

Punches from page 1A

rambling down their street?

Ka-pow!
Beechview student shuffle:
Overcrowding at the elementary school had people grappling for solutions. One idea involved moving students to Wood Creek and Alameda. Guess who had to inform 50 or so parents in a heated meeting at the school their kids would be the ones moved?

Wham!

School fisticuffs: Several reported fighting incidents in the schools this winter prompted a flurry of activity by concerned parents, not the least of which was an emotional meeting in February with Save Our Sons And Daughters' Allen Martin at the Farmington Public Library. Some in the audience used the gathering as a forum to lambaste the schools. Guess who was left to stand up and defend the schools' side?

Pow!

"He is in a tough spot," school board member Cathleen Webb said. "He does take a lot of the heat. It's just the nature of his job."

"He takes a lot of the heat off the board. It's a reassuring feeling for the board to know that he's there."

Webb and others concur Cowan wrestles with the multi-tentacled beast with particular aplomb. He seldom gets riled or defensive.

Bears up well

His gregarious personality and 6-foot-2 frame bear up well under the pressure.

"I don't know," he said with a slight laugh. "My blood pressure

"I've watched him over the years. He'll listen to the parents and he'll give them a fair shake . . . I think he has a great sense of advocacy for the average student. I mean philosophically we're very close: The average kid needs attention. He's going to be sensitive to a student's needs."

Michael Flanagan
school superintendent

would indicate I don't do as well internally as externally."

Not that Cowan's complaining. He's quick to add how much he enjoys dealing with people, solving a crisis a minute, and being the point man on a variety of issues. He also stresses that excellent staff and parents help make the job easier.

After 31 years in education, the former collegiate baseball catcher is used to a few knuckleballs, though.

Cowan started out in the district as a physical education teacher. He became a principal at Wooddale Elementary in 1967.

Cowan's ascent in the administration ranks has been steady. He served as an assistant high school principal at North Farmington, 1980-85; then as principal, 1985-90.

Cowan has also been a principal at Fairview, Highmeadow and Eagle elementary schools in addition to Wooddale.

In 1971, he served as the head administrator for both Fairview and Highmeadow. Because of district budget constraints, he split time between both places.

Cowan recalls how he had to deal with a kid at one school who'd like to run away; then have another kid at the other school go after a teacher with a pair of scissors. "I was younger then," said Cowan, 53.

The experience served him well. Layoffs and budget difficulties led Superintendent Michael Flanagan to create the dual position of building and student services.

Up to the task

Flanagan thinks Cowan is up to the task.

"I've watched him over the years," Flanagan said. "He'll listen to the parents and he'll give them a fair shake . . ."

"I think he has a great sense of advocacy for the average student. I mean philosophically we're very close: The average kid needs attention. He's going to be sensitive

to a student's needs."

Neither fully knew the scope of the job at the time it began. Things have certainly billowed since.

His schedule on one day went like this: An Optimist Club board meeting (he's a member); a Roundtable discussion with students; a conference regarding a principal's evaluation; a hearing regarding a student disciplinary case; a visit to the Food Service program at North Farmington; and returning three pages in phone calls.

"I'm very lucky, though," he said. "Sometimes people look at age and experience as a detriment in this day and age. . . . All that background has helped in handling the job I have now."

He admits it's difficult not to become defensive, especially when people call his integrity and ability into question. Some angry parents and residents have done both in recent controversies.

One particularly volatile issue involved the Wooddale parking lot.

Cowan and administrators met with residents on several occasions. Despite that, the solution still left many residents upset.

"The frustrating thing is that you'd like to see everyone happy," he said. "So many things I deal with, you realize you're not going to make everyone happy."

Common Cause leader to speak

Karen Holcomb-Merrill, executive director of Common Cause in Michigan, will be the featured speaker at the Monday, April 5, meeting of the Farmington Chapter of the Older Women's League (OWL) at 7 p.m. in the Farmington Branch Library on State Street.

Holcomb-Merrill will discuss campaign finance reform and ethics in government.

Common Cause, a non-partisan, non-profit citizens' lobby, attempts to keep watch on government at all levels.

More than 270,000 citizens members throughout the United States are involved in Common Cause programs.

Citing the lack of government ethics laws in Michigan, Holcomb-Merrill will advise voters of



Karen Holcomb-Merrill

proposals endorsed by Common Cause to bring about reform in this area.

The meeting is free and open to the public. For more information or to join the Older Women's League, call 474-3094.



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Investors Are Frustrated And Angry About Higher Taxes

"I believe The President and Congress are going to give us higher taxes and inflation. My advice is to hold your wallets."

- Local Retiree

Troy, Michigan

Today's seniors who are counting on their nest eggs to provide for them are frustrated and angry. They feel their taxes are going up while their income goes down and even social security is on the table.

A local retiree was quoted as saying, "Clinton's already changed his mind on tax cuts, and he wants me to pay higher gas taxes. My property assessment is going up 15% even though the world is going on? I've sacrificed enough already." These guys should be ashamed of themselves for grabbing more of my money before they tighten their own belts.

As with anything else, knowledge is the key. Washington is taking in more than ever and hopes the

average person will not learn about their alternatives. They want you to keep your money in fully taxable CD's so you can pay your "fair share," and ante up for more of Congress's pet projects.

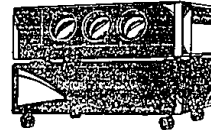
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