

How schools fight battle against dropping out

The war to fight the dropout rate in the Farmington School District is being fought on many fronts.

Educators at the three district high schools agree the major reason for the low dropout rate are the specially designed programs—vocational education, special education, counseling and the co-op job program.

State statistics reveal that Farmington's dropout rate is 3.88 per cent, as compared to the state average of 8.88 per cent during the 1973-74 school year.

During the 1974-75 school year, 12

males and 12 females dropped out at North Farmington. Student enrollment is 1,350. Out of approximately the same number of students at Harrison, there were 21 female and 45 male dropouts.

At Farmington High School there were 42 female and 36 male dropouts. The student enrollment is 1,677.

Harrison Assistant Principal Jack Buller lauded the Southeast Oakland Vocational School at Walled Lake for aiding in keeping students in school.

of vocational skills, from data processing to horticulture.

"Some of the students we might normally lose are kept in school by the Walled Lake program," says Buller. "Students who express interest have a chance to visit the school and see what it's like."

Those in the program attend for three hours a day. Eighty Harrison students participate.

"The school seems to meet their needs and interest is something they can handle," says Buller.

North Farmington Administrative Assistant Clarence Shrewbridge thinks the Walled Lake program is popular because students recognize the need for having a salable skill to find employment.

"I'm sure that there are more kids in school because of this program," says Farmington Assistant Principal Gerald Potter.

"Guys who were potential dropouts now have an opportunity for three hours of study a day. They like the courses."

"I was at Walled Lake yesterday. I think 100 per cent of the student body is there because they want to be. It gives them something meaningful."

Vocational education programs continue to be offered in high schools as well as in the Walled Lake facility. Earl Baumunk, director of the Farmington vocational program, says the program is designed to relate to the job market.

"We have an alternative program in vocational education called Preparatory Employment Program (PEP), which is designed to give success to students who haven't been successful in academic classes."

"At the present time 32 students from the three high schools are taking instruction in office occupations, auto mechanics, printing, machine shop, welding and nursing arts," he says.

"Our rate of placing students has been 85 per cent in the past four years."

COUNSELORS CONCENTRATE on spotting those who may be potential dropouts.

"Individual counseling on a one-to-one basis helps the students with their problems and keeps them in school," says Shrewbridge.

Buller points to an additional counseling program used to educate those who are going out into the working world.

"Counselors make an exceptional effort with the kids on two kinds of programs at Harrison," says Shrewbridge. "They first encourage students to take the Ohio Interest Vocational Survey to find their interests."



The career auto class teaches students a skill they can use in the real-life job market. Working on this six cylinder engine are North

Farmington High School students, Randy Allyn, Mark Bondy, and Jim Brown. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

"Everyone in the 10th grade has an opportunity to join the vocational education group which is conducted in co-operation with the English department. For several weeks the students, deeply explore vocational choices to see what they need to get a certain job, or what actual work the person in that job does."

"Counselors are a factor in identifying potential dropouts. They help students with home and school problems and recommend certain classes in which they can find success."

Mary Larson is one of those responsible for helping students who have been identified by counselors as needing special attention.

A resource room teacher at Farmington Senior High School, she takes in hand the student who needs a special boost in math, reading or science skills.

"We try to provide alternative forms of education for students with learning disabilities or emotional problems," she says. "By learning disabilities, I refer to a child's normal handicaps in areas such as math or reading."

Mrs. Larson often orients her students toward a vocational education

to prepare them for life after high school.

A READING CLASS for some of the students would include surveys, skills such as learning to make a job application, read want ads, get a job. Instead of traditional geometry and algebra these students might learn to make their way through the intricacies of interest rates on loans, writing checks and filling out income tax forms.

"There is no way to know for sure, but I think we can definitely say that students will end up with a high school diploma because of this program," she says. "Kids love it. They tell me. They stay in the program and don't rebel against it."

They learn to feel better about themselves. They become productive individuals. We could hypothesize that some of them might show up on welfare rolls without the skills they learn here."

The concept of the resource room where students can come for help in bolstering needed skills is carried down to both the junior high schools and the elementary schools in Farmington.

Because of the special efforts that Farmington is making, the way students are educated is a little kind of new.

It is also true that the young people in the district are benefiting from the special work offered by the district and the job training centers.

In addition, the district is available to help students with a variety of handicaps such as learning disabilities.

There are a number of programs offered at Walled Lake, a special education program for students becoming educationally handicapped.

Having all these programs to plug into helps retain students in school, Shrewbridge maintains. If they didn't have them, a lot of kids wouldn't make it.

It is all here, the potential for any student to achieve a salable skill or prepare for further training.

"From 1966, we have been fortunate to have a good program in a different field of study, attracting them."

All we need is to have the student turn on, and away he goes.

Art club honors rooftop sketcher

By CORINNE ABATT

In 1928 a young Detroit artist, W.C. Gus Lissen, made a sketch of the rooftops of the old art colony between Russell and Rivard in Detroit.

As he tried to think of an idea for a painting, to enter in the Farmington Artist Club show on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 14, 15, and 16, Lissen, now 68 and a retired advertising executive, chanced upon the old sketch.

"He used it for an oil painting, 'Rooftops,' and won the best of show award for his effort."

"I'm especially happy," he said shortly after putting the ribbon on his painting, "because the only other award I've had is an honorable mention several years ago."

Lissen, who says he has an attic full of watercolors, attended the Junior School of Art in Detroit in the late 1920s and later studied under George Rich before going into advertising, most recently with the Detroit News.

PAINTING ON AND OFF for 30 years during his career, and actively involved with family responsibilities and the Boy Scout movement, he says, "I sorta go by streaks between watercolors and oils."

Artist Johanna Haas, who, along with Igor Begman, judged the show, told Lissen as she presented the award. "This painting carried across the room, across the walls. It has an expressive feeling and the color carries over. It catches your soul as it did ours."

Lissen who has suffered four heart attacks said he was especially proud because last week the Bedford Dis-

trict Boy Scouts presented him with the coveted Silver Beaver award. He has designed patches for the Detroit Area Council since 1970, was on the Boy Scout Commission for six years and is presently a member of the advancement committee for the Bedford District Eagle Board of Review.

Others in the club who won awards were: Elsie Hoffman, "Seawall," first prize; Walter Hedding, "Reflections," second prize; Marjorie Chellstorp, "Flowers," third prize; Jerome Hahsburg, "Blue and Pink," honorable mention; and Alice Nichols, "Where the Fern Grows," honorable mention.

As she made the presentations, Haas who teaches painting at the Birmingham Art Association commented on each prize winner.

SHE URGED the artists to keep up the good work and complimented the club on the quality of the show and the way it was hung. Marjorie Chellstorp's work, she explained how it was judged.

"We looked for a painter's feeling—color, form and structure."

Adding that the art was of good quality, she said, "Good art will survive. Good painting will always survive."

The two judges selected 46 paintings from 112 submitted to be hung in the juried section. Those not chosen were not displayed.

The open exhibit and a selection of unframed works of art were all popular with the hundreds of visitors to the exhibit which was held on the lower floor of the Farmington library on Twelve Mile.

The club holds exhibits twice yearly.



Farmington Artist Club judge Johanna Haas holds the best of show ribbon which she is about to present to painter W.C. (Gus) Lissen.

His prize winning oil, "Rooftops," is a scene of Detroit in the 1920s. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

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