

Let's talk: American Studies class at North Farmington, taught by Mark Wilson, combines social studies and English knowledge. The class encourages open discussion. Below Jackie Cottrill gives her point of view as fellow sophomore Tricia Berry listens.



## Kids talk issues using literary themes

Today's Lesson is an inside glimpse at daily classroom activities in Farmington Public Schools.

By TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

For a while Monday morning, North Farmington High School students delved into this coming week's "homework assignment," finding out how appearance changes the way people are treated in the marketplace.

Then, they discussed the classic novels "The Grapes of Wrath" and "Huck Finn," both which exposed similar themes of humans wrangling humans.

This weekend, sophomores in the combined English-Social Studies classes of North teachers Mark Wilson and Derek Day will become scientific "control groups" to obtain base-line data for comparison purposes. They will dress up or dress down — put on a blue suit or blue hair, for example — and enter businesses in an attempt to buy merchandise or secure other services.

North student Jeff Swinger said a student in his group will put on gangster-type clothes and try to reserve a rather exclusive object.

"Then another will go in all preppy and try to buy that one thing after it's been reserved," Swinger said. "Then we'll see how the store clerk will react."

### Under control

Wilson emphasized to the students the need to have specific plans ready for each store they plan on entering, and not to go with generic situations.

"You'll almost need to establish control groups at each merchant," Wilson said. "But you really can't compare Lord and Taylor to Hudson's."

Then, the subject of the final written project came up. What-



Tuned in: Cortney Terrian (right) listens with classmate Julie Lefton to another student's opinion during an open discussion about John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath" in Mark Wilson's combined social studies and English class.

ever the students find out, added Day, "relate it to our books ... relate it to 'Huck Finn' and 'The Grapes of Wrath.' Relate it to our theme, to human rights."

With that, the teachers unfolded a yellow dividing wall (for sound purposes) and split the group into their respective classes. Day's discussed Mark Twain's "Huck Finn," about a boy and a slave in Civil War-era Mississippi.

On Wilson's side of the divider, John Steinbeck's story about the Joad family was the topic for some rather lively give-and-take between teacher and students. In "The Grapes of Wrath," the Joads first took land from Indians and, second, had to fight bankers to keep it.

Several agreed that the Joads treated the two groups quite differently.

"They treated the Indians with more hostility," one said. "With

the bankers it was more out of desperation and mercy, like 'I'm going to protect this land no matter what.'"

Even so, the Joads were much more respectful to the bank, said Adam Henderson. "They (the Joads) treated the bankers with more respect, because they were more of a threat. They had all the money."

"And all the money, all the power?" chimed in Wilson.

"Right," responded Henderson.

### Ironic tale

Tracy Krochmal noted that the Joads "really didn't have the right to fight the bank," because the bank rightfully owned it. Meanwhile, she couldn't overlook the irony of the Joads' plight.

"They didn't legally have the right to take the land away from the Indians. But the bank legally had the right to take it away from them," she said.

Another student, Jackie Cot-

trill, elaborated. "With the bankers it was, 'Yes, sir, we'll have the money.' With the Indians, they kicked them when they were down, 'Get off my land.'"

Cortney Terrian blamed the Joads for their own situation.

"First, they took the land that was not legally theirs," she said. "They kicked the Indians out. Then, the bankers came in and said 'You have to leave.' There is this whole giant circle of messes."

Following the session, Wilson confirmed that the themes in both novels are related to this weekend's control group visits to merchants.

"Absolutely," Wilson said. "The whole premise behind 'The Grapes of Wrath' was people being treated unfairly for things they have no control over. Their ancestry, or the color of their skin. That's exactly what our kids are basing their hypotheses upon."

## Pastor behind diversity leaves for a new position

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

One of the community's most visible religious leaders is disappearing ... to Missouri.

The Rev. Brewster "Budge" Gere left this week after 10 years as pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Farmington to accept a similar position in Kirkwood, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis.

Gere, 54, is credited as one of the key figures behind the start of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council. He was also active in the Farmington Ministerial Association, an ecumenical group made up of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish clergy members.

He presided over the 17,000-square-foot expansion of the Farmington Hills-based church, which has grown to 600 adult members.

"I think the real loss is for the community at large," said the Rev. Mark Jensen, North Congregational Church senior pastor. "He's been involved in the community at so many levels."

"He was also part of the glue that kept the clergy association together and provided the impetus for us to do things together."

Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield worked with the pastor on the multicultural council. Gere, at Maxfield's request, served on a district task force dealing with religion in the public schools.

"Budge was one of the first people I met when I came here. What I was struck by was the way he was the conscience of the community," Maxfield said.

"Budge was always one of those people asking, 'What qualities should a healthy community embrace?' Diversity was definitely one."

Gere found himself as a bridge between longtime residents and a new generation starting families here. The community has become more diverse, and



Push from the pulpit: The Rev. Brewster "Budge" Gere was one of the driving forces behind the formation of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council.

respectful of differences, he said. As a pastor in Farmington Hills, he'd reached the end of his 10-year "shelf life."

"During the first five years, you complete a plan, a vision of what could be, and the next five years you try to realize that vision," Gere said. "As a leader, your stamp is on that organization."

Gere's mission included leaving a mark on the community. Such involvement was not easy, considering the amount of time spent operating a church.

"You have to make it a priority," Jensen said.

Gere worked with Neighborhood House and wrote the ministerial association's statement on public prayer. He was the recipient of the multicultural council's

first Rainbow Recognition Award in 1996.

"I guess I just like to work," Gere said. "I think it's important to bring the voice of the church to the community at large. I think it's also wise for the church to hear the voices of the community."

Though his family is moving, his wife, Anne, will remain on the faculty at the University of Michigan. Their daughter, Cindy, is an art teacher at the Turtle Island Learning Circle, a Native American charter school. Their son, Sam, is a third-year student at U-M.

The family will miss neighbors in Quaker Valley subdivision.

"It's been a joy-filled 10 years," Gere said. "I've appreciated the spirit of the community."

carry on

This leather handbag from Perlina is the perfect companion for the professional woman. Zippered rear compartment and front fold-down organizer. Black or brown with silver-toned accents. 8 x 6". \$130. Handbags

# Jacobson's

Birmingham • (248) 644-6900 Livonia • (734) 591-7696 Rochester • (248) 651-6000

SHOPPING HOURS • MON-SAT 10-9 • OPEN SUN AT NOON