

# Computer education is essential in school, teacher says

By BEN DUMMETT  
Herald Staff

Computer education is essential if today's children hope to cope in the information age, Centennial Public School teacher, Mattie Spencer says. So essential she said, that computer education should start in Kindergarten.

Ms. Spencer was recently announced as the recipient of the Federation of Women Teachers Associations of Ontario Computer Education award. The annual \$1,000 scholarship recognizes a teacher's work in computer education.



Mattie Spencer

Ms. Spencer qualified her enthusiasm for the computer saying it's a tool, "albeit an important one," and only if it is used properly will teachers realize the desired results. Teachers first have to be properly familiarized with the computer before they can effectively incorporate it into the classroom. And according to the head of Centennial's computer committee, Sue Dobie, this is exactly what Ms. Spencer did for the school's staff.

Ms. Dobie, as head of the committee, nominated Ms. Spencer for the FWTAO Computer Education Scholarship.

As of last September there were only a handful of teachers interested in incorporating the computer in classroom instruction, Ms. Dobie said. But following the workshop Ms. Spencer held in October on the operation of a computer, the entire staff was hooked, she said. The only problem being the school's 32 teachers only had access to 23 computers.

"She created a monster," Ms. Dobie quipped.

Ms. Spencer organized the workshop, provided instruction and made up operation manuals for each teacher, Ms. Dobie said.

Ms. Dobie said Ms. Spencer was also instrumental in launching and handling the school's "Dare to be Different" program.

Centennial has a three-year instructional computer plan and as part of this program the school's Grade 7 Language Arts and Social Science teachers incorporated computers in their classroom teaching this past year.

The Halton Board of Education requires its schools to have similar three-year plans.

Ms. Spencer prepared information booklets for the teachers, describing how each topic should be taught using the computer, and different aids and quizzes that could be used. Ms. Spencer personally worked with five Grade 7 students during this period to

monitor the effects.

Two computer programs employed by teachers simulated real life situations. One had the student as a babysitter. The student would be given a series of situations and a selection of corresponding choices of action. Depending on the course of action the student followed, the student would either be fired or received a raise.

In another case, the student is a truck driver. Situations are posed, for example, in which the driver is over-tired. The student indicates whether the driver should continue driving or pull over. If the student chooses the former, the truck crashes, Ms. Spencer said. She offered these two examples to show how the computer can help students improve their thinking skills.

The computer was also used to help students improve their writing skills. Ms. Spencer said students enjoyed using the computer to write because they could make corrections immediately. She added the computer can be used to help teach a variety of subjects including art, drafting and math.

Ms. Spencer got involved in computers by accident in the spring of 1988. She had planned to take a primary specialist course in Barrie but because the commute was too far, she enrolled in a computer course held at Sam Sherratt Public School in Milton. "I was hooked the minute after the first class." The course centred around how teachers could integrate computers into curriculum.

Besides the work at Centennial, Ms. Spencer taught keyboarding to Grade 1 students at Park Public School in Georgetown and Robert Little School in Acton. She also taught teachers at MacKenzie-Smith Middle School in Acton how to use the computer to fill out their students' report cards.

Ms. Spencer said there isn't a negative side to the use of computers as a teaching tool.

Only if computers are allowed to become the be all and end all of instruction will they have a detrimental effect on students' learning, she said.

Ms. Spencer will start in a new teaching position in September at Oakwood Public School in Oakville, teaching Grade 4 students.

# Guilty plea in Barber House case

A Georgetown man pleaded guilty Thursday to charges of breaking and entering into the Old Barber House on Maple Avenue last August and to charges of theft in connection with thousands of dollars of goods on the property.

Edward Wallace Tooke, 35, of Eighth Line, Erin, was sentenced to 15 months probation and 100 hours of community work by Judge Douglas Latimer in Milton Provincial Court.

Halton Regional Police say the premises at 40 Maple Avenue, Georgetown, owned by Millview Development, were missing antique goods worth thousands of dollars. From Aug. 8 to Aug. 16, 1988, items such as a marble fireplace, wooden stairs and antique books were taken from the premises.

Goods were found in the garage of Mr. Tooke's home, where they were recovered by police.

Toronto lawyer Alan Gold, defending Mr. Tooke in provincial court, asked the judge for a light sentence for Mr. Tooke, who has no

previous convictions and has three children, a wife, and a job with the Ministry of Skills Development.

"Just convicting him is a severe punishment," the lawyer argued.

The court heard that Mr. Tooke thought he had permission to take some items from the property, a move that his attorney claimed was "bad judgement."

"Your Honor has a somewhat unusual case... Mr. Tooke was active in the community affairs prior to this (arrest)."

Halton Regional Police also charged three other men in connection with the break and enter and thefts at the 133-year-old Barber House last year.

George Joseph Galway, 43, of Acton, Kelly Kirton, 24, of Milton and Michael David Jackman, 55, of Burlington, elected Thursday to be tried by a judge and jury. If the court finds sufficient evidence to grant trials to the three accused,

they will appear in court at a date to be set possibly for next year.

The three men pleaded not guilty to charges of break and enter and theft.

The Old Barber House on Maple Avenue was sold in spring, 1988, to Millview Management, a Toronto company which plans to build condominiums there. Property owner Doug MacLaren and his wife resided at the home until May, 1988 when they moved to Belleville. Mr. MacLaren said he was removing the contents of his house on a gradual basis.

Millview Management had given the MacLarens until the summer to remain on the property.

The 17-acre property is the site where the Barber family, founders of the Barber Mill and much of early Georgetown, resided for many years.

Mr. MacLaren, himself, was born in the house.

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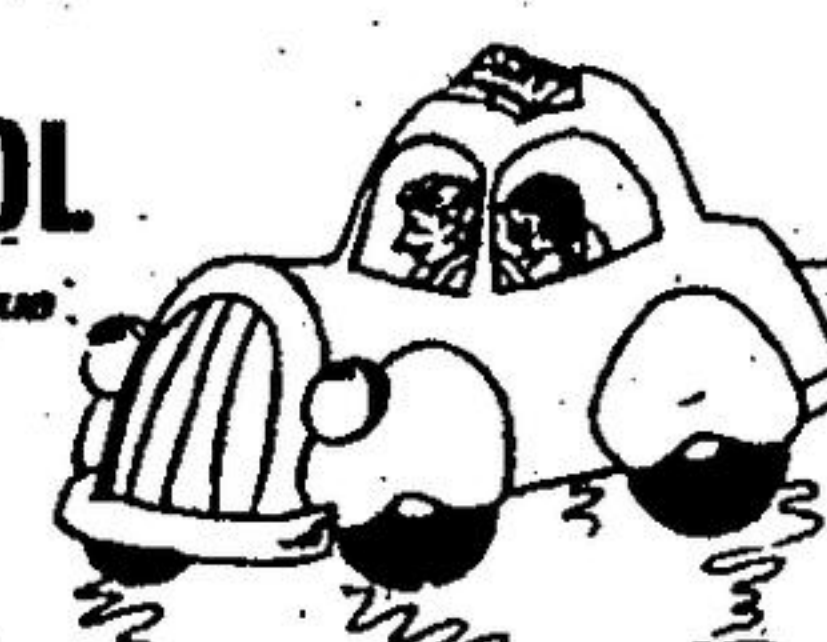
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