

CLASS

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that discussion, she added. There aren't those parameters in a college setting, where students can be influenced by the loudest and most persuasive speakers in the room.

PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS

Fouchey met April 1 with parents Linda and Bob Stulberg and Sue Kahn, who were present at Tuesday's meeting.

Fouchey also spoke at length with Don Cohen before the meeting. Cohen, a Farmington Hills parent who will have two students at Warner Middle School next year, is also the former executive director of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League.

Speaking at the June 17 school board meeting, he said a parent's political ideology is simplistic and no way for someone to understand different religions, ethnicity or cultural values in their own society.

"We're talking political issues here," Cohen said, adding politics should be kept away from familial values.

Cohen felt the curriculum approved was "drifting in its bias," and he criticized some of the Web sites as critical of

American foreign policy. Kahn feared bias and prejudice will be introduced into the school system and said the Web sites didn't present diversity of opinion.

Because Web sites are fluid, teachers will use caution in presenting material, Fouchey said Friday.

"Not teaching some topics would be censorship," he said.

FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS

"The fundamental problem with this district is that there is not (a) focus on basics," Steven Schwartz said. "It is more a university or graduate-level course."

He reviewed the curriculum to find out if it was anti-American, anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli, he decided it was more a university or graduate-level course.

"If you are really doing this curriculum it should be taught down at Wayne State," Schwartz said. "It is way above kids."

A teacher would need to be overwhelmingly neutral in teaching the course, he said. Schwartz found words used like "Palestine," which is not a neutral word, because the very existence of that land is in political dispute.

Linda Stulberg, who has worked for the Detroit Free

Press, the Chicago Sun Times and Music Magazine also criticized a flawed process.

Curriculum was drafted without the knowledge of the diverse Farmington community.

"Where was the oversight?" she asked.

STULBERGS WRITE

"Particularly troubling in some of the resources referenced in our International Affairs syllabus are the self-serving rationalizations for America-bashing, while ignoring or distorting the ugly truths and failings of other world systems," the Stulbergs said in a June 3 letter to Fouchey.

"So outraged are parents across the country by efforts to minimize the study of American government while force-feeding students international propaganda that they are banding together to sue their local school districts. Many have succeeded in preventing the false indoctrination of impressionable young minds."

Continuing in their letter: "Attempts to influence groups to pressure educators to revamp their curricula have not gone unnoticed by mainstream religious organizations. They are alerting their constituencies to subtly veiled and

Parents critical of moving government class

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Some parents critical of Farmington Schools' International Affairs course are also concerned over moving an American government course from 12th grade to ninth-grade curriculum.

Officials have said the move was necessary to be in alignment with Michigan Educational Assessment Program testing.

Parents believe the study of government is most useful to graduating seniors who are preparing to enter the adult world and might encourage them to vote.

In a letter to Jerry Fouchey, director of curriculum, Farmington Hills parents Linda and Bob Stulberg said ninth graders lack the sophistication and maturity needed for global studies.

In his reply, Fouchey wrote that a survey recently conducted by the Oakland

Intermediate School District found that of 40 Oakland districts, only five still maintain the 12th grade American Government requirement. Twelve schools recommend the study at ninth grade, five at 10th and seven at 11th. The remaining 11 schools require the course within a range of grades: one at grades 10 or 11, seven at grades 11 or 12, two at grades 10, 11 or 12 and one at grades nine, 10, 11 or 12.

"Our scope and sequence is clearly within standard practice for developing the skills of effective citizenship," he concluded.

Fouchey pointed out later that parents hadn't voiced concerns about teaching civics/government in April 2002, when new graduation requirements were approved. Much discussion then centered on the Senior Project class, which is now a pilot offered as an elective.

During the June 17

Farmington Public School board meeting, board member Gary Sharp said the switch provides a good grounding for ninth-graders.

With the federal No Child Left Behind program, which uses test scores to measure school progress, the MEAP requires the course under Important, Board Member Frank Reid said.

Superintendent Bob Maxfield, a former 12th grade social studies teacher, said 10-15 year olds have the worst voting records.

That won't change until adults figure out a way to communicate the importance of voting to them.

"There's a number of students to make that happen," Maxfield said.

If young people gathered and registered to vote they could be as strong a voting block as the American Association of Retired People (AARP), said board member Cathy Webb.

blatantly transparent historical revisionism with strong anti-American/anti-Western undercurrents.

Christian Science Monitor, Los Angeles Schools pulled hundreds of copies of donated Koreana that were offensive and bigoted.

Universities, too, are grappling with pressures from international student groups and foreign governments to radicalize campus education."

CONTEST

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of 15 finalists. From there, he went on to win an honorable mention, and was presented with a \$50 scholarship and Associated Press Stylebook at a ceremony held May 15 at the Focus: HOPE Conference Center.

"I really wasn't expecting anything. I was really surprised," said Robbins.

Others who have worked with Robbins expressed somewhat different expectations. "I really did think he would do really well," said Cindy Raby, newspaper adviser and social sciences teacher at



Justin Robbins, a Clarendonville graduate, was honored recently with an award for his journalistic talents.

class his freshman year. "I could see that he had very good writing skills and (he) was interested in history and politics ... so I recruited him," Raby said. "He has shown a great deal of dedication. He's a fantastic young man."

He's also one of only two young men who advanced to the finals.

Along with Heather Kilpatrick, Shades editor-in-chief-in-training, Raby decided to send Robbins as one of the two contestants permitted from each school.

The actual competition was held on April 2, beginning at 8:30 a.m. Throughout the morning, 20 mentors from various newspaper publications provided an intensive "crash course" of advice and tips.

Students also learned about the background of Focus: HOPE, a nationally recognized civil and human rights organization that was established in Detroit in 1968. From there, they received a tour during which they were introduced to personnel and students, and then the contest began.

"Their task was to go out, find and interview a person and submit a story by 5:30," explained Maurice Huey,

Focus: HOPE events coordinator.

The process started at 1 p.m. and journalists were supplied with notepads, pens and access to a computer lab, where they pounded out their stories by deadline.

Robbins decided to interview Command Sgt. Major Thomas Murphy, a 60-year-old ex-military man who manages Focus: HOPE's First Step and FAST TRACK programs, designed to develop and improve reading and math skills.

Accustomed to writing hard news stories, Robbins found that he had to put in extra effort to write his two-page feature.

"(It) started off as a really straight news story," said Robbins, who interviewed

Murphy with a panel of other students within 45 minutes.

"So what I had to do was ... really have to make it interesting. That was the hardest thing."

After interviewing several other Focus: HOPE employees and a former student, and adding the right mix of details, Robbins succeeded.

"Justin was one of the most enthusiastic participants that we had," said Huey, whom Robbins interviewed. "He was very gung-ho about getting out there and finding someone to interview. His grammar was excellent."

Among the mentors helping at this year's event was Edward L. Cardenas, an eight-year Macomb County bureau staff writer at the Detroit News. A

mentor of about five or six years, Cardenas participated in the Olympics in 1991 while a student at South Lake High School in St. Clair Shores.

"It was a good immersion into the city (and) I was able to ... make some good contacts with different professionals at the time," said Cardenas.

Robbins plans on attending Eastern Michigan University, where he may write for the Eastern Echo. He's veering towards political satire and opinion writing, although he is not yet sure whether he'll pursue journalism as a career.

"I love journalism and especially love to write," said Robbins. "I'm optimistic to a point."

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