

Galileo

Nine Farmington educators take leadership role in program

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One might accurately describe Farmington school district teachers such as Laura Sparrow as human pebbles who willingly fling themselves into a pool of knowledge and leadership.

As members of the Galileo Leadership Academy, they are taking that plunge, and it triggers wave after wave of such positive attributes, affecting colleagues and even students.

"By teachers valuing themselves they can value students," said Sparrow, a Harrison High School teacher. "We try to create that environment for our kids. When the district creates that kind of environment for us, we blossom."

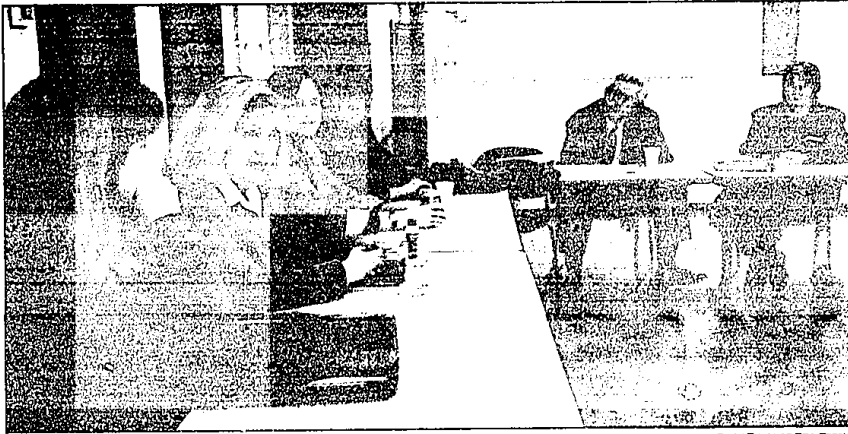
Sparrow and eight other Farmington school educators are participating in the current academy, a two-year commitment involving several other Oakland County districts. Championed by Judy White, the district's assistant superintendent for curriculum, Farmington also took part in the 1997-1999 academy.

Among the district's original Galileo contingent was Retta London, a teacher at Wooddale Elementary School.

"It's been professionally and personally enriching and gratifying," London said. "The whole idea is to find the leadership within yourself, find your light within" and then share those discoveries with others.

The current Farmington group includes: Sparrow, Greg Drowdowski and Joyce Tomlinson, of Harrison; Lorena Burke of the DELTA program; East Middle School teachers Marilyn Greenstein and Barbara McCune; Vitas Underoy of William Grace Elementary School; Denise Rau of Hillside Elementary School; and James White of Farmington High School. Individual districts contribute \$2,600 toward the tuition fee; the W.K. Kellogg Foundation funds the rest.

Taking action
But another 49 employees in the district (and not just teachers) signed up for a leadership academy, patterned after Galileo's mission to develop a



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRANDES

Motivated: Teachers (from left) Lorena Burke, Retta London, Laura Sparrow, Marilyn Greenstein, Farmington schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield and teacher Joyce Tomlinson (right) are encouraged by the Galileo Leadership Academy's accomplishments to date.

network of supremely talented and motivated role models.

At the heart of Galileo, London explained, is development of action research projects. That entails identifying a problem area being experienced in the classroom and coming up with ways to solve it.

Meanwhile, after completing the two-year academy, Galileo participants continue working on district action plans. London said her plan is assembling a system of keeping grades and reporting them to parents. Greenstein said she is piloting a "Kindness Counts" program to teach youngsters that their words and actions do matter.

"It wasn't a two-year program for these guys and then 'you're done,' nothing happens," said Sparrow during a recent roundtable discussion about the ambitious endeavor. "It's a two-year growth opportunity and you take that growth and continue to do things with it."

"All of the Galileo consortium's first group is still very much out there in the forefront."

Comprising the consortium are several other districts, among them Walled Lake, Livonia, Novi and Southfield.

One Southfield teacher taking part in the first round of Galileo was Farmington resident Cheryl Blau. She found it a richly rewarding experience, one she'd recommend to any educator.

"The gifts of Galileo are many and varied," said Blau, a teacher at Birney Middle School. "Anyone who has the opportunity to participate is so lucky."

Enhanced confidence and self-esteem were benefits of the academy, which she said sparked professional and personal growth.

Of the seven Southfield educators who participated in the 1997-99 round, most went on to pursue additional college degrees "which they originally didn't intend on pursuing."

Several also followed up Galileo with attempts for school district administrative positions, Blau added.

"There's been a tendency among teachers to be apologetic

for what we do," continued Blau. "... We no longer respond in that way. We are teachers. We now carry a different sense of professionalism with us, (a new) confidence."

Blau and other teachers feel empowered from the Galileo experience, and can't wait to take their new-found knowledge and leadership as far as they can.

"I find that my role in the district is a leadership role," said Burke of the district's DELTA program (the assists special education, gifted and mainstream students in the same classrooms). "And I wanted to be more effective, doing things to maximize my own growth. Galileo seemed like the perfect vehicle to do that."

Growth opportunity
When Sparrow signed up for the academy, she had already long demonstrated the very qualities Galileo strives to develop. She took a seminar in teaching Advanced Placement English courses, and subsequently tin

1992) created LINK, Harrison's first interdisciplinary block scheduled course. She later designed and taught BRIDGES, a computer presentation course including technical skills in a workshop environment.

And now, there's no stopping the veteran teacher.

"Where I'm at in my career, it'd be easy to stagnate," said Sparrow, who is in her 30th year at Harrison. "... You see teachers who stay around too long, who kind of retire at their desk and fossilize. They haven't grown in so long. And that's what this is about, growing."

The program doesn't just spark teachers to step up in the classroom, either.

Because the district encourages teachers to take the leadership bull by the horns, Burke said she feels comfortable standing up at staff meetings and expressing herself without fear of reprisals.

"It's given me the freedom to have a voice ... I always had something to say, but never

knew who to say it to. I feel empowered. I don't expect it will change anything, but at least people will be listening," Burke continued.

According to Greenstein and Tomlinson, current academy members who teach at East and Harrison, respectively, the early returns on Galileo are that it easily is a winner.

"It's important to me at this stage of my career," said Greenstein, a veteran teacher of more than 20 years. "It's energizing, it's challenging, it's sharpened my awareness of new programs out there, new techniques."

Leading by example

Tomlinson jumped on the Galileo bandwagon in order to continue her quest toward becoming "the best science teacher I could be and also help other teachers be the best they can be. And to do it on a daily basis."

Farmington schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield, a firm believer in the program, echoed the teachers about how Galileo inspires and encourages teamwork and leadership.

"Leading is about helping other people grow, it's about nurturing and supporting each other instead of just saying, 'We have a job, let's get it done,'" Maxfield said.

Others can't help but notice how fired up Galileo participants are when they return from weekend retreats, Tomlinson said.

"Our comrades see us having fun and they ask, 'How can I do that?' It spreads naturally. We come out of these meetings still charged up," she said.

The teachers also agreed that the district, with its philosophy that students need to be lifelong learners, is the perfect place for something like Galileo. The academy encourages teachers to also keep on learning and experiencing professional and personal growth; meanwhile, Farmington schools boasts one of the most comprehensive staff development programs in the area.

"The district puts a premium on lifelong learning," Sparrow said. "They emphasize it for the kids ... for teachers as well. That's why we have so much staff development. Galileo is kind of like the ultimate in staff development."

Farmington is one of a number of districts in Galileo

The Galileo Leadership Consortium is comprised of the Farmington, Livonia, Walled Lake, Southfield, Northville and Novi public school districts; Wayne RESA; Oakland Schools; Oakland Community College and Schoolcraft College. The executive director of the consortium is Dr. Joyce Fouts, from Wayne RESA.

Mission: To create dynamic learning communities within organizations through the development and support of a network of educational leaders.

Goals: Develop and support participants in their quest to become exemplary educational leaders; create and develop structures, strategies and skills to effect organizational change resulting in healthy learning communities; establishing models of K-14 cooperation.

Curriculum: Members attend 14 seminars over a two-year period. Curriculum addresses relevant educational and leadership issues and the following themes: Personal Assessment,

Who Am I?; Changing Organizations - Where Am I; Influencing Strategies - How Do I Lead?; Planning for Action - What Can I Do?

The consortium is funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and by the institutions themselves.

The first group: The following educators from Farmington Public Schools participated in the initial leadership academy, which took place from 1997-1999: Gaye Williams and Bever-

ly Miller, Highmeadow Common Campus; Retta London and Deb Wilson, Wooddale Elementary School; Denise Gundie-White,

William Grace Elementary; Mark Morawski and David Hales, Hillside Elementary School; Julie Grodin, Kenbrook

Elementary School; Michelle Meyers, Beechview Elementary School; and Cathy Goebel, who has left the district.

Fellow from page A1

programs in the nation.

"MPLP expands the quality of leadership in the public policy-making process in the community and in government," said MPLP co-director Lynn Jondahl. "This upcoming class will develop consensus-building skills that will distinguish them as a generation of community leaders dedicated to developing innovative public policy."

The paid-in-full fellowships are made possible through foun-

ation support and private and corporate contributions.

This year's fund-raising dinner is set for 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, at Laurel Manor in Livonia. Featured speakers are Haley Barbour, former two-term chair of the Republican National Committee and Leon Panetta, former White House Chief of Staff and U.S. Congressional Representative.

For more information about the MPLP fellowship or fund-

The MPLP is one of only a handful of public policy and leadership education programs in the nation.

raising dinner, call 517-355-6672.

Manhunt from page A1

While he may understand how it happened, he wants to make sure it never happens again. Already, department officials have reviewed the 60-page jail

manual and talked with the officers most directly involved with jail operations.

"We've experienced a dramatic increase in the number of prison-

ers housed here as opposed to a few years ago," Dwyer said. "We feel there's a need to take a look at tightening controls."

Clean from page A1


Arbenowake said. Then the authority adopts a brownfield plan, which will include remediation and development of the golf course and residential property," she added. The city has completed soil

borings and found "limited amounts of contaminants" as the result of the past use as a landfill. Those consist primarily of metals and similar chemicals typically found in landfills throughout southeast Michigan,

Arbenowake said. No housing will be built on the 26-acre landfill, which has already been contained to protect the soil.

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