

District aids students with learning problems

By RON GARBINSKI

A new special education program in the Farmington School District is paving the way for successful classroom experiences for many area pre-schoolers.

One of the first steps in the district's pre-school learning disabilities program at Kenbrook Elementary School works with children at the nursery-school level helping them cope with learning difficulties.

"The primary function of this program is to take kids with certain learning problems and work with their specific learning difficulties," says Douglas Smith, director of special education for Farmington schools.

"It is largely a preventative program where the teachers try to work with the problem so that when the child is ready to enter the first grade, he will have an easier time learning. If we can help the child to learn, then there is a better chance of success for him later on in school."

THE PROGRAM responds to referrals from parents, doctors and other nursery schools about children with apparent disabilities. From there, the program conducts comprehensive evaluations of the child, including psychological, speech, language, gross and fine motor skills tests and several other evaluations.

The teachers involved in the program then prepare for the child a plan of remediation which could support or strengthen his development.

Speech psychologist Duke Robinson and learning disabilities certified instructor Mary Lou Campbell are the two Kenbrook teachers who work with social worker Ronald Wallace, psychologist Lynn Hamilton and speech psychologist Georgene Johnson in the program.

According to Smith, they work together as a team helping pre-schoolers with problems they experience while learning.

There are six seven-week sessions of the program and after a student completes one block of the program, he is re-evaluated to see if he should continue in the same program or move onto some other area of special education.

"A child may be in the program all year or he may attend just one or two blocks at a time," explains Smith.

"After his time in this special program, he may be placed in Middle Belt School. This is a special center for elementary students with learning disabilities. A student may go there if he needs further help for his learning disabilities."

The program is conducted in the morning for about two hours, Tuesday through Friday. In conjunction with the learning disabilities program, Kenbrook also is the district's center for a program that helps children who have speech difficulties.

At the start of the learning disabilities program, the teachers evaluate each child. The psychologist also evaluates the pre-schoolers and spends several hours with the children separately during the period each child spends in the program.

"After the comprehensive evaluations, parents are invited to participate in the educational planning for the children," explains Smith. "The learning disabilities team and parents together attempt to diagnose the child's primary problem. Then they work out an appropriate educational plan for the child."

"After this meeting, it may be determined that the child is eligible for some other special education program or that he should continue in the learning disabilities program."

THE PRIMARY emphasis in the total program is to prevent failure in the early elementary years, says Mrs. Campbell. "Parents are usually the first ones to realize the child may have a problem and they are the ones who should contact us when they suspect something is wrong."

"It is difficult for us to really determine if the child has a learning disability problem during our initial hour-long evaluation of the child. Parents must help us because they are the ones who have knowledge of such problems," she continues. "Kids develop at different rates and it is hard to see if they have reached certain developmental milestones as compared to other children," adds Ms. Robinson. "Kids get tired quickly and it's hard to determine what their problems may be. This is why we are conducting this program, so we can work with the child over several weeks and devote our time to each child's problem."

Mrs. Campbell and the rest of the staff start the classroom sessions with physical tests and then move into other problem areas. A child may have a mixed problem, for example, where his speech and language skills are hampered by his underdeveloped motor skills. Then the staff has to determine which special education program is best for the child, explains Mrs. Campbell.

There are 18 pre-schoolers in the morning learning disabilities program and 15 children in the afternoon speech and language session, which is also for pre-school youngsters.

"At times it is really difficult to keep these kids interested in what they are doing," says Ms. Robinson. "Keeping their motivation level high is really tough. Teaching them things they find difficult to do is even more frustrating because they always want to quit when they trouble."

BECAUSE THE TEACHERS have the students for only a short time, one of the major goals of the program is to assist parents with activities and things they can do for the child at home.

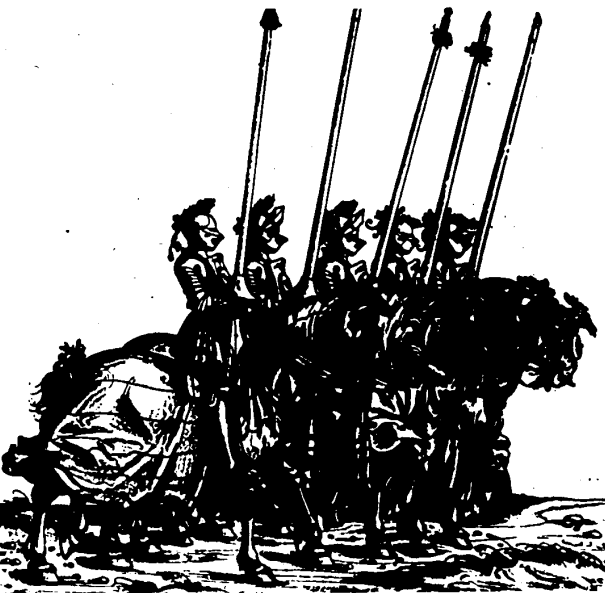
"Management in the home is one of the most important aspects of dealing with a learning disabled child," says Smith. "Our learning disabilities team has had many conferences with parents and has helped them direct and organize home activities for the child."

Parents also seem to be open in discussing their child's learning disabilities with other parents who also are experiencing problems with their children, says Mrs. Campbell. "They are willing to share problems and solutions in an attempt to best help all pre-schoolers overcome their difficulties."

"And we have gotten a lot of referrals from these parents telling other parents about the program," adds Ms. Robinson.

"We are just developing the program and conceivably we could expand the program in the future if there is a greater basis for it to expand. But right now, we have not reached the point of a waiting list."

"And we can't do that because we must keep the classes small in order to give each student the individual attention he or she needs."



This print by G.B. Piranesi will be among those displayed at Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus Jan. 30, from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m., in the campus library. Many of the prints, from the Ferdinand Roten Galleries, will be on sale.

Residents approve of grant funding

Residents attending this week's public hearing on how Farmington Hills should spend its community development block grant funds expressed satisfaction over administration plans.

The \$600,000 three-year grant will be used for storm sewer development, housing code enforcement, home renovation and an as yet undetermined senior citizen program.

THE MAJORITY of funds will be used to develop a storm sewer system in sections 35 and 36, located in the city's south end. That area has major problems, according to city officials, with flooded streets, many of which are unpaired.

"Farmington Hills' use of the funds in the first year met with the intent of how the money should be used," said Sue Willis, a representative from the Farmington West Bloomfield League of Women Voters. "We urge the city to implement the storm sewer funds."

Federal guidelines specify that community block grant funds must be used for the benefit of low- and moderate-income persons to combat blight.

In its first year, the city used funds to hire a housing code enforcement officer. The administration asked council to continue that position. The majority of the first year funds went toward storm sewer development.

Although the program runs for three years, citizens are required to reapply every

year in case the federal government decides to reduce or increase the funding.

The resident spoke in support of youth programs, saying young persons would benefit from the sewer program, which in turn would make the area a better place to live.

She also urged the council to consider expanding a contemplated senior citizen transportation plan for use by all persons in that part of the community. City officials are discussing the possibility of using some of the block grant funds for senior citizen transit.

"If we are going to help the youth we must help the entire community. You are right on this program," said Terry Anshelick, a social worker who works in the youth assistance program.

"OUR VOICES walk these streets. A transportation system will meet the youth's needs who are hitchhiking. Low income housing is needed in that area, and not just for senior citizens," she said.

This week's meeting was the second public hearing on the funding issue. By law, the city is required to have two such hearings.

"I don't think in all my years of working in city administration I have seen such support from residents for a project," said City Manager George Maysas after the hearing.

"Now we know we're doing something right as far as this program is concerned," he said.



Taking on the slopes

Susan Robins (left) and Lisa Williams, both of Farmington Hills recently received bronze medals in the open class ski racing at Cliff Ridge ski area. Miss Robins, 17, is a senior at North Farm-

ington High School. Miss Williams, 13, is a student at Dunckel Junior High School.

Schools gird to fight sexism in classroom

By RON GARBINSKI

Sexism in education may soon be eliminated in the Farmington School District.

If students or employees believe they are being discriminated against by a Farmington school, they will be able to challenge the district and take their grievance before a coordinator who will investigate their complaint.

Under Title IX, a law developed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and enforced by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, federally assisted educational

programs cannot discriminate on the basis of sex.

"This law was passed last year. It says if any person in the Farmington school system feels they are being treated unfairly because of their sex, then they have the right to complain to the school district," says LeRoy Bartman, director of personnel for the Farmington School District.

"Actually, Title IX should have taken effect in October, but we have just received guidelines from the state on how to comply with the law," he continues. "We now are working on a draft of the grievance

procedure students can follow if they have a complaint.

Bartman, who has been appointed district Title IX coordinator, will handle all discrimination complaints filed with the school district. He will coordinate compliance efforts and investigate the complaints.

BARTMAN AND SEVERAL OTHER school administrators previously are working on a draft of the procedures students and employees can follow in their discrimination action.

"What we have to do now is make sure everyone in the district knows about the rules and the steps they can take to have their complaint heard," he explains.

"The entire school system has to be informed on Title IX and who they can go to for help," he says. "It's not just a question of having an inquiry concerning discrimination in the schools."

"We must communicate with every child and staff member in the district and tell them of their rights under this law." Some of the educational discriminatory practices covered under Title IX are providing different services, or services in a

different matter, on the basis of sex, applying different rules of access to courses, enforcing different rules of discipline, failing to provide equal opportunities in athletics, counseling in a discriminatory manner or using appraisal materials that tend to group students in courses by sex, separating classes by sex except where expressly authorized.

At a meeting Tuesday afternoon, Bartman and the committee preparing the Farmington Title IX program, reviewed communications the district will send home with every student within the next few weeks.

"So far the committee has three major accomplishments. First, we have prepared the grievance procedure. It is only a draft now, but at least we have the groundwork for an effective method of handling complaints."

"Second, we have appointed a coordinator for the program. Now, if anyone has a

discrimination complaint, they should notify my office and I will make sure their grievance is handled properly."

"Third, we have started a wide sweeping evaluation of our district to see if it is meeting the requirements as stated under Title IX," Bartman explains.

SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, Bartman and School Board Trustees Anne Struble and Ernie Makinen attended an educational opportunity workshop in Ann Arbor. The workshop was federally funded and designed to help school districts implement Title IX.

"We have a good start on setting up our local program. We had a meeting last week and have set July as our goal to make sure the district is thoroughly evaluated in terms of Title IX. We want to make sure there aren't any discriminatory practices in our system," he continues.

The grievance procedure and other materials concerning the Title IX program and its implementation in the Farmington School District will be published for all students at a later date.

Lincoln had romantic problems, too

Dr. Weldon Petz used a small part of his 40,000-piece collection of Lincoln memorabilia to illustrate his discussion at the Flinders School Thursday, Jan. 22.

His most popular memento, a Lincoln head carved from a peach pit, was made by a Union soldier in Andersonville prison. "Children always ask me show them that pit," Petz laughed.

The carving was given to Petz's grandfather by the soldier who whittled it. There are three such carvings in existence. The Smithsonian has a rougher version of the head and wants to acquire the one in Petz's collection. He wants to keep the carving in his family.

Petz also owns a bronzed head of Lincoln as he looked before becoming president. It was made from a plaster casting taken by artist Leonard Pulk. Lincoln was compelled to lay still for an hour while the plaster dried on his face.

THE REMOVAL of the cast was unexpectedly painful because some of the hair around Lincoln's forehead had dried onto the plaster, Petz said.

Petz also made a cast of Lincoln's forehead. The right hand is broader, Petz explained, because the night before the casting, Lincoln learned that he had received his party's presidential nomination. He shook hands with 800 well-wishers before sitting with the artist.

One of the hands grasps a stick which Petz says was the top part of Mrs. Lincoln's broom handle. The artist wanted him to check something in his hand, so Lincoln cut off the handle of the broom.

"He always got to the heart of the matter," Petz said.

Lincoln met his wife, Mary Todd, at a dance in Springfield, Ill. Years later, when

she was living in the White House, she remembered, "He asked, 'Miss Todd, I'd like to dance with you in the worst way,' and that's exactly what he did."

After showing several photographs of Mrs. Lincoln, Petz pointed out that she wore the same necklace, bracelet and earrings in each picture.

Although Mary Todd was nine years Lincoln's junior, by 1862 she looked older than her husband, she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and her condition was so worn as the great older. Her face was puffy from diabetes, an illness she was not aware she had.

LINCOLN HAD PROPOSED to Mary Owen before he met Mary Todd. Miss Owen wouldn't give him an intermediate answer and gradually Lincoln began to change his mind.

"He was scared to death," Petz said. Miss Owen steadily gained weight and eventually reached 200 pounds. Lincoln was "in love with her," Petz said.

"I wrote her a very passionate letter," Petz said. "It began, 'Friend Mary, nothing would make me more miserable than to see you miserable.'" Petz said this passage was written after Lincoln had changed his mind about plump Mary. She declined his proposal.

Lincoln's first sweetheart, Ann Rutledge, died shortly before he proposed to Mary Owen. A story exaggerating their relationship was circulated after his death. "It was fabricated by Lincoln's partner," Petz said, "because he hated Mary Todd." The story aggravated her deteriorating mental condition.

City students are graduates

Fourteen students from Farmington and Farmington Hills were awarded bachelor degrees by Eastern Michigan University at its winter commencement.

Farmington Hills graduates were Shirley Allison, 2446 Orchard Lake Road; Leslie Bill, 3186 Pleasant Run; Paula Grundy, 3175 Lakeside Drive; Jeffrey Kaschky, 3465 Quaker Valley Drive; Ricky Page, 3629

Drake; and Dennis Scott, 2801 Forestbrook.

Those from Farmington were Elaine Baratta, 2650 Ruston; Merja Blum, 3123 N. Manor Drive; Terrence Giles, 2947 Lakespark Drive; Grace Kett, 22718 Grand River; William Lee, 22750 Hayden; James Morgan, 2873 Sunnyside; Kathleen Sparks, 2811 Blanchard; and Bradley Thompson, 3117 Twin Valley Court.