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scenes, Frank McLaughlin has put on his teaching hat, and is helping about 30 teens get excited about science.

"This will weigh a human hair," he tells a group of Bloomfield Hills Middle School students, pointing to "not a machine — but an instrument," he clarifies.

In the library, where information about chemical compounds is available for employees, he told students "this is the place where employees can come and see if they're lying by the minute."

His wry humor and wit is carried through the building, as he brings the lab to life.

Down the hall, he talks about a "giant pressure cooker," which is really a micro-processor for bugs needed in daily lab work at Analytic & Biological Laboratories — commonly known as A & B Labs.

The company, which was founded by McLaughlin 35 years ago and based in Garden City until 1989, does a number of things including food analysis and quality control for companies like Tyson Chicken and Sara Lee, environmental site testing for pesticides and PCBs, and water and soil testing.

They do business here and in Mexico, Hong Kong, France and Asia.

In a world where children are often told "hands off," employees at A & B take a "hands on" philosophy.

Students from more than 30 schools in Metro Detroit have been invited to tour the Farmington Hills facilities under the company's "Project Science" which is designed to show kids of all ages that science can be fun.

Recently, a group of Bloomfield Hills Middle School students ranging in age from 11 to 14 visited the facilities for a morning science tour, hands-on experiments and information on different types of science careers.

"Our goal is to try and reach every teacher K-12 in Michigan with in-



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMLEY

Running experiments: Chemist Ana Laze shows science club members from Bloomfield Hills Middle School how to perform a test on soil contamination.

formation," said A & B vice president, Suzanne Cole. "This is our grass roots approach."

Although suburban schools also take advantage of the program, Cole said the company is really targeting urban, city schools where students don't have as many opportunities. "In one Detroit case, he paid for the bus," Cole said of McLaughlin.

"If we can even reach one student and turn them on to science, it is well worth our time," Cole said, adding that the company is concerned about projections which show there will be — and already is — a shortage of scientists and engineers.

"Anyone who teaches science to young and old children alike knows that for the child the moment of discovery can be pure joy," said McLaughlin, a Bloomfield Township resident who lives on Hammond Lake. He said science is even more delightful to children when their experience is a hands-on one.

During the past year of Project Science, A & B has hosted up to four student groups a week through their facilities, where visitors meet with department heads and other lab technicians. They visit nearly every part of the facility. Cole stressed to students that "science is not a chore."



Commitment to outreach: A & B Laboratories owner Frank McLaughlin mixes the tours with facts and jokes.

Testing from page 1A

"Still, she remains concerned. "I would hope we would do something," she said. "And it's not at grade four it's got to start."

Although the assessment office indicated the gender bias issue was one which needs to be addressed, no plan was offered on how the problem would be approached.

Meanwhile, school board vice president Jack Inch said he remained concerned about what he thinks is an over emphasis on the MEAP test. "We are now talking about taking instructional time for a test," he said. "We are putting this as a top priority."

"We're saying it's not the class that counts — it's the test."

Farmington's students rank high on satisfactory performance on the MEAP tests, but there are still a percentage of students who do not do satisfactorily. Inch said he is also concerned about that.

"I want to see what's going to

happen when 10 percent of the class doesn't graduate? I make that prediction — they're (state officials) going to back down," Inch added.

Flanagan said that "the debate is over" about the MEAP and that all districts must identify the problems and work on them to ensure all students a diploma. "We're saying let's get it out of the way as soon as possible," he said. "We need to deal with it, but not make it our focal point."

The Farmington report also detailed areas of weakness which the district needs to work on. They include: reading for information at all levels; fractions, decimals, ratio and percentages in grade four; measurement, geometry, estimation and computation in grade seven; and problem solving/logical reasoning and geometry in grade 10.

The report listed many other items or strengths noted in the MEAP tests.

Musician brings songs, and his moose downtown

From traditional songs to humor by a moose named Max, the musical program by local children's entertainer Marc Thomas captures the third week of Farmington's Summer Fun Series on Wednesday, July 1.

The 10-week series is sponsored by the Farmington Downtown Development Authority and is held under the green-and-white striped tent in the Downtown Farmington Center parking lot. The

July 1 performances will be at 10:30 a.m., 11:45 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Thomas, a Farmington resident, weaves a theme of self-esteem into a motivational music program to create a performance which is fun and inspiring. The performances, which encourage participating by both children and adults, will include original music and traditional songs selected to inspire the positive values of life. He adds humor to his performance by using his puppet sidekick, Max the Moose.

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