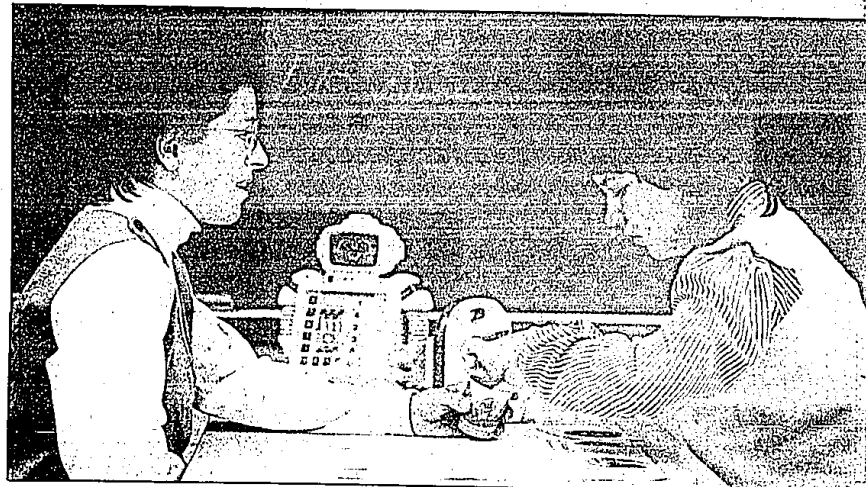




Helping make communication easier



AT LEFT: Teacher's aide Juanita Abid (left) works on communication skills with 11-year-old Jason Daniels, who attends Flanders Elementary through the Farmington special education department's autistic program.



photos by RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Farmington speech pathologist Lori Cummins (left) works with Amy Weber, a student in the Farmington school district's autistic program at Flanders Elementary through the special education department.

Amy is learning to identify the real thing — in this case a cookie — from a picture of a cookie on her learning chart.

By Casey Hans
staff writer

A VISIT to the Tel-Twelve Mall in Southfield this year was an eye-opener for shoppers and more than fun for visiting students.

The non-speaking group of students from Eagle Elementary literally carried their voices with them — in the form of personally programmed electronic computers with voices controlled by the students.

They used the devices when purchasing items to converse with store employees, who appeared fascinated with the new, high-tech way the speech-impaired students were shopping.

As problems with physically, mentally and generally speech impaired students become more specialized, so does the teaching of necessary communication skills, several local speech experts said.

OF THE 13 speech pathologists employed in Farmington Public Schools, most have an area of specialization not necessarily known to the others, according to George Kinsman, speech pathologist at Fairview Early Education Center.

"Before the trend towards special-

ization, a speech pathologist may have worked at three or four different schools, she said. Now many are in specialized programs, involving different impairments and different age groups.

"We're part of that trend — the age of specialization," said Liz Stamos-Bushey, a speech pathologist at Eagle Elementary. "We're going to become specialized because of the different programs."

THE TRADITIONAL one-on-one speech training Kinsman had as a youngster is now a thing of the past in her area of speech. "Today, we're offering our services more to the classroom teachers," Kinsman said.

She spends much of her time — when not working with parents and screening incoming students — going into classrooms to do group language programs.

"I do anything that encourages verbal expression," she said. "We go into the classrooms instead of pulling them out. I get to see the child in a realistic setting."

OF THE 120 young children per year Kinsman evaluates, 25-30 qualify as speech impaired, she said. She discourages the use of labels during a child's developmental years. "La-

bels tend to become self-fulfilling," she added, "and can place undue pressure on the child."

While Kinsman works with mainly verbal students, other speech pathologists in the district work with students with little or no capacity for verbal speech.

These professionals use alternative communication methods.

AT EAGLE Elementary, about one third of Stamos-Bushey's students are non-speaking, and most are part of an Oakland County program based in the Farmington district.

Using both low-tech, manual charts and high-tech computers with voices, students learn to function and have a "voice" in society, she said. Each device is individually structured to meet the needs of the individual student.

Parents are "a very vital part" of developing the students communication device, Stamos-Bushey added. "Often times, they know their child best. It's important they work with us."

Using pictures, words and symbols, students with a variety of physical handicaps learn to interact with

other students and with the general public, as they did during their trip to the mall, mentioned above.

"A few years ago, we weren't able to get the children out," she said. "This year, we were received extremely well."

SOME SPEAKING and non-speaking students are part of the autistic program at Flanders Elementary, where the children's main problems are language. Speech pathologist Lori Cummins works one-on-one with each student.

For the non-speaking autistic stu-

dents, "the goal is to develop a communication board she can take with her," Cummins said. "The goal is to have as many pictures on the board as possible."

Highly-motivating things for each individual, such as sweets and music for one autistic child, help them to learn more quickly.

What makes teaching communication skills to autistic children difficult, according to Cummins, is that "communication is usually learned by imitation — that's what makes it so difficult. None of our kids imitate."

inkwell

Inkwell provides news and information about Farmington-area primary and secondary schools. The column appears monthly throughout the school year as part of the Observer's "School Page." Send news items to: The School Page, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. Include a telephone number where a contact person can be reached during the day.

AMERICA AND ME

David Grand of Farmington Hills placed third in the 17th-annual America and Me Essay Contest sponsored by the Farm Bureau Insurance Group.

The eighth grader at Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Middle School earned a certificate of achievement.

The topic of this year's contest was "Why I Am Important to America's Future." Eighth graders from 500 Michigan schools took part.

TOP HONORS

William Ciluffo of Farmington Hills, a student at Detroit Country Day School, Beverly Hills, earned a silver medal in the National Latin Test, an examination taken by 4,000 students throughout the U.S.

The annual competition is sponsored by the American Classical League and the National Junior Classical League.

GAINS SCHOLARSHIP

Jodi Wolford, a Farmington Harrison High School student, was awarded a merit scholarship for the 1986-87 academic year at Madonna College, Livonia.

She has been accepted into the business administration-management program.

HATS OFF

Students at Gill Elementary in Farmington celebrated Hat Day March 21. Students and staff wore their creations throughout the school day.

"Hat day was not only fun, the students also learned about careers. Exotic bonnets, customs of other countries and much more," principal Nick Abid said.

The band on Abid's straw hat bore the inscription, "Principals make it work."

The accent was on variety during the day.

Megan Dawson had a safari hat carrying a stuffed monkey. Beth Chambers had an elephant on it. Erika Stiechkins wore a hat loaded with fruit. Jennifer Baydoun wore the largest hat in school — 90 centimeters across.

Susan Ryan sported a strawberry shortcake hat. Jeff Schneider wore a colorful Hispanic sombrero.

PROBLEM SOLVER

David Kuhn of Farmington Hills was a member of the Detroit Country Day Middle School (Beverly Hills) team that earned a bid to the Michigan Future Problem Solving Bowl April 19-20 at the University of Michigan.

The seventh graders qualified for the title bowl by placing in the top 20 percent of Michigan's 605 future problem solving teams.

The Future Problem Solving Program helps students develop creative thinking skills.

CHEMISTRY OLYMPIAD

Scott Clarke of Farmington Hills finished 11th in the regional examination for the National Chemistry Olympiad.

The senior at Detroit Country Day School in Beverly Hills was among 160 students from 40 metro-area high schools to take the exam March 19 at the University of Michigan, Dearborn.

The exam was sponsored by the American Chemical Society Detroit Section.

Because he finished in the top 14, Clarke served as an alternate for the national testing April 23 at U-M, Dearborn.

MERIT SCHOLARSHIP

Jodi Wolford, a Farmington Harrison High School senior, was awarded a merit scholarship for the 1986-87 academic year at Madonna College, Livonia.

She was accepted into the business administration-management program.

EMPLOYEE APPOINTED

Effective April 14, Nancy Temple was appointed executive secretary to Michael Flanagan, Farmington Public Schools assistant superintendent for finance and services.

12 RETIRE

Twelve Farmington Public School employees' retirements were ac-

cepted by the board of education April 15.

Media specialist for Farmington High School, Marjorie Cramer will retire at the end of the school year. She has been with the district since 1957.

Donna Flehman, with the district since 1984, will retire in June. She is a second-grade teacher at Larkshire Elementary.

William Grace Elementary first grade teacher Ethel Heaton will also leave at the end of the school year. She has served the district since 1981.

Math teacher Carlin Lapinski, with the district since 1987, plans to retire in June. He teaches at Dunckel Middle School. Also from Dunckel, language teacher Ruth Levine plans a June retirement. She had been with the district since 1988.

Farmington High School English teacher Rita Pieron will leave at the end of the school year. She has been with the district since 1986.

Carol Smith, second-grade teacher at Larkshire Elementary, plans a June retirement. She has served the district since 1969.

Another second-grade teacher, Margaret Vaughn from Wood Creek Elementary, will leave at the end of this school year. She has been with the district since 1967.

Warner Middle School counselor Margaret Weber, hired in 1986, will retire in June.

In July, Ethel Begian, Eagle Elementary secretary; Lorraine Bretler, special education aide for Kenbrook Elementary; and Margery Nash, Warner Middle School secretary, will all retire.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS

Three students from Farmington Hills were recognized for outstanding scholastic achievement by their installation into the Cum Laude Society at Detroit Country Day School, Beverly Hills.

Scott Clarke and Nora Villamin are seniors. Daniel Hommes is a junior.

Senior society members must rank in the top 20 percent of their class over four years, juniors in the top 10 percent over three years.

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