

Schools, parents zero in on the gifted

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Intelligence can be placed in an advanced course simply because the enthusiasm and desire allow the student to do well academically, Lewis said.

"WHAT WE are trying to do is analyze our student population," Lewis said. "No one has a priority of needs over anyone else. We are not trying to carve out a population of gifted and talented. We do not extract these (gifted) students from classes. But we make sure the entire curriculum is evolving to meet levels of these students. It is better to identify each child's capability."

Students who are identified as intellectually gifted remain in the regular classroom. A coordinator is provided to work specifically with the intellectually gifted, Lewis said. The coordinator's responsibilities include counseling of the gifted student, teachers and parents.

Farmington's program includes:

- A committee that reviews and acts on referrals made by teachers, administrators or students.

- Assessment to determine whether a student is in the 98th percentile (132 IQ) of intellectual ability.
- Individualized programming for the gifted student.

PARENTS MAINTAIN that the district should follow guidelines for gifted education suggested by the Michigan State Board of Education.

It is the responsibility of the local school district to implement programs which reflect the policy of the Michigan State Board of Education in meeting the unique needs of gifted and talented students, at all levels of education, in ways that enable them to achieve optimum personal growth," Tomasini wrote.

Despite the state's guidelines, Lewis said: "Not one iota of gifted education is mandated (required by law) by the state. There is much debate in this area about gifted education. No one has 'the plan.'"

Although parents did not indicate in their proposal what's included in the state's guidelines, they listed in a paper titled "Gifted and Talented Education in Michigan Schools." Gifted and talented students must be:

- Provided with the ability to "move at their own rate, regardless of age or grade placement."
- Offered a "diversity of learning experiences which includes instructional methodologies, activities, materials and experiences beyond the classroom."
- "Challenged and stimulated in an environment that allows children of like ability and interests to learn from and support one another."
- Provided with "guidance so that they may understand themselves and make the best of their educational opportunities."

EVEN THOUGH Tomasini said she believes that keeping gifted students in the regular classroom provides positive results for the entire classroom, more definite programming is needed for the gifted.

"It has been observed that within our district, there are enormous differences from school to school in the way the program for gifted students is implemented. We see the need to equalize the

delivery of services provided throughout the district," said FACET member Tom Kotowski, who presented the parents' proposal.

The district attempts to provide an curriculum that continually upgrades all students' academic abilities, yet

provides for the gifted student at the same time, Lewis said. "The curriculum has to be flexible for all students." What parents would like, as suggested by the state Board of Education, is a variety of criteria used in determining which students are gifted and talented.

The criteria, parents maintain, should include intellectual ability, plus other abilities, including art and music.

But the district does not use the term "talented," Lewis said. "We don't need a systematic procedure for weeding these kids out. Teachers see it and devel-

op it. I guarantee that." Although the district has expanded academic programming to physical education, art and music, a procedure for determining who is creatively talented "gets out of the district's purpose," Lewis said.

Hills is looking at screening requirements

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said. Planning commissioners see a developer's landscaping plans during the site-plan review process.

MOST OF the required landscaping is within front-yard setbacks. Landscaping, for example, is required when parking is permitted within the required front-yard setback, Rowe said. It is also required when a berm — to serve as a border generally between commercial and residential — is used. In some cases, a greenbelt or lawn may be substituted for a wall or a berm.

Although the city has requirements for the spacing of trees and shrubbery as well as for the size of such materials, Costick said the rules are not tough enough.

"I am particularly concerned about the lack of more substantive requirements with the number of new smaller-site plans that are being approved. My concerns have both to do with the quantity of landscape material required as well as the size or maturity of plantings," Costick indicated in a letter to planning commissioners.

Complaints about landscaping are few. They generally have to do with vacant gas stations and worn parking lots, Rowe said.

In other cases, some developers fail to comply with city regulations, al-

though that, for the most part, is because of lack of compliance by the landscape contractors the developers hire, Rowe said. Other problems arise when plantings die and replacement is a long time in coming.

THE CITY'S landscaping requirements should be as strict as those in neighboring communities, Costick said. Differences between Farmington Hills and other communities can be seen by driving past 14 Mile along Orchard Lake Road as well as south on Northwestern Highway in Southfield, Costick said.

Other communities, Costick said, require much more in terms of quantity and height of landscape materials.

"Southfield requires much more in terms of quantity and height of landscape materials," Costick said.

Southfield's zoning ordinances do not offer separate requirements for landscaping and the use of trees and shrubbery, said Robert Henkle, Southfield staff planner. The requirements depend on the land-use zone, he said.

Southfield's toughest requirements are in the high-rise office zone, where the city requires a specific number of trees that must be landscaped. At the other end of the spectrum, the industrial zone requires the least amount of landscaping.

"ALL THE rest (land uses) fall some-

where in these extremes," Henkle said. When landscaping is required though, at least 80 percent of it must be with "living material," Henkle said. "Some could push it and just put in grass. But the city council usually steps in."

When a developer fails to comply with requirements, the city council steps in and enforces the requirements or building permits — and certificates of occupancy are not issued, Henkle said.

In other cases, he said, the city council works with developers, making suggestions on the kind of landscaping they would prefer at a particular site.

"I don't know whether ours (landscaping requirements) are stricter by ordinance or by application," Henkle said.

Southfield has a forester and some landscaping experts on staff who re-

view developers' plans. The design of a landscape plan is not so much the concern. The staff is concerned about the aesthetics — a good variety of plantings — and whether the species chosen can survive the location, Henkle said.

"A variety of trees is preferred," he said.

THE CITY staff and council from when only one variety of planting is chosen because the plants could become diseased and die, leaving absolutely no landscaping, Henkle said.

Southfield's zoning ordinance includes a section that deals with the maintenance of landscaping, Henkle said.

Although Southfield does not have the staff to continually enforce maintenance, it tries to make sure the plantings that developers use are basically maintenance free.

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12 Noon-5 p.m., Chanel make-up consultations with Thomas Fanos III all week.

THURSDAY 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Nancy Johnson Collection Show and designer appearance. Collection Sportswear.
10 a.m.-5 p.m., Consultations with Queen Anne's Lace Sleepwear representative Barbara Broadhurst.
1 p.m.-8 p.m., Informal Black Diamond Fur Show.
7 p.m., Formal Coat & Fur Show.

FRIDAY 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Informal Kansas Collection Show and designer appearance. Collection Sportswear.
12 Noon-4 p.m., Estée Lauder make-up consultant Deedee Hassinger.
1 p.m.-8 p.m., Informal Black Diamond Fur Show.

SATURDAY 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Doll designer Suzanne Gibson appearance.
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