

COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY HIGHLY TOUTED BY ESTONIAN EDUCATORS

Eastern Bloc teachers visit Joseph Gibbons PS

BY JAMIE HARRISON
The Georgetown Gemini

From the former Soviet Bloc to Georgetown, it seems all teachers want to do one thing - to teach and to learn.

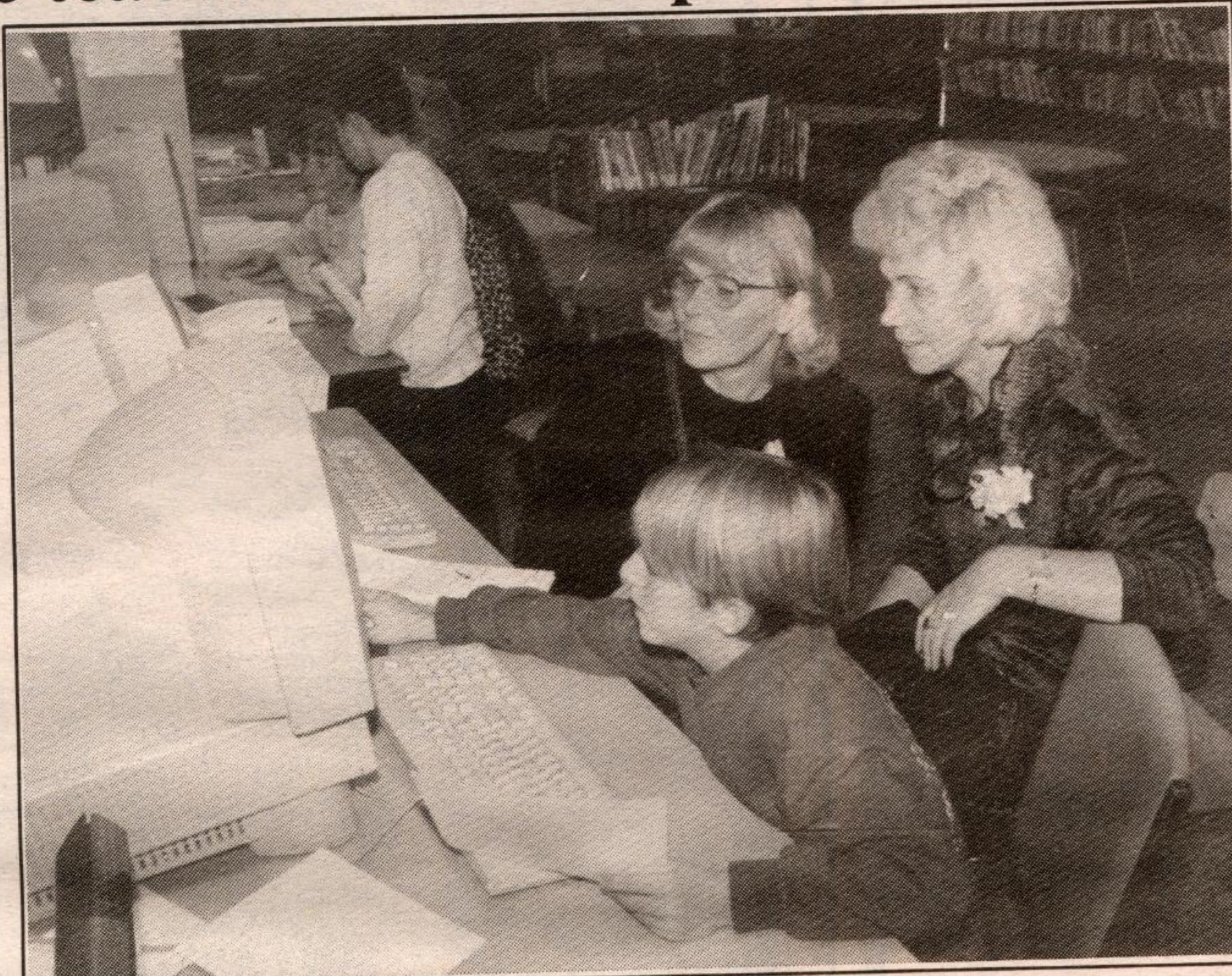
Students at Joseph Gibbons Public School were acutely aware of this as a group of visiting teachers from Estonia came to see how the Gibbons students are learning about the world around them.

When the USSR dissolved, it left teachers throughout the former Soviet republics scrambling to bring their students up to speed with their western counterparts.

Through the generosity of other educators around the world, teachers in Estonia were given disused texts and publishers' surpluses. In Halton, members of a group called ECCO (Educators, Computers Consortium of Ontario) found a way to bring emerging technologies to the cash-strapped nation, and to mold new friendships half-way around the world.

"Basically, it started six or seven years ago when Estonia first became independent again," Carol Cargill of ECCO, said, adding the initial drive came from two North York teachers, one of Estonian descent, who decided to do something to help their Estonian counterparts. That included securing a government grant, allowing the teachers to enter a five-year English program.

Last week six teachers and three administrators took a tour of Joseph Gibbons School before moving on to Stewarttown Public School. While at Gibbons, the teachers interacted with students



TEACHING THE TEACHERS: Topher Gassner-Petch, a Grade 5 student at Joseph Gibbons School, shows Estonian educators Paivi Aljamaa, left, and Milivi Tikka, about Canadian geography on a computer. The teachers are in Canada on a two-week visit to learn about Canadian teaching systems. (Jamie Harrison photo)

and one teacher even managed to contact students at her school via E-mail, providing a thrill for students on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the seven years since communism crumbled in Estonia, the country has worked

hard to boost computer literacy and Internet use among students. The nation now ranks 18th in the world, tied with Japan and ahead of France. Many schools even have their own Web Pages on the World Wide Web.

'Frustrating' season for farmers

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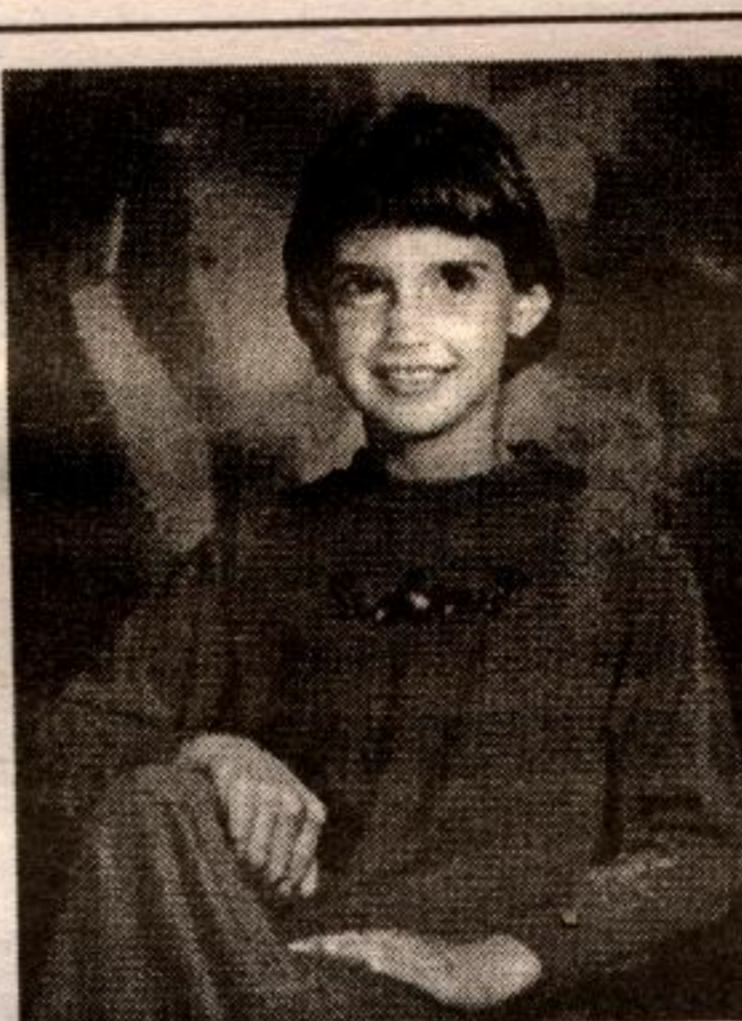
There were also problems planting canola in late September because of slugs caused by the wet weather.

"The other frustration is that over this time commodities of bean prices and corn prices were at an all-time high and here's the producer trying to get crops in the ground," Hendry said, not-

ing that farmers are optimists and seem to be dealing with the crop problems very well.

Farming production in Halton was worth \$120 million last year with approximately \$30 to \$40 million coming from Halton Hills crops. Roughly 40,000 acres of land in Halton Hills is cropped each year.

— Niblock



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Map showing location of Halton Hills IGA at the intersection of Hwy. #7 and Mountainview Rd. Landmarks include McDonald's, Wendy's, and IGA. Address: 158 Guelph St. Georgetown. Store hours: Mon. - Fri. 8 am - 9 pm, Sat. 8 am - 7 pm, Sun. 9 am - 6 pm. Thank You For Shopping IGA.

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