent decision to adopt it as a regular program. It will again be offered at Fairview, Alameda Early Childhood Center and Hillside Elementary School, as well as at two new locations—Lanigan and Wood Creek elementary schools.

When parents next week (Feb. 23-27) sign up their children for 1998-99 kindergarten classes, Educare will be an option, Somerville said. The program is available to all kindergartners enrolled in the district.

Convenience for parents and consistency of the day for children are just two of the reasons more are taking interest in Educare, said Yvonne Christensen, who works as a paraprofessional in Bresnahan's classroom.

"Some kids are ready for more than a half day kindergarten experience," Christensen said. "It's nice for children to do things in this room that we just don't in a traditional kindergarten."

Children in the program, Bresnahan said, "have more free choice, it's not really as structured as regular kindergarten."



Forest fun: Educare pupils Rachel Zapata (left) and Calvin Hanna participate in a dramatic play activity, acting out the roles of forest animals such as wolves and bears during an afternoon session at Fairview Early Childhood Center.

nihan said, "have more free choice, it's not really as structured as regular kindergarten."

They need the opportunity for dramatic play, making their own decisions.

Christensen described Educare as having a "much slower pace."

Valentine's time

But that might be subject to debate, except for the first part of the afternoon. A group of kids sat on a carpet reciting song songs about the alphabet, accompanied by teacher Bresnahan. The "Jump Rope Chant" was the feature of that day's so-called circle time. The segment enables the class to focus on language development.

Moments later, the real fun began as youngsters scattered all over the room, doing everything from serving pretend tea to assembling Legos to stacking wood blocks.

"It's a volcano," said 5-year-old

Rebecca Klegon, sitting next to the blocks. "We need more yellow," responded classmate Jennifer Lu, 5.

A mock forest in another corner was a way for kids such as Rachel Zapata to pretend to be a bear or a wolf rummaging through a camp site. There even was a small tent and two logs nearby.

Since it was the week of Valentine's Day, several were involved in appropriate activities. There was 6-year-old Cindy Fielder, pushing heart-shaped cookie cutters into Play-doh. Bresnahan worked with others as they created their own special Valentine cards.

"This is the card we're going to put in the mail to your mom and dad," said Bresnahan to 5-year-old Stephanie Wald. "How do we start?"



Heart-felt: Zachary Roshak uses fine motor skills to create a Valentine's Day card for his parents.

Bresnahan then wrote out the words "Happy" and "Valentine" while sounding out the letters with Stephanie.

For more information about Educare, call: Alameda, 489-3803; Fairview, 489-3799; Hillside, 489-3773.

Aims to please: Teacher Geri Bresnahan starts the program at circle time by allowing Samantha Kritzer to lead the kids in a sing-song chant.



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBERT

New contract

Clarenceville teachers get raise

BY MARIE CHESTNEY
STAFF WRITER

The 113 teachers in the Clarenceville School District have a new three-year contract which gives them a 2.3 percent pay hike for each of the three years.

The percentage is higher than the rate of inflation, currently 1.7 percent, and slightly higher than the current average pay increase for Oakland County teachers, which is 2 percent, said Superintendent Tom Tattan. Clarenceville district includes a southeast portion of Farmington Hills.

The Clarenceville Board of Education recently approved the new contract retroactively for the current 1997-98 school year as well as the following two years, 1998-99 and 1999-2000. Both sides have bargained since last August, when the previous three-year contract expired.

'We've got an agreement that is fair to both parties.'

Tom Tattan
—superintendent
Clarenceville School District

"We've got an agreement that is fair to both parties," Tattan said. "This is a fair rate of pay for teachers that lets us continue to support our programs and our small class size, with no cuts in service."

The average pay for a Clarenceville teacher is \$48,292. Beginning teachers start at \$29,970. The top pay for a teacher with a master's degree is \$69,475.

With the contract, teachers have agreed to an insurance rate increase cap of 3 percent. The district pays \$621 each month in insurance for each teacher.

With the cap, teachers will pay any rate increase over 3 percent, Tattan said.

"If there's an increase more than that, teachers will pay the extra," Tattan said.

Workers in another bargaining unit, Clarenceville Educational Support Personnel Association, also will get a 2.3 percent increase for the 1997-98 school year. They agreed to accept what was negotiated for teachers.

Bargaining for the district's administrators is now underway. The teachers' pay hike is slightly larger than the 2 percent they received in 1996-1997.

Clarenceville, which serves students in Livonia, Farmington Hills and Redford Township, gets \$7,036 from the state for each student.

"Our contract contains cost containment," Tattan said. "We have to live within the amount the state gives us for labor and fringes."

Pot charge stems from cop chase

Farmington Hills police arrested a West Bloomfield male, 20, after a police chase on westbound 14 Mile Road Saturday afternoon.

Officers found 16 grams of marijuana on the driver and in his vehicle. They also recovered a brown stem-like substance believed to be hallucinogenic mushrooms.

The driver was expected to be charged with fleeing and eluding, marijuana possession and having a hallucinogenic narcotic.

At 5:20 p.m., an unknown cellular caller told police about a possible drunken driver in the 14 Mile and Northwestern Highway area. A few minutes later,

officers spotted a Dodge Dakota pickup speeding on westbound 14 Mile. Police attempted to stop the vehicle, which was traveling between 55 to 60 miles an hour.

A chase continued west on 14 Mile, past Farmington Road and onto northbound Drake Road, and ended when the driver pulled into a driveway on Anne Drive, believed to be his residence. With his gun drawn, the officer ordered the man from the vehicle and told him to lay on the ground.

Family members came out of the house and began screaming at the Hills officers, who were joined by West Bloomfield police during the arrest. The man was

taken into a patrol car to defuse the situation.

The man had bloodshot, watery eyes and smelled of marijuana, police reports said. A roach clip and rolling papers were also found inside the truck along with a cellular phone. The phone had the electronic serial number torn off, which is common with stolen cellular devices.

While being taken to the police station, the man admitted he smoked two to three joints. "I'm stoned," he told officers.

At the station, police found three bags of marijuana in the man's pants. He was taken to Botsford Hospital where his blood was drawn for analysis.

Crime prevention breakfast seminar slated for March 11

Farmington Hills Police Department's Crime Prevention section will present a seminar on internal theft Wednesday, March 11.

The seminar, conducted by Jose Ortiz, runs 9-11 a.m. at the Wisconsin Activities Center, 11 Mile Road, east of Middlebelt. Registration starts at

8:30 a.m. A continental breakfast will be available.

For information or to register, call Juliet McGlinch at 473-9637.

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