



Little girls, they used to say, grow up to be mothers so they should learn to cook and sew, while boys learn shop work like their dads. Or do they? Should they? In a Plymouth middle school, some big changes are going into effect this week.....



Plymouth schools even shop, home economics

BY MARGARET MILLER

SHOP EQUIPMENT will be less mysterious to sixth and seventh grade girls in Plymouth's East Middle School as a new program of equalized shop and home economics for boys and girls goes into effect this week. From left: Diane and Dana Shanks, who attend East, and Pamela Henkel, a student at Central Middle School. Their mothers' protest of discrimination before the Plymouth school board brought about the change. (Observer photos by Harry Maute and Bob Woodring)

Girls and boys are getting equal shares of industrial arts and home economics classes beginning this week in Plymouth, due largely to the efforts of two mothers who saw the former system as discriminatory.

Donna Henkel and Jeanette Shanks, both with daughters of middle school age in Plymouth, went before the school board to protest the fact that their girls were getting less shop time in school than their male classmates.

This was in direct violation of Title 9 of the federal education amendments of 1972, the mothers held.

The school board agreed and ordered a middle school curriculum review to remove any discrimination based on sex.

John M. Hoben, superintendent, said he had directed principals to be sure that there is "equal opportunity" for boys and girls in shop and home economics programs at the sixth, seventh and eighth grade levels. "Our shop classes in the high school have been open to all students regardless of sex for some time now," he said. "I feel there is no discrimination at this point. The only place it existed was at



JEANETTE SHANKS

"More parents should get involved."



DONNA HENKEL

"Survival skills are taught in shop."

the middle school level and that has been corrected."

What brought these two mothers to the protest that affected change?

Donna Henkel and Jeanette Shanks, both active in the Schoolcraft-Livonia chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW), said they realized by chance they were working on the same prob-

lem. Their daughters, attending different schools, both were feeling discrimination.

Mrs. Henkel's daughter, Pamela, is in the seventh grade at Central Middle School.

"Last semester she had an art class she enjoyed greatly," her mother said, "and she told me she really was working on the same prob-

more about working with wood, plastics and metals.

"But to do so she would have to make it an elective and give up choir. The boys had 15 weeks of shop, but she had only five weeks while taking the longer time in home living courses. One

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'We will change'

Teachers express concern over 'integrated classes'

BY MARGARET MILLER

"Kids enter the sixth grade with a definite sex identification, whether we like it or not."

The words are those of Mrs. Jackie Johnson, home living teacher at Plymouth Middle School East, and they sum up both the basic need for equal educational opportunities irrespective of sex and the practical concerns that those opportunities may present.

Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Sandy Lestock will be teaching both boys and girls cooking and sewing under the new scheduling going into effect this week, following a protest by two mothers that former policies were discriminatory.

Tim Bortles will be teaching both sexes in shop.

"We will change," Mrs. Johnson said after Carl Taylor, principal, had commented that the new scheduling was being implemented "with excellent cooperation from the teaching staff."

But she had to voice reservations. "I want to be sure the best interests of the students will be served," she added, "and I feel sure there are some parents who would prefer the system we used before."



SANDY LESTOCK

"Role stereotypes need changing."



JACKIE JOHNSON

"There's sex identification whether we like it or not."

Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Lestock had to concede that some of their objections concerned practically the matter of teaching sixth graders.

"In the sixth grade, when Johnny likes Susie he pokes her with a pencil in English class, but in the sewing room he can keep unthreading her machine," Mrs. Johnson said.

"And in the shop - well, there are all kinds of possibilities with the equipment there."

They also felt that the level of maturity at sixth and seventh grade might make completely integrated and equal instruction for boys and girls not the best system for the students.

The middle schools' philosophy that all children get shop at either sixth or seventh grade level has not been fully implemented, due largely to building and staff limitations, Mrs. Johnson said.

"We've attempted," she explained, "to take the child as he comes to us and handle his education within our capacities and to the best interests of the majority."

"For me, the ideal situation would be one in which we offered more shop than we do and more home living than we do to both girls and boys."

At this stage of their lives, the "little girls seem to be more interested in home ec and the boys more interested in shop - except that they have a lively interest in the other class," Mrs. Johnson said.

For most, she added, this has been satisfied with a few weeks of girls in shop and boys in sewing and cooking in the seventh grade.

Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Lestock expressed concern the quality of instruction

might diminish, since in general girls and boys thread sewing machine needles," she said, "and if boys and girls are in the same sewing class that means two basic projects to work on."

She and Mrs. Lestock agreed that boys at this age, while wanting to learn to cook and sew, "do have a lot of worries about their masculinity," and some girls do worry about the shop equipment.

"I think we may be pushing them into situations many do not want," Mrs. Johnson said. "I can see good reasons for doing so, but I can see problems too."

Mrs. Lestock said she was much in agreement that male and female stereotypes as presented in early elementary course materials are bad and need changing.

"I've seen some of those supposedly new books, and they still show Mother with her hair in a bun and wearing an apron," she said.

"Both Jackie and I have offered our services for making suggestions to improve course materials so that roles are less stereotyped in the early years."

"I guess what we're saying," Mrs. Johnson concluded, "is that this really should start earlier."

MACLD will hear Dr. Eldis

Dr. Fran Eldis, director of the Children's Hospital communications center, will address the Farmington chapter of the Michigan Association for Children with Learning Difficulties Thursday, Jan. 31, at 8 p.m.

The meeting is scheduled in East Junior High School, 2300 Middle Belt, Farmington Hills.

Dr. Eldis will discuss diagnostic testing as it relates to language, learning and the pre-school child.

Garden center sets workshops

Mid-winter workshops for the Detroit Garden Center, Inc. begin Wednesday, Feb. 13, in the Morris House, 1409 E. Jefferson, Detroit.

The workshops, open to Detroit Garden Center members, are held from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., every Wednesday for seven weeks.

Pre-registration and payment are required. Mail checks or money order to Detroit Garden Center, 1409 E. Jefferson, Detroit. Note

which workshops you wish to attend.

There will be a sales table for supplies. Beverages will be provided at the lunch break.

Workshops will include whimsy walkings, Feb. 13; Williamsburg bouquets, Feb. 20; pomander balls and pot pourri, Feb. 27; spring topiary trees, March 6; fun with egg cartons, March 13; terrariums in bottles, March 20; and eggs, March 27.

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