

Wednesday, September 10, 1969

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A New Incentive

Secondary Schools Alter Curriculum
Teachers And Students Like The Change

Last of Series

(Following is the final in a series on school issues. Today, Wylio Gerdes looks at curriculum changes in the Farmington secondary schools.)

Extensive changes in the teaching of some academic subjects seem to have rekindled the enthusiasm of teachers and students.

The new sequences of instruction tend to connect the subject matter with the world outside of a classroom and make the subject more immediately useful to the student.

How changes happen is also examined with a prediction that students soon will take on added responsibility in determining curriculum.

BY WYLIO GERDES

Strident arguments have been voiced by members of Farmington's secondary school community over too-slow or too-quick changes in dress codes or student rights.

But the most important, and until recently the most static aspect of school living, seemingly has been ignored.

What and how students should learn escaped much discussion until Sputnik began making waves over the United States. Then mathematics and science curriculums across our nation were closely inspected for possible improvement.

ENGLISH, history and the biological sciences appeared to be ignored. After all, how many ways can world history be taught?

Farmington's two high schools have come up with an emphatic answer to that question. True world history, not the history of western civilization alone, can be taught in flexible segments designed for today's youth.

Flexibility has become the outstanding feature of three curriculum experiments in the Farmington district.

The first experiment began last year in English classes in Farmington High School. In place of English 10, 11 and 12, a program of two basic classes and a series of diversified classes in four groups was instituted.

A Fundamental Skills and Introduction to Literature and Composition class are required of all students. From there, the program expands into classes able to give in-depth treatment to areas probably given little consideration in traditional English classes.

IN ONE GROUP are classes such as American Culture, Humanities, Mass Media, Mythology, Directed Reading and Reading Improvement.

Another grouping includes two English literature courses, two world literature courses, and a course each in drama and Shakespeare.

Essay writing, two creative writing classes, and two journalism classes are in another group, together with business English.

The fourth group includes speech, forensics debate, dramatics and stagecraft.

Both teachers and students overwhelmingly approve of the change, according to Miss Rita Piron, an English teacher at Farmington High who was closely involved with formulating the new program.

"We are demanding a lot of our teachers," Miss Piron says, especially in preparation. But the program is so exciting that teachers are spending with closer cooperation.

THE FACT that teachers are allowed to select the area in which they will teach also helps hold interest.

"All our teachers teach sophomores," Miss Piron says, noting that teachers are to the system used to be placed on the lower levels.

Serious consideration of a change in the English curriculum at Farmington High began about three years ago, she says. "We didn't seem to be getting

anywhere, and instead of lamenting the fact, we decided to do something," she confided.

The school's English teachers banded together and agreed on a flexible program. Much of the work was done on their own time.

A new English program used at Birmingham's Groves High School was considered, but Miss Piron recalls that it was "not quite what we had in mind."

Practical matters such as scheduling, the teachers available in special interest areas, and textbooks also had to be considered.

THE ENGLISH Department surveyed the English classes to determine which classes would likely be most popular.

They even anticipated the extra demands which would be made on counselors because of the expanded program and set up a system in which English teachers give advice to students in the English program.

To allow a midyear change in textbooks if necessary, all

paperbacks are required for the course. Hardcover books must be used at least five years because of their cost.

The Farmington High English program's use of paperbacks is shared by the new social studies system being tried for the first time this year at both high schools.

Joseph Nicita, director of secondary education, says that the social studies program also was developed entirely by the classroom teachers. The social studies program has groups of classes, including some in African, Asian and Middle Eastern history, areas usually ignored in traditional classes.

ONE GROUP contains several offerings in European history, another courses in African and Middle Eastern history, and a third concerns Asian history and culture. The fourth group is American history and culture classes.

A new biological sciences program is beginning this year at North Farmington High and East Junior High, Nicita says.

Two years of pilot study has been done at East and North Farmington on the new series. It emphasizes laboratory investigation rather than lectures. The program was developed by the federally-supported Biological Sciences Curriculum Study done a decade ago.

The study found the lecture approach is not very workable in teaching the biological sciences and suggested three programs with slightly differing areas of emphasis. Two will be tried in the Farmington system this year.

NICITA SAYS that he expects few changes in the curriculum until adjustments have been made to the new programs. His goal now is "to do a good job of implementing the changes we've made."

The process of making curriculum changes is the key to leading to active healthy school system. If changes are hard to make and take years, they are often outmoded by the time they are completed.

Now teachers propose changes to the Secondary Council which is made up of secondary administrators.

If the change is minor, the Secondary Council can initiate it. Major changes are passed onto the Board of Education's curriculum committee, which makes recommendations to the board.

The curriculum committee can recommend changes of its own. The members of this group, Gary Lichtman, Richard Frankel and Mrs. Patricia Smith, have emphasized consideration of minority groups, human relations, and the role of counselors, according to Nicita.

THE CHANGING process took on an added dimension only a few months ago when a Citizens Advisory Committee was named to study school problems. One of its first tasks was to form a Family Life Education Committee to study sex education and other types of programs which might arouse sensitivity in the community.

Nicita comments that Farmington is trying to avoid a situation similar to the one in Livonia where no communication between the school board and the public accentuated a controversy over sex education. "Trying to involve the city takes a lot of work," the director of secondary education says, and the Family Life Committee has been meeting continually this summer.

Teachers and administrators figure heavily in any curriculum change, and the advisory committee gives parents some voice. That leaves the student part of the school community triumvirate approximately where it always has been -- with the power to observe and not much else.

STUDENT POWER on dress codes likely will come to the test before the first snow falls. The controversy at North Farmington which began last spring has not been resolved, but some observers think that the strike at North was only a prelude to formal student participation on many other more important issues, including curriculum.

Nicita personally believes that student participation is coming, although they're "not much involved" yet. He adds that consideration of curriculum by students hasn't been done in any high school yet.

"Students say they want to be involved," Nicita says, "and I think it's not a threat."

"I'm convinced high school aged students in many cases are mature enough to know the kind of course which will be meaningful to them," he says.

the disaster relief staff as representatives of the Southeastern Michigan Chapter. They are part of the 469-member emergency team sent by the American National Red Cross from all over the United States.

The two men have been assigned to disaster relief headquarters in Gulfport, Miss., and have been working with hurricane victims to provide immediate needs. They will soon be assigned to field case work which requires that they personally visit affected families to determine long-term needs. Over 10,000 families have registered with the Red Cross for rehabilitation aid.

THE
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SIDELINE SUPPORT The Raiders of North Farmington High School went back for vocal support when the football season gets under way. Here are the Raiders' parents and their cheering and cheering. Top row from left: Debbie Wilhelms, Debbie Gross, second row from left: Pam Kidd, Ann Flakke, Dawn Kourban, Kathy Kearns, Linda Borden. Top row from left: Gerda Kubo and Lynn Morden.

Farmington
Calendar

IMMUNIZATION CLINIC

Sept. 10, The Oakland County Health Department will sponsor an immunization clinic in the Wheeler Street Fire Station from 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

FARMINGTON CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

Sept. 10, The Farmington Citizens Association will hold its first general membership meeting in the Farmington Community Center at 8 p.m. Business will include explanation of the purposes and activities of the association and selection of a nominating committee to solicit candidates for office.

PIONEER GOLDEN AGE CLUB

Sept. 10, The Pioneer Golden Age Club will hold a business meeting in St. Alexander's social hall.

SENIOR CITIZENS DROP IN CENTER

Sept. 10, Farmington Senior Citizens Drop In Center will hold a potluck luncheon in the Farmington Masonic Temple.

HILL AND DALE GARDEN CLUB

Sept. 11, The Hill and Dale Garden Club will meet at 8 p.m. in the Farmington Community Center. Guest speaker Mrs. Betty Frankel will discuss "How to Establish a Perennial Garden." Guests are invited.

ALPHA DELTA PI

Sept. 11, Alpha Delta Pi North Suburban alumnae group will open the fall season with a couples potluck supper in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Prescott Crisler at 32411 Queensboro, Farmington.

BLUE STAR MOTHERS

Sept. 18, Chapter 49 of the Blue Star Mothers of America will hold a business meeting at 1 p.m. in Clarencville United Methodist Church.

SENIOR CITIZENS SOCIAL CLUB

Sept. 12, The Senior Citizens Social Club will have a social afternoon with cards beginning at noon in the First United Methodist Church social room. Bring a sandwich.

Farmington Man Aids
In Camille Clean-Up

A Farmington resident is deeply involved in the massive cleanup and rehabilitation program in the Gulf Coast area following Hurricane Camille.

Henry Maurer of 24568 Lincoln Court, manager of the West Regional Red Cross office, reported by telephone from his location in Mississippi to Southeastern Michigan Red Cross headquarters in Detroit that "the devastation caused by Camille is unbelievable. It looks to me as though the area was hit by bombs."

Maurer and Kenneth A. Baras of the Macomb Regional Red Cross office, were sent to

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- Replace front wheel grease retainers on each wheel if needed
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