

## Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

# Take closer look

## School proposal looms as quick fix

On Feb. 17, a task force is expected to recommend to the Farmington school board that kindergartens be removed from our neighborhood elementary schools.

The plan is to place all kindergarten classes in two or three centralized early childhood centers to which our 5 year olds would be bused up to 30 minutes each way.

The plan is not being proposed as a well-conceived innovation to improve the early education of our youngsters but, rather, as a quick fix to the problem of overcrowding in our schools. In recent years, our city fathers chose to close several elementary schools while our residential areas, especially in the western sector, continued to grow at a rapid pace. Now, we no longer have adequate facilities to educate our children.

UNDER THE proposed plan (the school board holds the final decision), our youngest, most vulnerable students would pay the price for our leaders' poor planning. The burden on these young children could be too much to bear.

The majority of them have already adjusted to leaving a full-time home environment to attend preschool or day care and would now be asked to adjust to a new environment for kindergarten and, yet another, for first grade.

The disruption to their lives could take its toll emotionally and could affect the quality of their all-important educational foundation. Precious learning time would be wasted as the children struggled over and over to adjust to new facilities, new faces and new friends.

MANY PARENTS feel the early childhood centers would be a step backward to the "play" kindergartens of the past. Most of our kindergar-

### guest column

teners have had the experience of attending nursery school and do not need to remain in a preschool environment for an extra year. And with the current trend to hold children who will turn 5 in the summer or fall back a year before starting kindergarten, most of our kindergartners are well into their 5s and many are 6s and well able to handle attending kindergarten in an elementary school.

In fact, the children need their kindergarten year of half-day sessions in an elementary school environment to prepare for first grade. This is their year to make the transition into elementary school — to learn to sit at their desks, to stand in line, to keep order in the halls, to know what is expected of them so that they can enter first grade, self-confident and secure, ready to begin the important business of learning.

How unfair and confusing it would be to isolate our children in a less-structured preschool atmosphere and then throw them into a full-day academic program in first grade with no period of preparation.

IN ADDITION, there are no two grade levels where communication between teachers is more important to help students make the transition between grades than it is between kindergarten and first grade. In removing kindergartners from our elementary schools, we would also be segregating our kindergarten and first-grade teachers.

Many homeowners carefully select homes in locations where their children can walk to school. Most conscientiously use car seats and seat belts. Now our

youngest children may be taken out of our neighborhoods and transported on buses with no seat belts. A 30-minute bus ride twice a day is too long for such young children. Who will maintain order on a bus filled with 5 year olds? Who would attend to the children if the bus broke down? Currently, on our elementary school buses, fifth-grade monitors look after the kindergartners.

Fifth graders also help out in the kindergarten classrooms. Under the new plan, that special opportunity for the 5 year olds to look up to and learn from the older children and for the fifth graders to learn a sense of responsibility and caring for the younger children will be lost.

THERE ARE other social advantages the kindergartners students would miss, such as assemblies, extra-curricular and YMCA-sponsored programs and the comfort of attending school with their older siblings, close to home.

Perhaps most disturbing is that our leaders do not seem to be addressing these issues. They appear to be trying to railroad the plan through quickly to solve a sticky problem while leaving the consideration of how to implement the plan and how it will affect our children until later. In the meantime, parents whose children will be involved are being given few answers and no forum to voice their concerns.

Surely, there must be alternatives to solve the overcrowding problem. A new school could be built; the land is already available and money, obtainable; for such an important project. Or, an existing facility could be converted or reconverted to an elementary school. The stakes are simply too high; let's not use our 5 year olds to solve a problem we adults created.

Bridget Riley McTigue  
Farmington Hills

## Restrict sex to marriage

To the editor:

I wish to respond to Steve Barnaby's commentary of Feb. 5, extolling the use of condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS.

He made the point that the "word" about the dangers of AIDS is not getting out fast enough. Actually, the word that is not getting out at all is that sexual intercourse is intended only for the sanctity of marriage.

Mr. Barnaby cites figures for potential AIDS victims in Detroit. I will have to bow to his statistics. I, too, agree that education is the answer. But the first lesson is not the preventive use of condoms, rather it is the end to premarital and extramarital sex.

God has given us the gift of sex. He wants us to have a happy and healthy sex life. He has also given us rules so that we can enjoy sexual fulfillment. His rule is that sex is exclusively for two adults committed to each other in marriage.

We use the media to tell our children that they have a right to say no to drugs. I propose we use the media for a similar campaign in regards to teenage sex.

Elizabeth Gabel  
Farmington

## Home day care — it's desirable

To the editor:

I am appalled at the view that many are taking toward in-home care for our children. What most people don't realize is that this is a very vital service, performed by competent individuals, for those of us who are two-income families.

For me, and for many others in similar positions, in-home care provides an excellent placement for our children. My son, for example, is cared for in a private residence and he receives a lot of love and attention by an individual who is interested in him and his well being. She treats my son with the kind of respect and care that I give him when we are home together.

Since circumstances are such that I

must work, I feel assured that he is receiving the best care possible. I would refuse to send him to a day care center where there are many children and few caretakers. Although this might be an alternative for some, I wouldn't want to leave my infant in this type of a setting. I prefer that he have a home to be in, and if it can't be mine, then the same setting on a daily basis gives him a sense of security and continuity.

Children need this type of stability. Many are complaining that this is a "business." I know what I am paying for in-home care, and I can tell you that most people would pay a 15-year-old more to baby sit for an evening out on the town than what I pay for someone who is literally helping me to raise my son.

There is a tremendous responsibility that comes with in-home care, and one must truly love children to do this on a daily basis, not because one wants to run a profitable business from their home.

I am sure that there are isolated cases where individuals are not conforming to state laws as per Department of Social Services licensures. In our situation, this is not true. I couldn't be happier with my son's placement; to ban in-home care would be a tragedy for working parents. This whole movement to disallow in-home care is treating children unfairly. They need warmth and love; a child's presence in someone's home will not "ruin" a neighborhood.

As for additional traffic in a subdivision, I see what goes on in my neighborhood with teenagers living on the street. Cars are continuously going in and out of driveways. Should we ban this as well?

At a recent planning commission meeting, it was stated that a permitted home "business" is a beauty operator. Imagine the traffic created by this type of situation if the operator has a customer every half-hour. Certainly, this is more "traffic" than a few children being dropped off in the morning and picked up in the evening.

Come show your support for in-home care at a general assembly meeting on Thursday, Feb. 19 — 7:30 p.m. in the Farmington Hills City Hall. It is not a business.

Marcy Colton, executive director  
Community Services for  
the Hearing Impaired  
Pontiac

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