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Students get proficiency test drive

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington area high school class of 1997 won't have to beat the MEAP to receive a state-endorsement diploma.

Instead, students will have to pass high school proficiency tests in reading, writing, math and science to get the state stamp of approval on diplomas.

At present, students must do moderately well on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests in math, science and reading to receive a state-endorsement diploma. The change takes effect statewide in 1997.

Farmington High and North Farmington juniors got a glimpse of the future. They took portions of the new tests as part of a pilot project in November.

FARMINGTON SCHOOLS

Results are unavailable. Teachers were to give their opinions to test publishers, CTB McGraw-Hill.

At Farmington High, students took the science portion while North Farmington students tackled the reading and writing segment.

"I think it's going to be much more thorough and much more comprehensive," Farmington High assistant principal Ken Dean said, "and much more difficult."

"... I don't think we'll have any problems with it."

Those taking the reading and writing — also known as Communication Arts — portion had to read three different test selections. Included in the readings were a story from Reader's Digest, a poem and a nonfiction piece.

Afterward, students had to demonstrate their knowledge of the material by answering a multiple choice quiz and writing a persuasive essay. The Communication Arts tests were broken up into three, 50-minute blocks.

"That's quite a bit of testing," said Carolyn Mahalak, coordinator of Evaluation, Assessment and Special Projects. "That's seven hours of straight testing."

Proficiency tests are not intended to be a cake walk, state officials said.

A mock math test given to journalists recently asked them to

compute the dosage of pain medication, dependent on a child's weight, the driving time between Detroit and Alena using a mileage map, and the amount of concrete that would be needed to construct a sidewalk next to a garage.

In science, participants were shown the procedure used to test a theory on the effects of caffeine on sleeping. Then, they had to point out the weakness in the research and describe how to correct it.

Some of the items on the science even caught educators off guard.

"Our people are going to have to address some of those things," Dean said. "The other feeling I had is kids knowing it was a pilot. I wish they would have taken it more seriously."

Board expected to OK bond vote — again

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The Walled Lake Board of Education, at a special meeting set for 4 p.m. Tuesday, is expected to call what would be the second bond issue election of 1994-95.

Pro and con about staging another bond issue will be debated before the board makes its decision, said Superintendent James Geisler. If the district is to hold another election during the current school year, the election must be called by Thursday.

"The board will have to make a decision at that meeting," Geisler said. "... The meeting is to decide if there's justification" for another election.

Geisler added that 20 to 30 opponents of previous bond proposals have been notified about the meeting, to take place at the Educational Service Center, 850 Ladd Road.

If an election is called it will probably be scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 4, Geisler said.

The ballot would contain two bond propositions — one for \$90.55 million, the other for \$25.45 million.

Citizens would have the option of voting yes on either one, yes on both, or no on both. That voters wanted to have a choice at the polls is something that has become apparent since the most recent election, Geisler said.

Meanwhile, the total of the two proposals, \$116 million, equals the amount of the unsuccessful September "Project 21" bond issue, with the ballot questions including virtually all components of the last election.

"We all know the needs haven't gone away," Geisler said. The district has long claimed that current classroom facilities are not adequate to house continuing enrollment growth of 500 to 600 pupils annually.

WALLED LAKE SCHOOLS

According to Lois Lange, director of personnel and community relations, the tentative Saturday date for the next bonding attempt is by design. Most school elections are held on Mondays or Tuesdays.

"Our information has been that (voter) turnout is better on Saturdays, so we're going to try that," Lange said.

In addition to the defeated September proposal, a \$135 million bond issue, also dubbed "Project 21," was trounced in October 1993.

Following is a breakdown of what each proposition would bring, according to information provided by the district:

■ PART ONE: (\$90.55 million) Construction and equipping of an elementary school at 13 Mile and Meadowbrook; construction and equipping of middle schools at Wilcox and Chama roads and an undetermined site; construction of appropriate athletic fields and playgrounds at the three new schools; construction of multipurpose rooms at seven elementary schools; construction of classroom additions at both high schools, along with site improvement; and educational technology district-wide.

■ PART TWO: (\$25.45 million) Renovation of older school buildings to bring them up to established baseline standards; constructing and equipping of an auxiliary gym at Walled Lake Western and a competition gymnasium at Walled Lake Central; constructing and equipping of a performing arts center at Central; constructing and equipping of a handicapped-accessible swimming pool at Central; and site development and improvement.

Hills cantor receives honorary degree

Cantor Larry Vieder of Farmington Hills received the honorary degree of doctor of music at the first annual convocation honoring members of the Cantors Assembly who have served the Conservative Movement with distinction.

The event was held Nov. 1 in the Feinberg Auditorium at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

Born in Czechoslovakia in 1923, Vieder attended various yeshivot in Europe and sang with renowned cantors such as Cantor Heller of Sighet and Cantor Yehoshua Weider in Minsk.

When the Nazis overran the country, he joined the Czechoslovakian Legion, stationed in Russia. During the ensuing war, he lost his entire family, including his parents, four brothers and two sisters.

In 1948, Vieder helped to organize the Hagana in his native country. He lived briefly in Israel and Canada before making his home in the United States. In 1960, he was hired by Adat Shalom in Detroit, in the capacity of associate cantor and Torah reader.

Vieder became Adat Shalom's senior cantor in 1974 and has been there 34 years. He is married to Gitta Vieder and has three sons, Thomas, Mark and Sandford.

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