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Public school students learn on computers

by Debbie Stull

WALKERTON--Computers are more than just fun; they're proving to be a valuable learning device.

Walkerton Public School received an ICON computer lab in September, and "it's been an interesting challenge to keep up with the kids," said John Finlay.

Finlay is the school's site administrator. He's responsible for any questions and problems teachers and students may have with the computers. If he's unable to answer or solve the problems, he takes the problem to the Bruce County Board of Education.

"Some of the kids know some of the computer programs better than I do. I just don't have the time to master them all."

The school is the last of the Bruce board's schools to have a computer lab set up. The lab has 15 work stations, one computer and printer.

"This means all the work stations can be using different programs at the same time."

Every class, from Kindergarten to Grade 8, gets at least two sessions a week in the lab. There are a variety of programs available covering topics ranging from history to English and math to science. Also

TONY LEUDKE, a Grade 5 student at Walkerton Public School, says computers are lots of fun to learn with. (Stull photo)

available are different levels of word processing, and the kids can use these programs when they're ready.

In one history program, which covers the Rebellion of Upper Canada 1830-44, students guide a family through the time period by making decisions about events going on.

"My whole theory about word processing is that you get a lot more output from the student. Kids find it much less of a chore to write, yet they still have to be creative. Only the mechanics are less of a chore."

The development and production of software programs are paid for by the Ministry of Education. A teacher, interested in obtaining different programs, can get them from the board office which has all the programs. However, the computer discs have limited space so the school cannot have all programs, said Finlay.

Each teacher spends time with his or her class in the computer room.

In order to familiarize parents with the computers, Finlay held three sessions in October so parents could see what the kids are dealing with. The 30 parents attending the sessions were in favor of the computers, said Finlay.
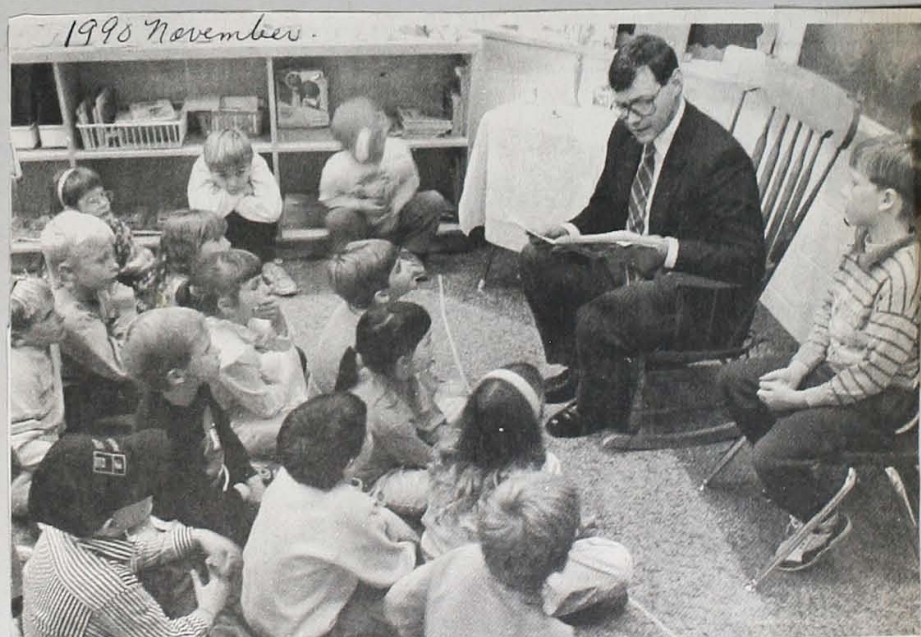
Students are not learning computer programming at school like they did about 10 years ago. Instead of the big deal being how to write a program, the emphasis is now on learning programs, he said.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM Grade 5 teacher Michelle Napper, Heidi Baker is learning the proper finger placement for using the keyboard. (Stull photo) *Feb. 13, 1991*

Students learn proper typing skills

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READ ALOUD WEEK was celebrated at Mother Teresa School last week with the help of 70 guest readers. Murray Elston, Bruce MPP, reads "Bea and Mr. Jones" to the Grade 2 class.