

# Education

## Unique program provides computers for students, libraries

Schools and students across Canada are gaining computer skills through a unique program.

Computers for Schools (CFS) collects surplus computers donated by the government and the private sector. The

computers are then refurbished and distributed to schools and libraries and across Canada.

Each year more than 60,000 classroom-ready computers are donated at no cost through the program. CFS met its Millennium Challenge goal of sup-

plying more than 250,000 computers throughout Canada since the program began in 1993.

Not only does this benefit the schools and students who receive the equipment but it also diverts tons of waste from

landfill sites. CFS has been praised by Environment Canada for environmental efficiency on the disposal of IT waste and is regarded as a best practice program for keeping often potentially toxic material out of landfill sites.

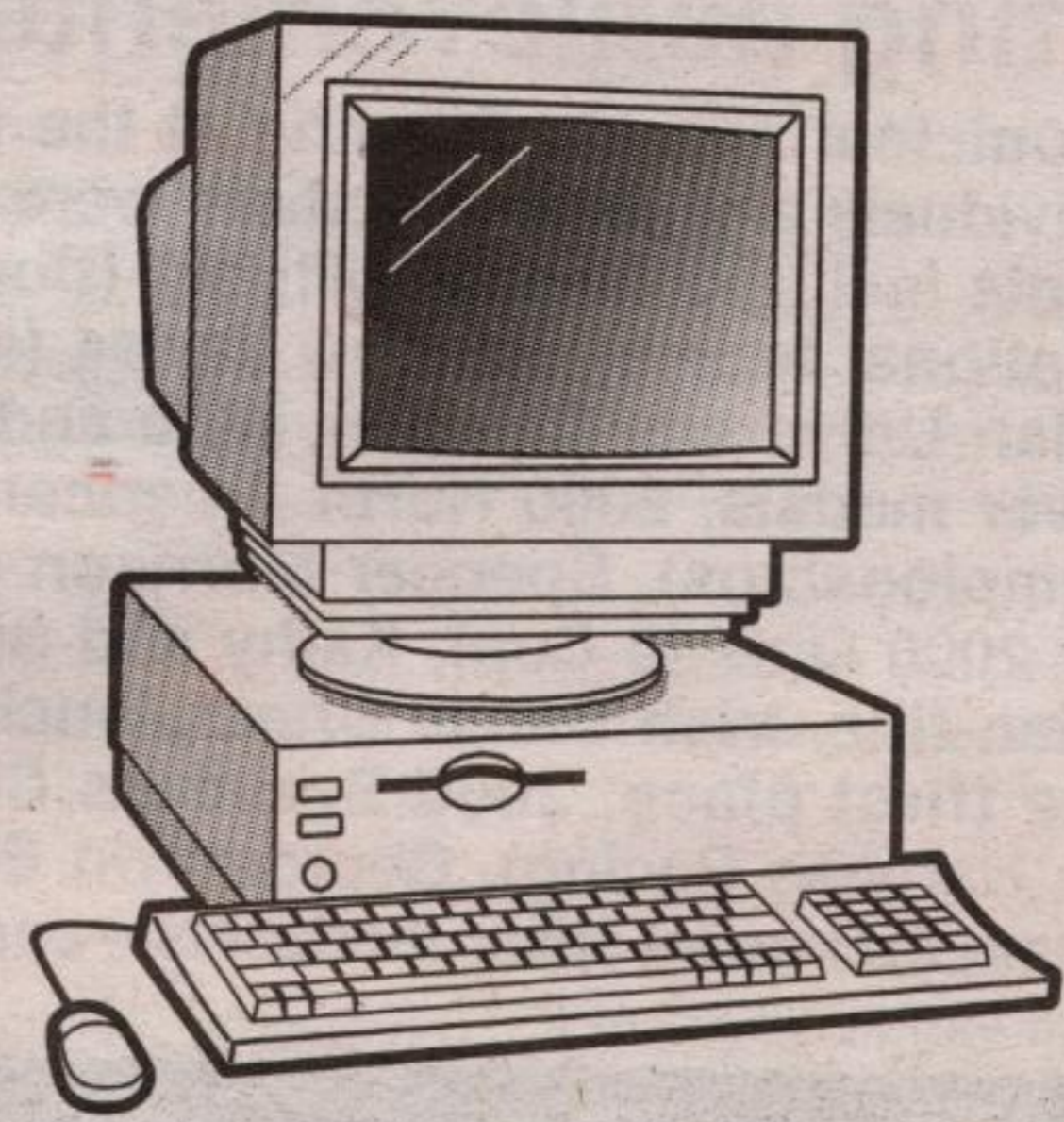
CFS donated six laptop computers to the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic Board of Education to help in the implementation of an equity program which assists students who do not have the means to own a computer.

Thornhill Secondary School uses its CFS computers in physics, chemistry classes as well as geography classes where students are being trained on a Global Information System computer mapping software package. CFS also provides hands-on information technology training at workshops in schools across the country.

CFS also works in partnership with the government's Youth Employment Strategy by providing first-time job experience in its workshops and repair centres. The Technical Work Experience Project (TWEPE) allows technology graduates, co-op students, youth interns and students to repair and refurbish donated equipment and software to prepare the computers for delivery to schools. TWEPE provides up to 26 weeks of employment, helping over-

come the no experience without a job/no job without experience hurdle faced by many graduates.

Post-secondary schools, such as the College of Information Technology, use the program for practical training. It held a Computer Build-a-thon at its five western Ontario campuses. Three hundred students refurbished more



than 1,000 computers in just two days.

Computers for Schools accepts donated equipment in good working order (IBM-compatible computers of the Pentium-class or better and Macintosh computers at the Power PC level or higher). Working colour monitors, keyboards, mice, printers, modems, scanners, digital cameras, CD-ROM drives and other accessories are also needed. CFS will remove all information from the hard drive to ensure computers are classroom ready.

To donate equipment to the program call 1-888-636-9899. Most equipment donated within a province or territory remains within that jurisdiction.

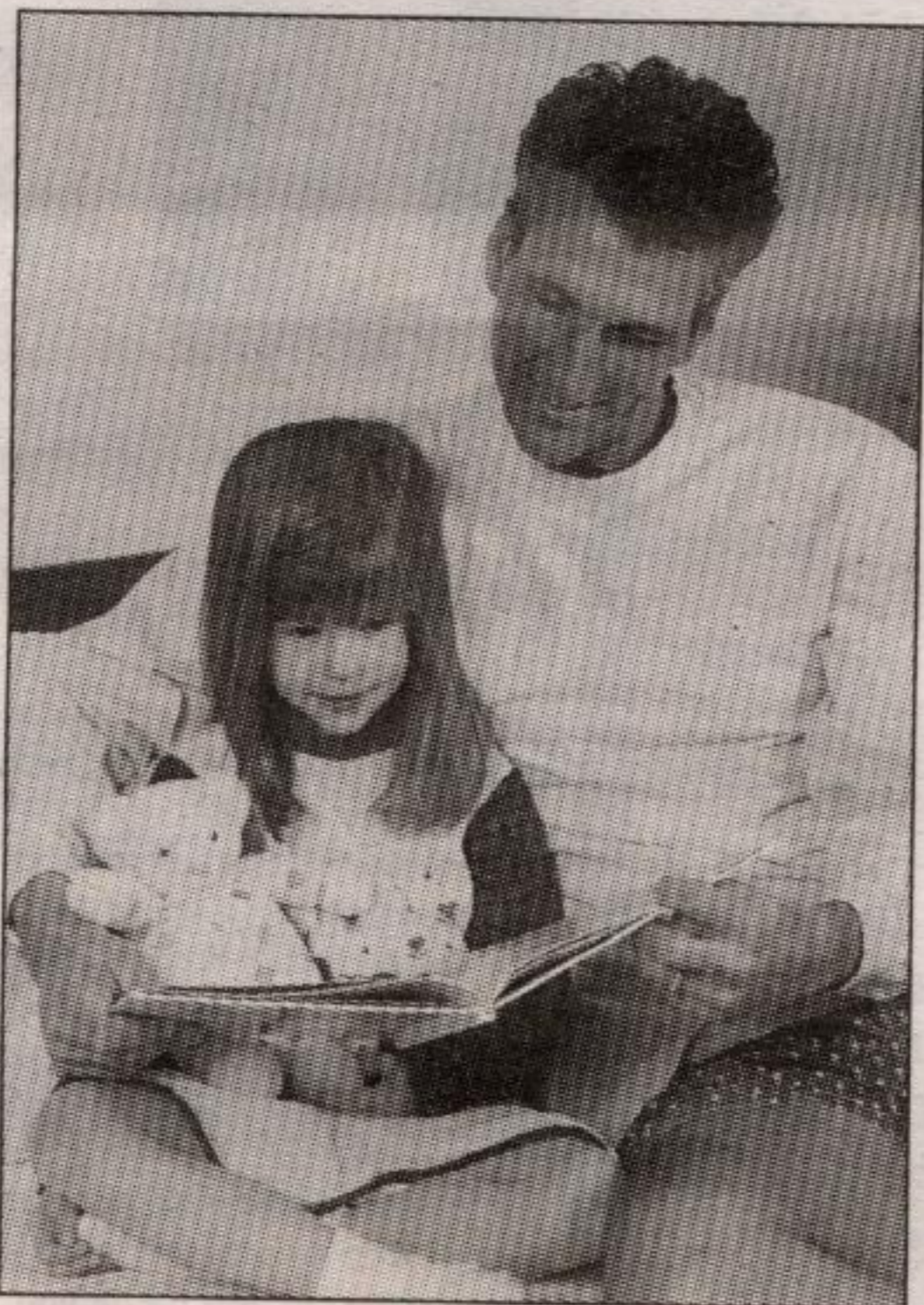
For more information about the program, visit Computers for Schools Web site at [www.schoolnet.ca/cfs-ope](http://www.schoolnet.ca/cfs-ope) or contact James LeCraw, executive director, Renewed Computer Technologies at 905-795-5387.

## Literacy, math and technology skills are key to success in these changing times

Education changes so quickly it makes your head spin. It's a complaint I hear often from parents, educators and students. They tell me it's tough keeping up with the latest education trends and difficult to predict which path will lead to the best results.

We start with the basics. Literacy should be a major goal in all educational programs. Unlike many skills, reading proficiency does not deteriorate as we get older. When we teach kids to read, we provide them with a skill that lasts a lifetime.

Proficiency comes with constant practice. You wouldn't expect a child to excel at hockey if they play only occasionally. The same is true for reading. Students who hope to cope with the reading load of university or college, need to keep their skills sharp in high school. Kids who read frequently increase their knowledge, develop their memories, learn to interpret information can can formulate opinions. These skills are important regardless of what your children want to be when they grow up.



Literacy also includes good writing skills. Students need to learn how to express their ideas in sentences, with all proper punctuation in place. People who tell you that ideas are more important than grammar and spelling forget that it's tough to get your message across without using the conventions of writing.

Mathematics and technology have become critical to most businesses and industries. Even enterprises that appear art-centred have embraced these fields of knowledge. It's difficult to think of a career that does not require mathematics and technological know-how.

Without studying math, students are systematically removed from many rewarding careers.

Parents are always interested in their children's access to computers at school, viewing computer skills as the bridge to careers in technology. Certainly, computers have become indispensable in our lives, and computer literacy has been associated with success. However, computer availability in the school will not promote learning. Children with no computer training can quickly learn to navigate systems and software. The activities that children engage on the computers are the important parts of developing a good foundation in technology.

Parents have a tremendous responsibility to make sound decisions when it comes to education their children. The decision gets easier when parents focus on what they want their kids to learn rather than where they want their kids to learn it. Some parents may be weighing the benefits of public education or French Immersion of home schooling. Other parents may be considering computer camp versus hockey school. Regardless of the educational venue, getting a good education includes reading, writing, math and yes, computers. Strong skills in these areas will support the development of reasoning and

the expression of creative thinking... skills that will maintain their value regardless of what the future brings.

—By Dr. Laurie McNelles York University educator, a recognized education expert and the Canadian Educational Specialist for Kumon Math and Reading Centres (1-800-ABC-MATH)

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