



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMIEUX

Bottle throttle: Above, Carey Wehnmiller, recycling education coordinator with Waste Management, asks kids at Eagle Elementary about what number (on the bottom of bottles) can be recycled in Farmington and Farmington Hills. At right, "Cycler" is a robot which owes its existence to old newspapers, plastic bottles and tin cans.



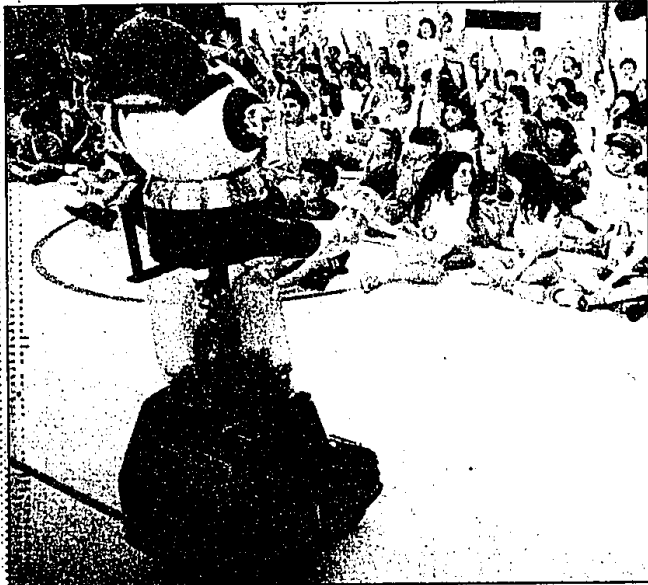
Kids dig into lesson: Don't trash recycling

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

When it comes to recycling, kids don't think it's a bunch of garbage. A recycling education coordinator from Waste Management of Michigan-Detroit North soon discovered she wasn't speaking to a landfill of empty minds at Eagle Elementary School. "They know a lot more than we realize," said Carey Wehnmiller, who provided some useful tips to Eagle students on recycling in an assembly May 23. "They're more aware than some adults. We go to the kids and then maybe they'll go home and say, 'Mom, in school today we had a great program on recycling.'" The kids-to-parents network appears to be working.

Eagle teacher Kristin Martin had her second-grade class working on a couple of ecology projects. One had students trying to bring a garbage-free lunch. Most passed, leaving the Hefty bag hollow and unfulfilled. Another exercise involved making their own landfill. Students buried paper wrappers, plastic utensils and other debris in dirt. Four weeks later, they dug up their mini landfill and found what disappeared and what didn't. The paper stuff was gone; plastics and tin foil were still around. "They're very excited about ecology," Martin said. "We try to make it practical for them and focus on areas where they can actually make a difference as second-graders."

"I've had parents tell me, 'I can't throw anything away now without looking it over to see if it could be reused or recycled.'" Who knows? Such a throwaway might later be used to construct a dancing and rapping robot. "Cycler" visited Eagle school along with Wehnmiller. The robot is made of old newspapers, bottles and tin cans. "Cycler" gave kids the low-down on the importance of recycling through a catchy rap number. "It was cute," said Eagle principal Susan Johnson. "The kids like it. There was a good instructional format, which allows kids to learn as well. I hope they can return." In the meantime, kids will likely be telling others to return it, reuse it or recycle it.



Scrap rap: "Cycler" entertains Eagle Elementary students with a rap number about the importance of recycling.

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