

# Early childhood options clarified by district

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER  
tsmith@oohomecomm.net

Parents of younger children in the Farmington school district attended two recent information meetings to receive updates and clarifications about newly unveiled plans to enhance early childhood and kindergarten programs.

First and foremost, said Kathy Obrizak, Fairview Early Childhood Center principal and part of a committee that made recommendations to the school board in December, parents who want their kindergarten children to attend either Alameda or Fairview (both schools of choice) instead of a home school could still have that option.

The catch, she explained, is that the district would like to first utilize existing space in the home elementary, space opened up by bond issue renovations.

Parents will sign their children up for home schools first when kindergarten registration takes place, from Feb. 26 through March 2. But, explained Obrizak, they still could sign up for any openings that might occur at Alameda or Fairview, something that won't be known until the spring.

At the registration sites, parents wanting their youngsters to go to one of the early childhood centers must indicate that desire. Those who are first to do so would have priority to fill subsequent openings at Alameda and Fairview.

"The district really does value an early childhood education," Obrizak said. "And with the switch to home-school-first registration there was some concern about that."

## Protecting resources

Superintendent Bob Maxfield recently addressed the concerns and confusion some parents expressed since the December overview of planned changes was presented.

"I think a lot of people worry that registering at the home school first reduces the choice they might have," Maxfield said. "One person said it's like you are treating the early childhood centers as the overflow centers. ... But because (the centers are) so popular, the plan is, if kindergarten enrollment is about what it is this year, those who do want to go to Alameda (or Fairview) will get to."

"I hope in the long run they understand we have to embrace strategies that protect our resources."

Meanwhile, the school district chief said "My guess is we'll always have early childhood centers" but enrollment would dictate the future number of sections in kindergarten across the district.

Some of the early childhood committee's goals included piloting all-day kindergarten in 2001-02; bringing more pre-school opportunities and programs to home schools; expanding pre-school options at the Alameda and Fairview centers, with eventual phasing out of first- and second grades at Alameda.

Fairview is only pre-school through kindergarten.

"We helped parents understand how kindergarten registration is going to go," said Alameda Principal Helene Blackman, about that school's meeting Wednesday night. "And (about) the reasons for having the home schools filled first. There is available space and to make the most effective use of the facilities we need to utilize it."

## County Democrats pick leadership

Several Farmington area residents have won key positions with the Oakland County Democratic Party.

Rose Christoph of Farmington Hills was elected recording secretary and Debbie Goldberg of Farmington will serve as corresponding secretary.

Named to the executive committee were Paul Blizman, Rose Christoph, Michael Shipice and Marietta Simon, all of Farmington Hills. Also serving on the executive committee by virtue of being candidates in the recent election were Ryan Gesund and Aldo Vagnozzi, both of Farmington Hills.

The high number of Farmington area members on the executive committee reflects the effectiveness of the local Democratic club in the recent election, according to Oakland County Democratic Chair Gary Kohut.

The meeting at Fairview was on Jan. 17. About 60 people, including parents and staff, attended each session.

Both Obrizak and Blackman, however, explained to their parents that efforts would be made to make sure choices and options will still be available to them.

## Pilots and hubs

Obrizak said all-day kindergarten would be piloted in 2001-02, but only at one site - which

has not yet been decided. Also not yet answered is whether parents wanting a half-day option for their child would still get one, and if so, where.

That site would be monitored to compare student achievement between the half-day and full-day models.

Meanwhile, the kindergarten curriculum is, and will be, the same across the district, she added.

The move to Educare hubs also

## FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

was clarified at the Fairview and Alameda parent information meetings. Educare is a tuition-based enrichment program for kindergartners to attend during the portion of the day they are not in their kindergarten classes. The goal is for all early childhood and elementary schools to

have the Educare option available. But, emphasized Obrizak, a lot has to do with enrollment. "All children can have access to Educare, but if there is not enough for a section at a site those youngsters then would be transported to another building. About expanding pre-school

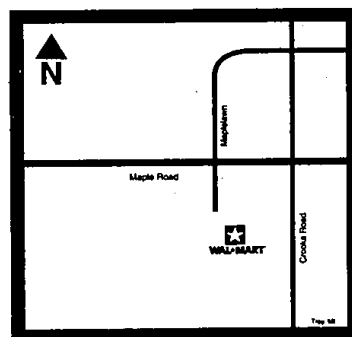
options, Maxfield listed a few ideas: parent-tot programs with 2 and 3-year olds; music-based enrichment for 4 and 5-year olds; bilingual pre-school classes.

"So, as space becomes available at the pre-school centers, that's when we'll be able to do these kinds of things," Maxfield said. "But we're never going to force it - make the decision that overflows neighborhood schools."

# WE'RE OPEN



Robert Riddle,  
Associate



Welcome to WAL-MART. We sell for less.  
Always have... Always will.

Welcome to Every Day Low Prices,  
brand names & friendly folks.

We're your WAL-MART.  
A full line discount store plus a whole lot more...

Troy  
2001 W. Maple Road

Look for your new Troy Wal-Mart  
at 15 mile, between Crooks and  
Coolidge. Turn left on Maple Lawn  
across from the Auto Mall.

# WAL★MART