

# Harrison and parents join forces

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Last year's parent information meetings about Harrison High School's then-proposed move to four-by-four block scheduling were almost hostile.

But as demonstrated during a very low-key info session held Tuesday, it's now a new world where school officials and parents are almost buddy-buddy.

"We're very happy," said Harrison Principal Rando Horn. "We've had a long haul with the parents, but an enjoyable one. We've kind of come together and that's what I think people saw here tonight. We have a pretty unified front."

Parent Nick Waldeckor said he's "absolutely certain it's going to go through. I'm not disappointed. I just want to make sure we maximize the educational value once it's implemented. With this, I feel much better than with the four-by-four."

Waldeckor was referring to the new block plan, an alternating, seven-class schedule, plus optional "X-block" sessions, which for now will not count as part of the instructional day.

The length of the X-block remains to be decided, with transportation and union

## BLOCK SCHEDULE

contract issues still on the table. But Harrison Assistant Principal Mary Brown told parents at the session that she didn't think the board-approved version would be much different from the support council's proposal. "There might be a little bit of (financial) trimming."

If the school day needs to be extended to accommodate the plan, a memorandum of understanding would probably be added to the district's accord with the Michigan Education Association, Brown said.

The support council's proposal, to go to the block at Harrison in 2000-2001 (and North next fall), is set to be discussed by the school board on Tuesday, Feb. 23, with a final decision expected at the board's 7:30 p.m. meeting on Tuesday, March 9. The council is comprised of administrators, educators, parents and students, who discuss proposals with significant funding attached to them, Brown explained.

In the four-by-four, where students would take four courses in one semester and move to four others the next, parents were worried that students might not receive as much instruction time, and that

and other block models such as Birmingham Grove's were examined.

"We were at different places," Horn said, after the session, attended by about 60 residents, teachers and block scheduling committee members. "When we finally sat down at the table and worked it through, we both realized that 'Maybe they have some points that are valid.'"

Horn said a telling comment was made during last week's session by Harrison parent and committee member Beth Grossman, one of the leading opponents to last year's four-by-four.

Grossman was opposed for many reasons, including worries that AP students would lose key instructional time due to "compressed" schedules, that the music program would be "obliterated," and that SAT and ACT scores would greatly suffer.

According to Grossman, who urged parents to maintain an active voice during the implementation phase of block, parents on the committee came to the realization that "the upper-end student, unfortunately, is not the only concern of our public high school."

"... We needed to put on the other hat and say, 'You know, we have to give a break to the parents whose kids are not being reached.... This is a public school.'"

Brown began the meeting outlining some of the reasons why a block schedule is being pushed for by the district. Those included: Promoting educational equity and opportunity for students of all three high schools; improving learning through a more-relaxed school environment.

In the block, she said, students would develop more hands-on activities in class; incorporate technology more consistently; have more chances for complete laboratories and lessons in a session; benefit from a lower teacher-pupil ratio.

Brown, answering parents at the meeting, said the type of statistical-based evaluation of block being done at Farmington High School has merit.

Concurring was Horn, afterward. "We feel strongly that we need to do something like that. But whether (assessment) is done internally or by an outside firm has to be determined."

## Chalk it up



STAFF PHOTO BY GILL BENDER

On display: The latest showcase at the Farmington Hills City Hall is a display of Carnival Chalkware. These "prizes" for games of chance and skill on the Carnival Midway were first produced about 1910 and distributed until the 1950s. They were manufactured from plaster of paris and were distinguished by gaudy bold colors. The chalkware is one of many collections of Historical Commissioner Pam Correll. This showcase will be on display through March. At left, this example of carnival chalkware was from the old Edgewater Amusement Park.

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## Meeting from page A1

"Most of the proposed improvement changes are new," Richards added.

If approved, the master plan would be active through 2003.

The MDNR also requires census and demographic data, geographic mapping and location of facilities, and description of planning processes used in developing the master plan, according to a report from City

## FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Manager Frank Lauffhoff to council members.

Farmington City Hall is located at 23600 Liberty.

## in the 90s

by Herbert M. Gardner, D.D.S.

### PREMATURE THOUGHTS

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry urges parents to bring their children to the dentist within six months of their first tooth eruptions, and no later than age one. This recommendation is particularly important for children born prematurely because, when their teeth come in, they may not have protective enamel and may be more prone to decay and staining. While teeth are fully formed under gums at birth, some may experience damage to enamel as a result of breathing respirator tubes exerting pressure upon the gums for protracted periods. Known as enamel hypoplasia, this condition may also occur due to illness or insufficient calcium absorption due to feeding problems. The dentist can apply protective coatings on affected teeth.

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To find out more about the benefits of living trusts, attend one of these free seminars...

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|                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>TROY</b><br>Wed, Feb. 17<br>7:00 - 8:30 p.m.<br>Coffee & Cookies<br>MSU Management Education Center<br>811 W. Square Lake Road         | <b>BLOOMFIELD</b><br>Thurs, Feb. 18<br>7:00 - 8:30 p.m.<br>Coffee & Cookies<br>Bloomfield Township Library<br>1099 Lone Pine Rd. |                                                                                                                              |

Refreshments Served—Plenty of free parking. Please arrive early, seating may be limited.

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## The older we get, the less time we take to express our love.

When we are young it seems so easy to say "I love you." This Valentine's Day not only tell your sweetheart of your love but tell others — your mother, father, sister or brother. Maybe even a neighbor or friend.

Make a call, drop a note or send a card. Too often we all wait until it's too late and then we wish we could say "I love you."

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