

On ballot in June

Intermediate schools asking for 2 mills

Oakland Intermediate School District Tuesday approved language for a June 8 proposal to triple the county's special education funding. The schools are asking a two-mill increase in the property tax. If approved by voters, the increase will generate about \$22 million annually. The one mill now levied was approved in two half-mill portions in 1974 and 1975.

"There has been an explosion in the growth of the special education population," Supt. William Keane said, started when federal law imposed requirements on the nature of special education programs. The intermediate district directly operates only one special education program, but it has 65 contracts with 15 county K-12 districts to provide such services, Keane said.

IN THE LAST five years, he said, the district has experienced a 32 percent increase in the number of special education students and a 125 percent in-

crease in the cost of providing programs for them. General education student population has declined countywide by 13 percent in the same period, he said.

Cost increases in special education were sparked particularly by a program Keane called "child-fund." He defined it as "trying to identify young people who are out in the community who are handicapped in one way or another and who have not been serviced."

Also an increasingly significant cost recently has been programs for learning disabled students, said Keane, "not a nice, clean and easy category to define."

Keane said learning disabled students are "those children who seem to have normal intelligence and yet have not been able to learn at the rate expected of them."

The result, Keane said, has been the near-elimination of payments to local school districts opera-

ting independent special education programs. Such independent programs now garner only 4 percent of the intermediate district's special education spending, with the remainder required to pay contract costs to 15 districts offering magnet special education programs drawing students from several districts.

KEANE SAID, "Oakland County was definitely a leader" in special education. It maintained a policy dating to the 1950s of reimbursing local districts for 100 percent of costs involved in independent special education programs.

"After you include the money that we can pay to the local districts and the money they're getting from state and federal sources, the local districts are spending 33 percent of their operating budgets" to fund special education programs, Keane said.

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Elderly deaf group to meet

The first board meeting of the Michigan Association of the Elderly Hearing Impaired, Inc., will be 9-11:30 a.m. Friday at the South East Oakland Vocational Education Center.

The center is on Delamere street in Royal Oak between Coolidge and Crooks roads south of 14 Mile.

The hearing impaired group is a social service agency serving Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Monroe, Livingston, St. Clair and Washtenaw counties.

State Rep. Ruth McNamee, R-Birmingham, will address the group at 10:30 a.m.

Board members include Sr. Colleen Morris, director of gerontology at Madonna, and Kenneth O. Rust, also of Madonna.

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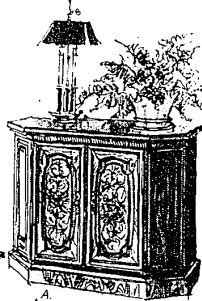
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