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tion and after school was dismissed for the year so information could not be easily dispersed to elementary school families."

Jaske said she also isn't convinced about reducing science benchmarks (topics, such as photosynthesis or the universe) from 80 to 60, to allow for more "in-depth" study. More changes also could once again impact Michigan Educational Assessment Program test scores. "Do we want to test something new once again on our children?"

Enberg said the new science curriculum would probably enhance MEAP performance, in part, because it would be better aligned with national and state science curriculum standards. "I think it looks like a wonderful science curriculum," Enberg said. "The science course will be strengthened, it will be more universally taught. All schools will be getting the same subjects

at the same time." Fouchey said the reduction of benchmarks does not equate to a reduction of content, because many of those subjects instead will be taught to students after they enter middle school. "But it's a cleaning up. It's more focused" for grades K-5.

Enberg said the proposed changes were assembled during "hundreds of hours with elementary teachers and science coordinators looking at what the kids understand science and are (more) ready for middle school."

"It's the most well-defined and comprehensive science curriculum that the district has had," she said.

The new curriculum, noted Fouchey, is all about "equipping students to think about those topics in a powerful way" through a variety of methods, not just textbooks.

Jaske, meanwhile, disagrees

with the notion that teaching the same subject in more than one year during a child's elementary school years is not educationally productive. She emphasized that younger children need that reinforcement.

About the desire to cut out redundant subjects, Enberg said that while "reinforcement is good, the ... kids were getting the same projects every year. We don't want to be (in) the fifth grade."

According to Fouchey, if the board approves the changes Tuesday, work will begin immediately to implement them. But that could take up to two years, with teachers attending training workshops.

"If the elementary curriculum is approved Tuesday, we'll move forward with the adoption of materials and spend time with teachers so they'll know how to apply it."

Harrison 'block' talk June 23

Harrison High School parents with concerns about a recommended plan to go to four-by-four block scheduling in 1999-2000 will be heard.

An informational meeting for parents is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, June 23, at the Harrison High auditorium, Assistant Principal Mary Brown said.

"A letter will be sent out to the homes of the kids who will be attending (Harrison) in fall 1999," said Brown, Friday afternoon.

That letter, she continued, will explain "our rationale to pursue alternative scheduling."

Brown said Judy White, the district's assistant superintendent of instruction, will be at the June 23 meeting to discuss the plan and answer parents' questions.

Certainly, some of the parents

who will attend that session are the same parents who attended Tuesday's Farmington Board of Education meeting, asking about the plan. (See related story).

Going to block scheduling is an issue that is generating much concern and controversy, particularly among the parents of students already on an Advanced Placement study track.

Those parents worry that their children — the ones who will attend Harrison during the transitional year — might somehow veer off of that track.

"Our target right now (for block scheduling) is the fall of 1999," Brown said. "But we'll be working with people all along the way to make sure we have any problems ironed out."

"I don't think the (school) board would approve any program that there were concerns

about."

The four-by-four plan is different from the block scheduling program in place at Farmington High School.

Brown said Harrison students would take four classes for one semester, then take four other classes in the second half of the year. AP students, however, probably would have to take courses over both semesters.

At Farmington, students take all classes on Monday, three of seven classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays and the other four classes on Wednesdays and Fridays. An enrichment class also is scheduled for five days a week.

With four-by-four block scheduling, noted Brown, "there would be fewer teachers, fewer subjects. They (students) can give more focus to those classes, so the learning is more intense."

Graffiti from page A1

Elementary School sign on Old Timber.

On the school's west wall, they wrote vertically with the words "F--- Jews Arab Jew Killers" accompanied by a cross figure. The letters "KKK" were also painted on a southeast corner of the school.

"The Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council of Farmington and Farmington Hills shows signs that are derogatory to any ethnic or racial population," said Karen Bolen, council co-chairwoman, in a prepared statement. "In fact our two communities have spent a great deal of energy

developing the Guiding Principles that celebrate and support the diversity of citizens in our community."

"We're confident these are isolated incidents..."

On June 1, teachers reported that four teens about 13 years old were hanging around the school. When told to leave, the kids swore at them.

Another witness may have seen the same four teens along with six other boys near the school at 11 p.m. the day of the incident. What concerns police is the height of the messages, which means the vandals needed a way — possibly using a truck or ladder — to get up on the school.

"If they are kids, they had to have some way to get up that high," Dwyer said.

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Advanced Placement courses and/or force them to miss out on invaluable electives such as music and art.

Another Harrison parent, Cheri MacLean, expressed worries that block scheduling might be another ill-advised attempt to change what already is working. She talked about how one of her children struggled after the district changed to inventive spelling several years ago — a program that was eventually discontinued.

MacLean echoed other parents who spoke out about how Harrison already "is a wonderful school, especially in the sciences ... We're really worried about block scheduling making it very hard to get those AP classes in ... They're already seeing what they're going to have to drop because they can't fit in what

they were originally scheduled to get. And band is very important, pivotal."

Harrison parent, Chris Schim said he didn't know about the proposed change until receiving a letter last month. He said the tone of the letter indicated that block scheduling was a foregone conclusion, that the decision was being made without sufficient input from parents.

"How will the board help parents work with our administration to create an appropriate forum prior to anything being presented to you to act on?" asked Schim, one of the parents addressing the subject during the public comment portion of the meeting.

But school officials assured them that every attempt will be made along the way to include them throughout the firming up of the four-by-four block scheduling proposal.

"We are committed to strengthening our program, not weakening it," White said. "We have no intention of destroying an AP program that we have spent lots of dollars and years building."

"We have no (intention) of

destroying a music program that some of us have spent numerous hours supporting and trying to make stronger. We are aware of your concerns. We know that you want input. We definitely have all sorts of plans for input."

White stressed that the "teacher driven" proposal follows the lead of the Mission 2007 report and secondary education study — which both had substantial parental input.

She did apologize to parents for the "lack of information and the misinformation that you're getting."

For example, parent Barbara Cooper asked whether the district had been promised any state or federal grant dollars for moving to a block scheduling program.

"There is no connection," responded MacLean.

School board President Linda Enberg asked the residents to "slow down a little bit, be patient enough to work with the staff, to hear, to listen, to discuss with each other. There is time. We will have lots of time for input. There are many stages this has to go through. This very much is a work in progress."

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