

# Quality Amid Controversy

School activities in Farmington, including curriculum changes and implementation, sports and the everyday business of learning, went on during 1970-71 despite one of the most controversial school years ever.

A storm weathered well by Farmington Schools arose over the millage proposals that Farmington voters squelched twice this summer. The Farmington School District is now operating on an austerity budget implemented after the first millage defeat in June.

Cutbacks in services, programs and personnel were instituted, but with every effort to maintain the "quality education" for which Farmington Schools are famous.

Athletics and all non-athletic extra curricular school activities such as debate, drama, school papers and yearbooks are all back in 1971-72, thanks to a private group of citizens. Pledges of nearly \$50,000, coupled with an agreement by faculty, the administration and the Farmington Education Association that coaches sacrifice half their normal stipend, assured that football practice began on schedule.

Sports had to be one of the brightest spots during the past school year. Gridders from North Farmington High School went all the way to claim the state football championship. Both they and Farmington High were League champs in baseball and Farmington High won golf and cross country track league titles too.

The Junior Great Books Program expanded into six more elementary schools and junior highs thanks to 28 new volunteer leaders who completed a four-week training course in February. They joined 17 other leaders who met with groups

of students throughout the school year discussing the classics, helping children develop their own opinions and think for themselves.

Additions at Shiawassee, Longacre and Larkshire Elementary Schools, each built under a different formula to cut costs, are already in use by hundreds of elementary school children. Shiawassee now sports a new media center and six "open concept" classrooms for a new learning experience. Larkshire and Longacre both have new media centers staffed by reading specialists, plus two new classrooms apiece.

The Family Life Education Committee composed of citizens, faculty, administrators and parents completed studies in three areas--human sexuality, substance abuse and minority under-

standing. After several public hearings on the proposed programs, guidelines for implementing the programs were formulated by the Committee. The School Board subsequently approved these guidelines with certain amendments to be implemented during the 1971-72 school year.

A series of stormy Board meetings attended by capacity crowds followed when this decision was announced, along with threats to recall four Board members. A recall movement in fact did begin, but never seemed to bring concrete results.

1970-71 was another year of great community involvement. Task forces studying human sexuality, substance abuse and minority understanding completed their work as parents and students joined teachers and administrators to help prepare for implementation of these programs.

The substance abuse program, dealing with the problems of alcohol, tobacco and drugs, was first to receive Board approval. The task force's recommendations called for a program in secondary schools of two seminars per year, in-service workshops for school personnel and an opportunity for parents to receive more information through the adult education department.

Human sexuality, or sex education as it is called, is perhaps the most controversial of the three programs. Guidelines for well-trained, properly motivated teachers of grades kindergarten through 12 were accepted and approved by the Board.

Parents' rights to withhold permission from their child to attend these classes were also assured by the Board.

Minority understanding as it related to student attitudes, their exposure to minorities on the faculty and administrative staff, and related school activities, was also given final approval by the School Board. Other aspects of minority understanding deal with curriculum planning and development, the classroom teacher, personnel recruitment and involvement of the parent community.

And 1970-71 saw a shift among School Board members as president John M. Washburn III retired and trustee Gary Lichtman resigned. Mrs. Betty Brennan and Dr. Mervyn B. Ross acquired seats on the Board of Education. Senior member Richard Peters was elected its president, Kenneth Perrin, vice president; and Mrs. Kathryn Stirling, secretary.

## DISTRICT DATA

### Number of Schools -- 26

19 Elementary  
4 Junior High  
3 Senior High

Enrollment ..... 16,700  
Certified Employees ..... 846  
Total School Employees ..... 1,435  
Equalized Valuation ..... \$320,806,300

### Tax Rate (for 1971-72)

\$35.83 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation  
29.83 for operation  
6.00 for debt retirement

Area -- 35 square miles including most of Farmington Township, the City of Farmington, and a portion of West Bloomfield Township.



From the  
Desk of the  
Superintendent

Frequently a detour is necessary even on an expressway or superhighway as repairs or modifications are necessary. The long range plans of Farmington Public School District are facing the necessity of a significant "detour." The duration may be temporary or extended, depending on a variety of circumstances.

Let us turn first to the plus and minuses of last school year.

1) The initial excitement of opening two new schools, Wood Creek Elementary and Harrison High, was augmented by the thrilling experience of two new educational programs developing into reality. The response from students and parents in each situation was gratifying. Each school was offering an educational experience with more student involvement geared to specific student needs.

2) Although controversial from some viewpoints, modest programs were developed in Family Life Education in an effort to better meet the needs of students and community.

3) Financial problems became critical as reductions in support were activated by the state authorities, and expenses were increased as a result of the court order to provide textbooks and student materials, but no revenues were approved to carry out that order. The result was a sizable deficit for the year's operation.

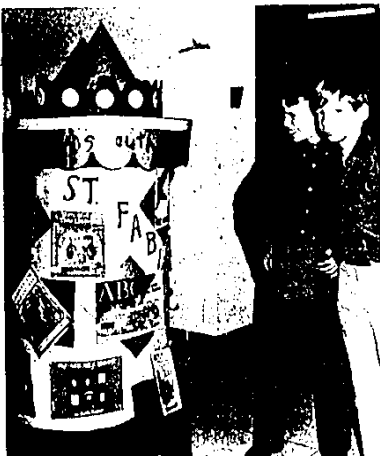
THE 1971-72 school year presents an almost impossible challenge to the Board of Education, administration and staff. That challenge is to continue a quality education program in spite of a severe austerity program. The challenge is accepted with the realization that many things have been excluded or greatly reduced in scope.

There are fewer teachers to instruct an even larger enrollment; teaching materials and student supplies are significantly reduced; there are fewer administrators and supervisory personnel available to give assistance and guidance; and special services such as music, art, library, physical education, and counseling are reduced. In spite of these problems, the professional staff is dedicated to producing a quality education program and will focus its efforts toward that goal.

The community must be aware that the reduction of almost 1½ million dollars out of a budget, which merely continued the program last year, will be specifically felt by both students and parents. Many services and benefits will have to be denied as the implementation of an austerity budget becomes reality. A major goal for 1971-72 must be the determination of the kind of an educational program the citizens of Farmington are willing to financially support, and also give influence to the proper balance of local and state funding.

The 1971-72 school year will have its difficult problems, but it will not be a wasted year, for your staff will endeavor to make it successful.

Roderick J. Smith  
Superintendent of Schools  
September 8, 1971



## Young Authors Pool Talents At Conference

Over 300 young authors from Farmington Elementary Schools got together at Farmington High School for the Second Annual Young Authors Conference designed to inspire the young in creative writing. Their original poems, stories, compositions and essays were attractively bound in covers made by volunteer mothers, and the youngsters were treated to a play presented by the Farmington Players. A third conference will probably take place again this year.