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ington school board members occurred that administrators of individual buildings — at least at the elementary school level — do have the latitude to make the kind of changes Miller made, in keeping with the elementary school study adopted by the board in 1998.

The schedule changes followed a January meeting attended by the principal, a handful of Highmeadow PTA members and school board trustee Gary Sharp, whose 8-year-old son Ryan attends the school.

Sharp, on Tuesday, said he did not know about the meeting in advance. "I just happened to walk into the school and (an office employee) mentioned something was going on that I might be interested in."

The school board trustee added that he has not since received telephone calls about the subject, either positive or negative. "I haven't heard anything."

Miller's letter detailed that students will attend three half-days, the first on Friday, March 10, so that teachers will have additional collaboration and curriculum planning time. The last two afternoon training sessions are set for Friday, March 31, and Friday, May 26.

There just aren't enough hours in the day to do all the collaborating and team planning needed to implement new themes, new curriculum, new ideas, new practices, and new technologies so that we can do an even better job of educating your children," said Miller in her letter. "The Highmeadow teachers are master teachers inspired and energized as they plan and prepare for your children. We have devised a plan that will allow for concentrated collaboration time while meeting the required minutes in the instructional day."

According to the revamped schedule, which is in effect from March 1 through the rest of the 1999-2000 school year, Highmeadow students will come to school three minutes earlier every day than they previously did and will lose six minutes of their daily lunch hour, with those minutes earmarked for instruction.

Time to lead
Miller informed parents that bus schedules will not be affected, except for the three half-days, and that Y-Care (YMCA) will be available for children who need afternoon care or activities.

"This valuable time will be spent in dialogue among teachers about how to maintain (Highmeadow) as a unique

Rates

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Gushman said he did not have information as of yet for sewer rates, which are billed separately.

Joanne Fournier, of Farmington City Manager Frank Lauff's office, said a budget public hearing is scheduled for the evening of Monday, June 5. Water and sewer rates will be open for discussion then, Gushman said.

It is projected that the city of Farmington will purchase, on a wholesale basis, about 525 million gallons of water from Detroit, which is close to what was bought for the current fiscal year, which concludes June 30. Gushman said the total cost to operate the water and sewer department, including the purchase of water from Detroit, is approximately \$2-to-\$2.5-million.

Detroit pumps water out to communities around the metropolitan area (including Farmington Hills), with water dispatched via meter pits to individual destinations.

One factor for different community rates is that costs go up in tandem with the distance to the downtown Detroit water plant, he said.

"Every community has a different rate," Gushman continued. "It's based on water usage, peak rates, peak (water) flows ... and the closer to Detroit you are, the less the pumping costs."

Although rates established by Detroit are a major component of what the local per-customer bill will turn out to be, making sure Farmington's water system is working smoothly is another.

"We do maintain our own water system," Gushman said. "There are costs incurred."

school of choice," the principal's letter continued. Sharp said Miller's meeting probably was held to gauge how parents would react to the changes, and then implement them more quickly, rather than to receive widespread approval at a town hall-type meeting.

"I told Boy (Miller) that one of the things Highmeadow is known for is its innovation," Sharp said. "In order for it to be that kind of 'leader' school ...

teachers need some (training) time."

Transportation home on the half-days might be the only sticking point. Because Highmeadow is a school of choice, students from all over the district attend classes there.

School board president Priscilla Brouillette stressed that the kind of changes made at Highmeadow do not require board approval. But, she added, Miller would not have proceeded with-

"We're expecting each individual elementary school will determine the schedule that's appropriate for their own school."

Priscilla Brouillette
—School board president

out strong parental support. "We're expecting each individ-

ual elementary school will determine the schedule that's appropriate for their own school," Brouillette said. "It's important that it happen because teachers really need time to collaborate. But it doesn't work if the parent community isn't involved."

The elementary study serried in on issues such as foreign language, use of enrichments and technology, and that teacher training and collaboration were essential for those areas to be

successfully added to the instructional mix, Brouillette said.

Meanwhile, Sharp said the most-recently negotiated teacher contract (in 1999) allows for such changes to be made at individual schools.

"We are trying to give schools a lot of site-based power," said school board trustee Linda Eaberg. "That school felt it was important for their teachers to receive some (additional) training."

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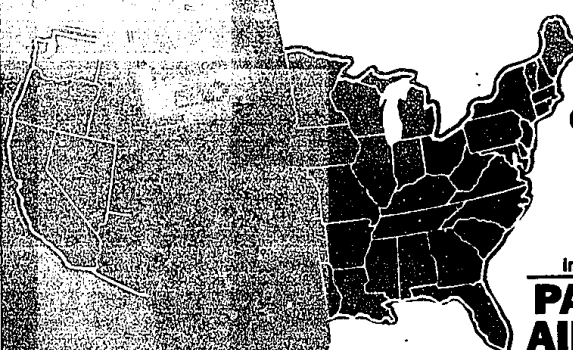
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