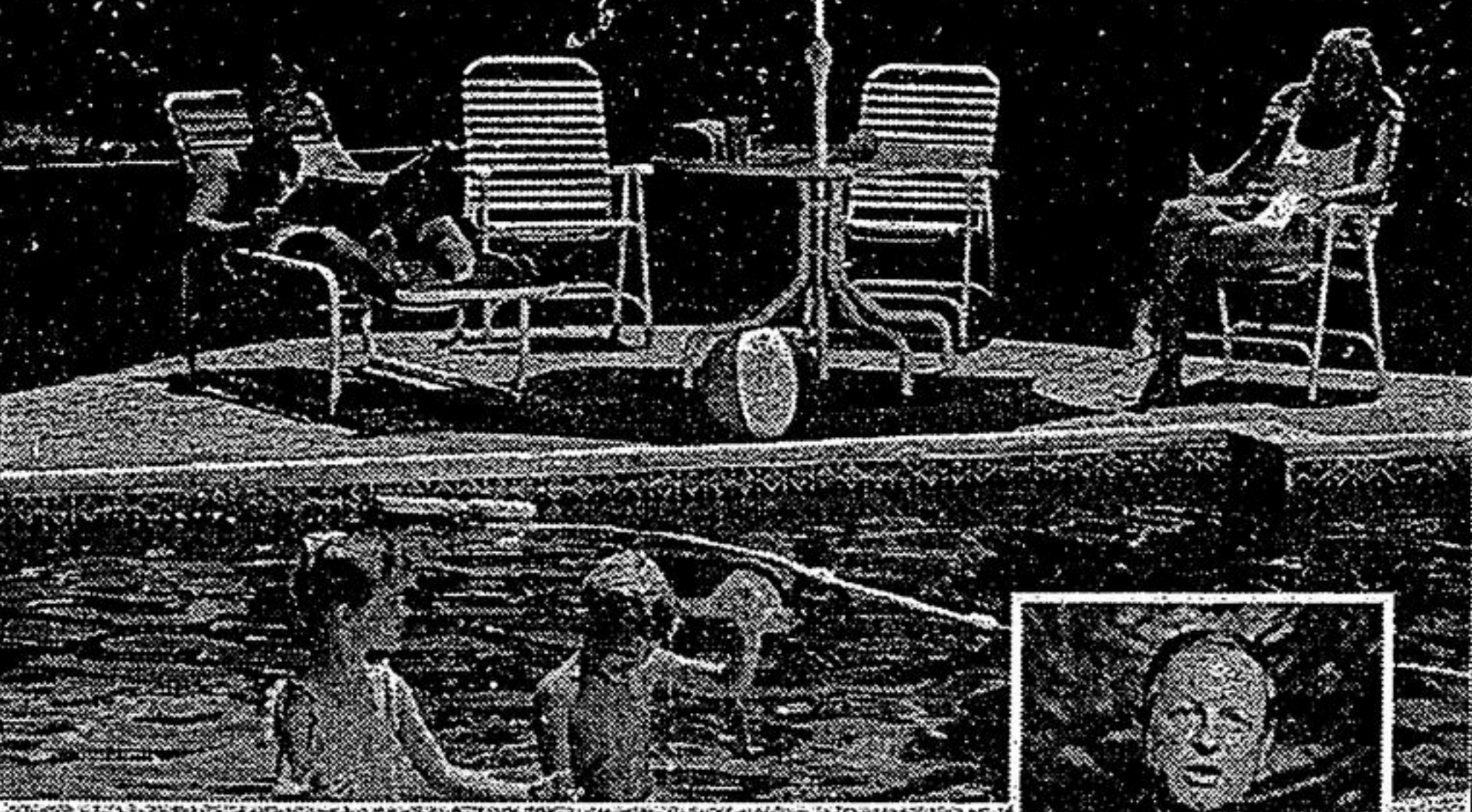




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Bar raised for Grade 3 standardized testing

This year, the Grade 3 tests are later and they'll take half the time.

The children, though, are expected to do better — by their government and by local school boards.

The province expects students to perform at Level 3, said Barb Smith, a Markham resident and board chair of the Education Quality and Accountability Office supervising the testing.

Last year, when the provincial assessment of reading, writing and mathematics was introduced, Level 2 (out of four levels of understanding) was considered a good enough result. Only Level 1 was unsatisfactory.

"I would argue Level 2 is (acceptable) as well, that you have to look at the individual child and their performance through the year," added Smith on Friday.

"It's a snapshot. It's not the whole picture, and it should be considered in that context."

The process, which starts in two weeks, should take five days at three hours a day, because teachers have said, "Make it shorter," she said. Last year, testing took up most class time in a day during 10 days.

Instead of late April, the test — called "Inventions,

Investigations and Discoveries" — this year — is starting in late May, so teachers will have more time to cover the curriculum. But this also means individual results for students will be ready in September, not June, said Smith.

Parents will be given a guide explaining the testing procedure as well as a questionnaire.

After last year's results, all local schools, separate and public, drew up plans to improve. For public schools, principals and superintendents are responsible for seeing that schools followed through on their plans, said the district public board's testing officer, Daria Lindsay.

In December, Education Director Bill Hogarth set a goal to have "at least 60 per cent of our students at Levels 3 and 4 (the enriched level) in reading and writing and 50 per cent in mathematics within the next two years."

The board's Level 3 and 4 results last year totalled 55 per cent in reading, 49 per cent in writing and 39 per cent in math. Both boards placed above the provincial average for scoring at the higher levels.

The district separate board launched training programs in mathematics for its teachers. "Every school looked at the areas that it did well and where they required focus," said board spokesperson Chris Cable.

-Mike Adler

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