

Opinions clash at area education reform forum

**By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER**

In the challenger's corner were voucher fans calling for schools of choice, lower teacher pay, Latin and Greek, parental control. In the defending champ's corner were Michigan business and the current educational establishment, pushing employability skills. In center ring were the referees — six Republican state senators and a representative — studying education reform in the wake of their repeal of \$9 billion in local property tax revenues. "I have very mixed emotions about 'choice' or voucher," said Rep. Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak, whose district includes part of Troy. Citing her own father (fourth grade) and mother (eighth grade), the veteran lawmaker asked: "How do you have schools of choice and include all children? Not all parents care. And those that do care can't always provide transportation." The GOP hearing drew more than 300 combatants and spectators Tuesday evening to the steamy auditorium of Royal Oak's Kimball High.

Focus: vouchers
Center of discussion was the voucher system, prohibited in 1970 when voters amended the state constitution. With vouchers, state money would follow a pupil into any school, public, proprietary or religious. Supporters see it as a way to keep kids out of the state's employability curriculum and away from outcomes based testing. "I'm disillusioned," said Birmingham mother Carol L. Pope, chair of Friends of Michigan Schools in Oakland County. She deplored public schools' emphases on "attitudes, not cognitive skills; social-behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. It's more political than educational," she said, charging the Michigan Education Association union had taken over school reform. "Get that solid core curriculum," Pope told lawmakers. But she was hooted when she charged public school teachers are making "\$43 an hour for part-time work." "Go back to classical education — Greek and Roman philosophers, logic, math, Tacitus, Plato,

Aristotle, Plutonium," said Troy mother Charlene Ferrimino. She said the state should assign schools \$2,000 and reward successful schools whose pupils exceed minimum state assessments with more money. Couared Dante Lassetta, former Birmingham mayor who works in survey research: "Ask any parent if he really wants a child to go into the world with a 16th-century education. They

won't make it. We kid ourselves if we think otherwise. "Teachers are the only people I know who have a large advisory group — people who would not dream of telling a surgeon or auto mechanic what to do, but will tell the teacher how to teach."

Progress already
"We've already made major educational reforms," said Dorothy Beardmore, former Rochester

school board member now in her second term on the State Board of Education.

Business, industry and university educators contributed to the massive research base that went into the model curriculum, she said. "The employability skills profile was developed by business," Beardmore added.

Beardmore, one of the GOP's chief movers and shakers on educational change, said Michigan

has moved toward re-certification of teachers every five years and identified entry-level standards for new teachers.

Asked why so many community college students need remedial work, Beardmore said, "Those students do know the basics — add, subtract, multiply, divide. But to use that knowledge — they haven't learned. They may not know which they should do. That is why the MEAP tests have been

changed." MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) has been changed to emphasize problem solving rather than performing individual steps. John Richter, a Southfield employer who has interviewed 40 job candidates, agreed with Beardmore that job seekers often don't know which step to perform. "They can't think logically," he said.

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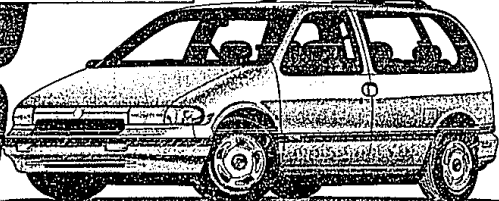
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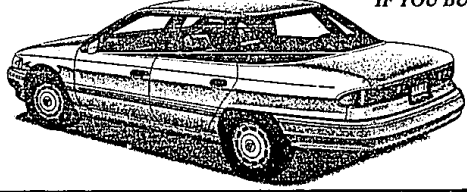
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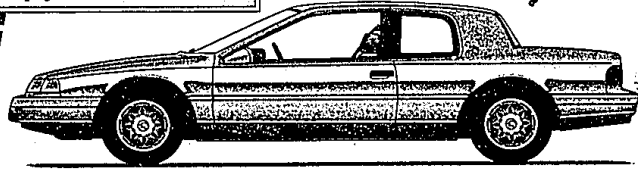
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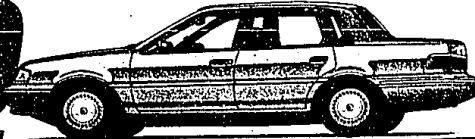
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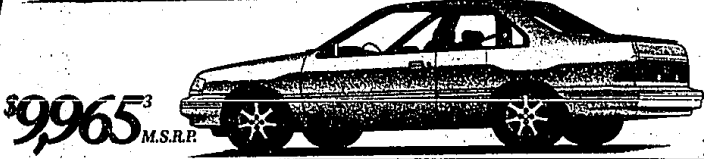
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