## Steppingstone moves beyond typical learning

Memo to parents:
If your young child possesses the memory of a steel trap, an unbelievable passion for books and an imaginary friend, along with observation skills and a tendency to ask question after question, there may be a school in Farmington Hills worth whecking out.

in Farmington Hills worth checking out.

In fact, this particular school likely is one you didn't know existed. It's the Steppingstone School, which dubs itself as the center for the potentially gift-

ed. Located at 21900 Middlebelt, it doesn't look too special from the outside. But on the inside there is some pretty interesting learning taking place, under the direction of Kiyo Morse.

Teachers work with small clusters of students from several different grades—such as 1-3 or 4-6. But one intriguing Steppingstone characteristic is that the students themselves set the educational tone.

students themselves set the educational tone. During a recent visit to Steppingstone, children – who use their own personal planners – moved from station to station at their own pace. Subjects of the day included "discovery science and computers. But unlike the typical learning pattern, these students do the experiments first, and then go back and figure out the theory part of the lesson, explained Morse, who has background as a research scientist at the University of California and science mentor for gifted students in the Plymouth-Canton school district. "Public schools have single ages and a set curriculum, Morse said. The their vit's tailored for the student."

lored for the student."

In other words, if a student wants to go in a particular direction, the faculty doesn't get in the way, (it should be noted that, at least in Farmington Public Schools, more "multi-age" groupings of students are occurring.)

Student assessment also is unifous.

## Real world learning

Real world learning

Students worked on a Sim City model with professional engineers, to design prototypes of a city, complete with all services, and Linda Alvarado, Steppingstone associate administrator.

"Every year, they work on an extended project," Alvarado said. Many projects in real life are group projects, extended projects, So they need to (learn to) budget their time and resources. The kind of learning her folds into the real world."

Alvarado echoed Morse about the different grading technique. "There's no point in grades, because we do 'mastery learning," which she estimated as 90-plus percent proficiency.

After atudents attain such a level of understanding, they move on to the next level, Alvarado said.

According to Morse, the way the students learn is different. But there is a reason for that.

"Usually a parent knows their child has different needs than the average population," Morse explained. "And they seek an environment suitable for their child. And in the process, they find us."

Students still get to enjoy typical childhood activities and daily

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## Teen summer celebrationon tap June 16

Teens ago 13-16 can kick off their summer with a splash at the Jewish Community Center's Teen Night event 6-9 pm. Wednesday, June 16, at Camp Ruth on the grounds of the Kahn building, 6600 W. Maple, West Bloomfield.

The event will include volleyball, basketball, swimming, outdoor games and inflatables. A deejay will play today's hottest tunes. A kosher barbecue dinner will be served.

Admission is \$3, except for Jewish youth group, Jewish Center and Mascabi Club members, who will be admitted free. Reservations are required.

Call Michelle at 661-7683. Teens age 13-16 can kick off

E 'it's tallored for the student here.'

Kiyo Morse

enrichment opportunities. Examples include swimming at a nearby pool and field trips at Mayberry State Park.

## Enrollment growth

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Tuition next year will be more
than \$6,000 for full-time students in grades K-S. Despite that
cost, enrollment is climbing, particularly as more parents find
out about the facility.
Morse noted that enrollment is
expected to increase from 62 this
year to 60 in the fall and 75 in
2000-2001. Farmington and
Farmington Hills children make
up about half of the current
enrollment, with local youngstern benefiting from transportation provided by Farmington
Public Schools.
Steppingstone, which is a private, nearprofit state-approved
school, was established in 1981
in Plymouth. It moved to Mercy
Conference Center in Farmington Hills in 1988, where it
remained until the 1997 relocation to the current Middlebelt
facility.

For more information, call

facility.

For more information, call



(248) 473-1808. Enrollment also is under way for Steppingstone Summer Day Camps, which run from June 14-Aug. 27.







School days: Left, Morad Leeal and Jeremy Wojchihoski use construction paper to make different shapes, then test the load shapes, then test the water bearing capacity of each shape. A cylinder held the most weight. Below left, Amy Polcyn teaches stu-dents about geometric shapes. George Blake shapes. George Blake, Daniel Ziazadeh, Ashley Hochstein and Peter Kosinski take notes. Above, Anne Dilorio and Beverly Beal work in the



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