

The Farmington Observer

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The Farmington Observer

A HomeTown Communications Network™ publication
33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335
(On the southwest corner of Grand River and Farmington Rds.)

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

CARRIER DELIVERY

One year.....\$47.40
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MAIL DELIVERY

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One year (out of Country).....\$68.00
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Pay increase designed to attract more substitute teachers for district

By TIM SMITH
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In hopes of attracting more substitute teachers to their ranks, the Farmington school board Tuesday night is expected to approve a slight increase in wages.

Also at the meeting, slated for 7:30 p.m. at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center, the board likely will approve proposed rates for substitute para-professionals, secretaries and other fill-in employees such as noon aides and hall monitors.

Larry Lobert, the district's personnel director, presented the new rates during a recent board meeting. He emphasized that the need for additional substitute teachers is crucial, but that a smaller roster is doing yeomen's work so far during 1999-2000.

"These are modest increases," Lobert told the board. "But it's keeping us in a competitive pos-

ture. And we need to be in (a) competitive posture."

Pending board approval, per diem substitute teacher pay would be increased 2 percent, from \$75.04-\$77.63 to \$76.55-\$79.19. The rate for retirees would move from \$82.58-\$85.43 to \$84.24-\$87.14.

"We couldn't function without these people right now," said Lobert, about the importance of the substitutes.

The rates are close to what substitute teachers are earning elsewhere. In West Bloomfield subs are paid \$75 for a full day and \$43.76 for a half day. In the Walled Lake district, which includes a small portion of Farmington Hills, the rate is \$80 for a full day and \$50 for a half day.

Lobert noted that, even with 40 fewer sub teachers available this year (about 250) in Farmington, the so-called "failure" rate is significantly reduced.

In 1998-99, up until this point

of the school year, there were 4,371 occasions when regular teachers were absent. Of those, 209 slots could not be filled, a failure rate of about 6 percent, Lobert said.

This year, all but 51 of 4,371 absences have been filled, a failure rate of approximately 1 percent.

Two factors account for the reduced failure rate, Lobert said: More subs are staying on for extended stays, thus receiving bonus pay; the district is reaching more potential subs on the call-in list, via a new and improved telephone system.

"The technology was a huge factor," he said.

One problem with sub teachers, Lobert said, is that they usually are either retirees or lacking state teacher certification. Once teachers attain certification, at least in Oakland County, they are quickly snapped up as permanent employees.

Lobert said more than 1,500

new college graduates were hired by the 28 Oakland County districts this summer.

Further reducing sub ranks is the fact that every year some teachers are becoming certified and subsequently being hired, Lobert continued.

He estimated that of the sub ranks one-third have been certified.

Other proposed rates are as follows:

■ Special education sub-para-professional: \$9, no change from 1998-99.

■ General education sub-para-professional: \$9, no change from 1998-99.

■ Sub secretary: from \$9 to \$9.50.

■ Noon aide/sub noon aide: from \$8.75 to \$9.

■ Sub food service: \$9, no change from 1998-99.

■ Hall monitor: \$10.04, no change from 1998-99.

■ Parking lot attendant: \$10.04, no change from 1998-99.

C'ville board members take crack at MEAP

By LARRY O'CONNOR
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To understand what fifth graders came up against, Clarenceville's curriculum director let school board members take a crack at the MEAP social studies test.

That produced a few furrowed brows and puzzled looks.

"I can see why they can't answer some of these questions," said board member Sharon Simpson, poring over the exam

with colleagues at Thursday's Clarenceville board meeting.

Such test taking helped soften the blow of Clarenceville's abysmal results on the state test.

Only 12 percent of the district's 118 fifth graders exceeded or met state standards by getting at least 40 of 61 possible points on the social studies exam, which students in the fifth, eighth and 11th grades took last school year.

A fifth grader at Botsford Elementary was the only one in the

district to exceed the state mark by earning 50 of 61 points.

The rest failed.

Of those in the bottom half, 25 percent reached the basic level by getting at least 31 of 61 points while 63 percent fell below that and were labeled as "apprentices."

At the eighth grade level, only 16 percent of 82 students who took the exam met or exceeded the state standard by getting 38 or more of a possible 61 points.

Of the bottom tier, 30 percent rated basic by getting 29 of 61

points.

Clarenceville's results in both grades fell below state and Oakland County averages. Though located in Wayne and Oakland counties, the district belongs to the Oakland Intermediate School District.

Kids were tested on geography, economics, government and history.

The test was administered for the first time, which school officials are partly attributing for the poor results.

Some questions on the new exam are open to interpretation, Church said.

In one dealing with history, children read a story about an 18th century newspaper publisher embroiled in a defamation suit. The publisher prevailed in court.

In follow-up multiple choice questions, children are asked about the modern day implications of the trial, such as free speech.

"That's really high-level thinking for a fifth grade student," Church said. "...If this was a middle or high school test, we'd say 'Yes, we want them to know this.'"

Nonetheless, Church added that work will be done to the social studies curriculum to include more of the subject matter.

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