WL school board expected to adopt new student policy

BY JILL HOCKMAN
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Teachers in Walled Lake Schools will likely soon have the legal right to toss misbehaving students out of class for the day.

The Walled Lake board of education is expected to pass a policy allowing teachers to suspend a student from class for breaking the law or violating other conduct codes.

But Assistant Superintendent Michael Beauchamp said the state-mandated policy isn't that different from the district's current procedure for handling misbehaving students.

Currently, a teacher can remove a student from class, but the final decision to suspend a student falls on school administrators. That policy will not be changed, he said.

"I have not felt a need from teachers and administrators that we do not have things in line," Beauchamp said. "This is one more tool in the toolbox that teachers can use to make sure their classrooms are safe and orderly."

The board's move, which could happen as early as its Nov. 18 meeting, is a reaction to the state legislature's "Safe Schools" laws. That legislation requires all districts to give teachers the power to oust students from school.

State lawmakers passed the legislation in July after the issue of school safety was raised by the Columbine High School shooting and other incidents.

Other school boards in West Bloomfield and Birmingham have already enacted the policy, which must be in place by the end of 1999.

"The intent was to empower teachers," said Todd Harcek, legislative aide to State Rep. Marc Shulman (R-West Bloomfield). "It allows an on-the-spot decision."

But West Bloomfield Schools spokesman Steve Wasko said the mandate requires another cumbersome policy for districts with adequate systems for handling problems. Most districts left their remaining disciplinary policies in place and simply added the new state requirement.

"We think it's a lousy law," Wasko said. The legislation also requires teachers who suspend a student to set up a conference with parents. That task is usually handled by an administrator.

"I'm not sure that's a burden (teachers) would necessarily want," Wasko said.

Wasko also questioned the state legislature's timing of enacting the law in mid-summer. "This was at the very worst point in time in terms of communicating with parents," he said. School handbooks were being printed and many district officials were on summer vacation.

The "Safe Schools" legislation also requires districts to adopt other policies. Those must also be in place by the end of the year, although many area schools already follow the guidelines.

One new law calls for any student in grade six or higher to be expelled for physically assaulting a school employee. The expulsion can be reviewed after 180 days.

Students who make a bomb threat, verbally assault a school employee or physically assault another student can be suspended for up to 180 days.

Another new law requires school officials to report any incidents of violence or assault to law enforcement agencies.

RECREATION NEWS

YOUTH BASKETBALL

Register now for Farmington Hills Recreation's Co-Ed Youth Basketball program that begins with two weeks of practice starting Jan. 3 before a 10-game season (Saturdays) starting Jan. 15. Divisions are made up of fourth/fifth grade, sixth grade, and seventh/eighth grade. The deadline to register is Friday, Dec. 3. The cost is $65 per participant.

NUTCRACKER

Come and enjoy the performance of the Nutcracker at 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 3 at Farmington High School. The production will be put on by Eric Johnston's Detroit Ballet. Tickets are $5 for seniors and children 12 and under and $8 for adults. Tickets will be available at the door.

ICE SKATING HOURS

Following are public skating hours through June 11, 2000, at the Farmington Hills Ice Arena on Eight Mile Road:

Monday-Friday noon skate, 11:30 a.m. to 1:20 p.m.; Tuesday, Friday, 7-8:50 p.m.; Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to 1:20 p.m.; Sunday, 4-5:50 p.m. Cost is $3.50 for residents and $5 for non-residents. The Parent-Tot Skate is 9-10:50 a.m. Monday and Wednesday, while the Adult Skate is 9-10:50 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday.

SPORTS EQUIPMENT SALE

The Sports Equipment Sell or Shop Day is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 4, at the William Costick Activities Center on 11 Mile Road in Farmington Hills. Register now and dig out your old and outgrown sports equipment and sell it. This annual event offers the opportunity to buy or sell used skates, downhill and cross-country skis, ski clothing, sleds, toboggans, in-line skates and other sports equipment. Concessions will be available for purchase. Persons wanting to sell items at the event must register by Wednesday, Dec. 1. For information, call Farmington Hills Recreation Division at (248) 473-9570.

PINOCHLE

Register now as a single or as partners for an evening of playing Euchre. You will play a round-robin format to determine the evening's winner. Pre-registration is required and refreshments are provided. The event will be held from 7-10 p.m. Nov. 19 and Dec. 10 at the Heritage Park Visitor Center in Farmington Hills. The cost is $6 per person. Call the Farmington Hills Recreation Division at 473-9570.

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