

Writing now integral part of school work

'Writing is not easy — people avoid it. This is a non-writing society.'
— John Barrett,
English teacher



By Casey Hans
staff writer

AS FIRST graders master writing poetry, riddles and limericks, Farmington teaching professionals expect high school students to write plays, "good, full-length compositions," and enter writing contests.

A districtwide writing curriculum change last fall was designed to stop the "needless repetition" common in English classrooms, freeing a student to progress with writing, according to John Barrett, district writing coordinator and English teacher.

The program stresses mastery of different writing skills in each grade, carrying a student's best writing piece forward into the next grade for a year-to-year learning process, Barrett said.

"We decided writing should be an integral part of the (English) classes," Barrett said.

Teachers use a "focus correction system," highlighting only three writing concepts with each assignment. When grading papers, they look only for the mastery of those three focal points.

TEACHERS HAVE a list of focus areas for each grade, and track each student's progress on a chart, which holds a year of writing assignments. At year's end, teacher and student select the best piece of writing for the folder, which follows the student to the next grade level.

Ideally, Barrett said, writing progress will follow students through 12 years — "through their entire writing careers."

Barrett calls the program "much less threatening" than a traditional one. "It teaches that writing is on-going," he added. "It systematized the teaching of writing, and shows them (students) writing is not a one-step effort. The kids get to master something — they know what they'll be graded on.



AT LEFT: Nancy Hellman teaches creative writing at Farmington Public Schools' Kenbrook Elementary. She is shown with fifth-grader Dana Bastian. Teachers have increased their awareness and are stressing writing more, she said. "They were teaching it, but they're doing more of it" with the new program, she said. The program's key is how focus areas are applied to everyday writing. "It's their own work they (students) have to criticize," Hollman said. "Grammar and other writing tools are taught within the context of their own writing."

Staff photos by
Randy Borst

"Writing is not easy — people avoid it," Barrett said. "This is a non-writing society."

At Kenbrook Elementary where the program was piloted last year, fifth-grade teacher Nancy Hellman noted a definite improvement with students this year. "They really knew how to get their ideas on paper," she said. "There was more of a willingness to use words they may not have used before."

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For example, Farmington High School ninth graders learned to write effective thank you notes this year — and mailed them, Barrett added.

"You have to be organized to make it (the program) work effectively," said Michael Nayet, ninth- and 10th-grade English teacher at Farmington High School.

Nayet hadn't received any negative

comments from students and "likes the idea of the focus better than anything."

He said students would prefer maintaining the same English teacher throughout a school year, instead of changing at mid-year. He said the program would be more effective if this were done.

"**YOU CAN** teach right down the road," said 10th-12th-grade English teacher Margie Gagniol, who approved of the program. "By dating (the file) they can see (writing) improvement from September to June."

Although the program allows stu-

dents to move at an individual pace, she finds most classes "stay together" because the program allows them to learn in an orderly way.

Barrett spent December visiting the Farmington elementary schools, and going over program concerns.

"Most of their concerns were about mechanical decisions, such as what to put in student folders," Barrett said.

English teachers are "taking ourselves to task," Barrett added. With the extra workload necessitated by the writing program, teachers "are doing a great job adhering to the system," he added.

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short takes

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COMPANY PURCHASED
Newly formed Pro-Tread Corp. of Farmington Hills has purchased Fruehauf's truck tire retreading operations.

Affected operations are at Ft. Worth, Texas, Howell, Mich., York, Penn., East Hartford, Conn., and Charlotte, N.C.

Pro-Tread was formed by Robert Vujovich, chairman and former executive of Fruehauf and Gulf-Western, Robert Ratliff, president and former executive of Uniroval and International Harvester Corp., and Nolan O'Byrne, vice president and former executive of Sea Land Service, Inc.

The new company announced a five-year agreement with Fruehauf to meet all needs for retreaded truck tires at all of Fruehauf's U.S. locations.

PR FIRM CHOSEN
NuVision Inc., the 10th largest optical chain in the United States, has selected Hermanoff & Associates of Farmington Hills as its public relations agency.

NuVision, a public owned company based in Flint, has 111 locations in Michigan, Indiana, California and New Jersey. Thirty-six are franchised. The company has doubled its number of stores in the past five years.

The optical chain offers contact and eyeglasses lenses and frames. There is a licensed optometrist in each store.

MOVES UP
Attorney Brian Miller was named assistant director of the legal assistant program at Madonna College, Livonia.

The Farmington Hills resident teaches the legal assistant orientation and business associations courses at Madonna.

OPENS PR FIRM
Joan Urbach Stern of Farmington Hills has opened Joan Urbach Stern, Inc., a public relations consulting firm in Southfield.
Stern had been public relations director at Stone, August & Co., a Birmingham-based marketing communications firm. She previously was affiliated with the Detroit office of Burson-Marsteller, the world's largest public relations agency.
Stern started her career as a member of the communications staff at U.S. Mutual Financial Corp.
She is a member of the Public Relations Society of America.

BREAKS NEW GROUND
With Grace & Wild's latest acquisitions, the new Symbolics 3675 graphics system lined to the Abekas A-62 digital disk recorder, ideas can be turned into images never before possible on video.
The Symbolics Color Graphics System is a multi-

function computer allowing an artist to sketch, paint, draw and animate. It can transform an idea into a solid, 3-D image — even take a viewer on a video tour, panning and zooming into the closest details.

"You can use the Symbolics system to add to or improve existing video, or to create something entirely new," explains Keith Neff, director of operations at the Farmington Hills video facility.

As an example, Neff said the system can be used to add a realistic blue sky to a production shot indoors. Symbolics can cover up defects in artwork; add color, shading and metallic treatment to a logo; or paint an image on the screen, directly from the imagination.

Grace & Wild is one of three video facilities in the country using the Symbolics Color Graphics System. It is the first facility to receive the new 3675 model with enhanced computing capabilities.

Symbolics is not the first graphics system to let the artist work directly on a video screen. Other painting systems are widely used.

With Symbolics, you can add different brush shapes, designs and textures. It gives the artist almost infinite command of shading, lighting and motion.

The graphics system is a custom-designed mainframe computer built by the Symbolics Corp. of Cambridge, Mass. The Symbolics 3675 is a combination of sophisticated software programs using an artificial language called LISP.

With LISP, Symbolics can recognize and interpret a variety of commands, and understand when the artist is trying to combine different ideas together. It will allow the artist to back up, step by step, to correct mistakes.

Symbolics can create effects impossible with other systems, such as focusing a light only on the subject being highlighted. The system can also take the artist on a "flyby," visually moving past the 3-D object created, just as if it were a real figure suspended in space.

At this point, the image is normally transferred to a videotape recorder. But with their new Abekas A-62 digital disk recorder, Grace & Wild can create multi-generation special effects previously impossible on video.

With a videotape recorder, you can only do so much, make so many copies before the picture quality deteriorates," Neff said.

But with the Abekas, images are stored on digital computer disks, and no matter how many changes are made, the quality never deteriorates.

A producer can add layer upon layer upon layer, creating special effects, especially when combined with a system like Symbolics. Images can be played in real time, or at fast or slow speeds. They can even be stepped, creating unusual forms of animation.

RECEIVES AWARD
Charlotte Neuhauser of Farmington received an award for 10 years of service at Madonna College, Livonia.

Neuhauser is division head of business and computer systems, an associate director of graduate studies and a professor.

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