

# Farmington Observer

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## Farmington students lead pack in testing

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Farmington students this year increased their scores on state reading and math assessment tests compared to scores of four years ago and in most cases also outstripped the statewide average scores.

That's the bottom line of the results of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests given to all fourth, seventh and tenth graders in the Farmington schools last fall. The

MEAP tests are given every school year.

"There's been an overall increase in the scoring," said school district consultant Dr. Eric Gordon of the Instructional Development and Evaluation Associates Inc., in Berkeley.

Although scores have increased over four years of testing, "there's been no fundamental revision (of school programs and services) because we have been operating at a high level," said Graham Lewis, Farmington assistant

superintendent of special education and services.

But Lewis added that the district's reading program has been "firmed up" and there is constant revision of how the district "approaches reading, writing and arithmetic."

While many people think of the MEAP tests as a measure of whether a student is "good" in math or reading, the results are used as a diagnostic tool for the district and each of the schools, Lewis said.

"It's not to be termed an individual diagnostic tool," Lewis said, adding the test is used to assess the district.

If a significant number of students are scoring fairly low on a particular skill or objectives, then we have to ask some questions," Lewis said.

Some questions that might be asked when scores are fairly low in a particular skill are, for example:

- Whether that skill is being taught effectively in the lower grades.
- Are students forgetting the skill

once it is taught?

• After the skill is taught is it being reinforced?

In the 1983-84 school year, for example, Lewis said, students scored low in alphabetizing. When school officials investigated why that occurred, they discovered that the way the question was asked on the MEAP test was different than the way the school district would ask the question.

The MEAP test results also provide parents and schools with information

about individual students' performance levels. "It lets parents and the school know the child will have academic problems," Lewis said.

Although the district's test results are compared to statewide achievement levels, Farmington schools does not compare its results to those of other school districts, Lewis said.

"It's our own kind of achievement level. We're not talking about competition," Lewis said.

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RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

While a school bus edges past, a Farmington Hills road crew repairs the damage winter caused to Power Road, south of Futsom.

## Municipal assessors gird for annual complaint time

By Julie Brown  
staff writer

The taxman cometh — and it should be soon in Farmington Hills.

Notices of changes in assessed property value will be mailed Friday.

"Just about everyone will get a notice," said city assessor Dean Babb.

Failure to receive a notice does not invalidate the assessment, he added. For that reason, property owners who don't receive a notice by March 3 are advised to call the assessor's office, just to check.

Beginning Monday morning, the assessor's office will accept appointments for the Board of Review. That three-member board reviews assessment appeals.

The Board of Review is scheduled to meet March 15, 18 and 19.

"On April 1, we have to be done," Babb said. To help speed up the process, the assessor's office is encouraging property owners to submit appeals by letter.

"A letter appeal is acted on in the same manner," the assessor said. "The Board of Review will act upon the let-

ters." Letter appeals must be received by March 19.

Michigan state law requires that all property be assessed at 50 percent of its market value. Appeals should be based either on evidence that the law is not being followed, or on non-uniformity, evidence that the assessment is not comparable to that of neighboring properties.

"WHAT THE board's looking for is the kind of things they can act on," Babb said.

Property owners may also submit

"hardship" appeals. Forms for such appeals are available in the assessor's office and will be sent upon request.

"Taxes are a hardship on everyone, really, but some people just can't pay their tax bill," Babb said.

In addition to filling out the forms, property owners submitting hardship appeals must also attach copies of their federal and state income tax returns.

A map of Farmington Hills in Babb's office shows the various assessments. There are pink dots for areas where the

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## Gentle breeze gives message French accent

A funny thing happened to the helium-filled dime-store balloon launched by 13-year-old Leslie Albrecht of Farmington last September.

The balloon, with an enclosed note to the finder, didn't land in Troy, Ulca or Sterling Heights like Albrecht's classmates' balloons. It went a bit further — to the coast of France — the town of Etretat on the English Channel, northwest of Paris, to be exact.

Albrecht's enclosed note described when the balloon was launched and asked the finder to write to the Sunday school student at St. John American Lutheran Church in Farmington.

Sure enough, Albrecht received a note Feb. 13, five months after the launch, from someone called Bernard. The note was short. It read: "Leslie: At the beach I have found your balloon and note. Regards, Bernard."

According to Leslie's mother, the Albrecht family plans to correspond with Bernard to discover the details of his find.

Although the Lutheran Sunday school students annually launch balloons in observance of Rally Day, the opening of Sunday school at the church on Gill Road, Albrecht's balloon is the first and only to have been found outside of Michigan.

"THEY'VE ALL been found in other parts of Michigan," said Sally Stauffer

of St. John American Lutheran Church. Of the estimated 100 balloons launched by students last fall, only 18, including Albrecht's, have received a reply, she said.

But the reason why the dime-store balloon managed to travel across the country and across the Atlantic Ocean appears to be a mystery.

"The strong winds in the lower altitudes would give it some distance," said John Cunningham, an official with the Weather Service Office at Flint's Bishop Airport.

The Weather Service Office conducts atmosphere studies with the use of helium-filled balloons. But the balloons the weather service uses are about 6 feet in height and 4-feet wide, Cunningham said.

A helium-filled balloon "rises all the time," he said. If the balloon is filled to capacity, the higher it goes, the more the gas expands until it eventually bursts, Cunningham said.

Surprised that Albrecht's dime-store balloon crossed the Atlantic, Cunningham said the only thing he can imagine is that Albrecht's balloon was under-inflated or had a minor leak.

And the balloon must have traveled at a low altitude and avoided storms, otherwise the higher altitudes and friction from high winds would have caused it to burst, he said.

**"WHAT EEEZ THEEZ !?!"**  
Americas answer to the high cost of air mail ?"



### oral quarrel

## Where is the most annoying pothole?

Everyone complains about potholes. Driving this winter has become a strategic effort to avoid the cracks, dips and holes pitting the area's roads.

Oakland County officials admit there seems to be far more potholes on county roads this winter than in the past. Farmington and Farmington Hills officials, on the other hand, say the roads under their jurisdiction are faring well under the stress of winter.

While road crews are out every day patching potholes motorists continue to find new ones.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: Where is your favorite pothole and why does that particular one bother you most?

You can answer this question by calling 477-5498 until 1 p.m. Friday, March 1. Look in Monday's Farmington Observer to see how your neighbors feel about this issue.

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Big family homes, beginning homes, retirement homes, country homes, city homes, townhouses, apartments, condominiums...there's a place that was designed and built just for you.

**CREATIVE LIVING REAL ESTATE SECTION**

And we have it. Every Thursday in our Creative Living Real Estate Section. You're sure to find what you're looking for advertised by qualified Realtors.

## Pair arrested in bank hold-up

Two Detroit area men are in the Oakland County Jail facing charges in connection with the \$42,000 robbery last Friday of the Bloomfield Savings Bank on Orchard Lake Road in Farmington.

Thomas Barnes, 27, of Highland Park, and Howard Steven Simon, 25, of Detroit, were arraigned Saturday before 47th District Judge Michael Hand on charges of armed robbery and possession of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

Both suspects were unable to post the \$500,000 bond set by Hand. A preliminary examination on the charges is

scheduled for April 1.

Farmington police made the arrests and recovered the stolen cash within approximately six minutes of the robbery, said Commander Tom Cox.

At 12:34 p.m. Friday, police were notified that a robbery was in progress in the bank at 22725 Orchard Lake Road, Cox said.

Two armed men walked into the bank, ordered customers and employees to the floor and forced several people to accompany them around the teller counter, Cox said.

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