

Keeping up

Computers pop up in drafting

By Tom Baer
staff writer

To those who wonder where the computer will turn up next: Look in the drafting room at North Farmington High School.

The room still is filled with rows of drafting tables, each with its top tilted at an angle. The tools of the trade — the T-squares, triangles and compasses — are close at hand, as always.

But there've been some recent additions — three computer terminals and accompanying gear — and the new Apple IIe equipment is changing the way the students learn about drawing plans and figures.

Drafting students, using the electronic gadgetry, may do their drawing on the computer terminal and then obtain perfect printed reproductions by simply pushing a button.

Known as computer-assisted design, the system makes use of the terminals, graphics tablets and electronic pencils. Students simply use the pencils to draw the figures on the tablets.

The figures appear as green lines on the black screens. The drawings are printed (with a choice of six pencils and on various sizes of paper) with an instrument known as a plotter.

Computer-assisted design is being taught in a pilot program at North Farmington, "so that we can keep up with the technology," according to Earl Beaumont, director of vocational education for the Farmington Public Schools.

Similar, although much more sophisticated, systems have been used in American industry for about 10 years, he added.

DRAFTING TEACHER Ken Dean is keen on the "computerization" of the

subject he's taught since North Farmington opened in 1961.

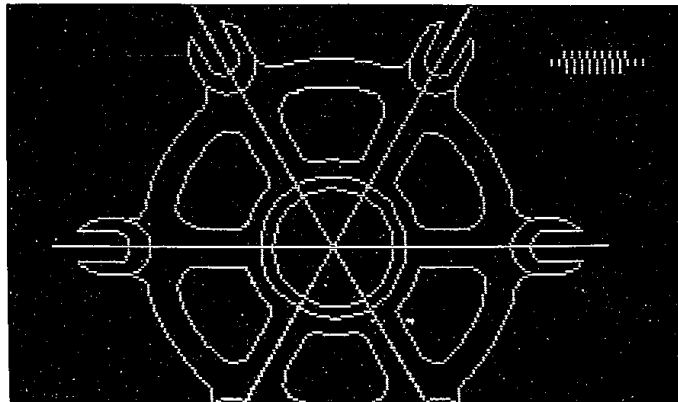
"It's better because it does things so much more quickly and so much more accurately," said Dean, in charge of the program at North.

Gone is the need for laborious hand copying of circles, squares, rectangles and the like on paper. Now that can be accomplished with a few strokes of the electronic pencil and a push of the right buttons.

The system makes use of a computer program provided by a company called Computervision, whose programs are widely used in American industry.

"Kids who get training in this program will have about a 40 percent chance of running into the same system again if they go into industry," Dean said. "But even if it's a different sys-

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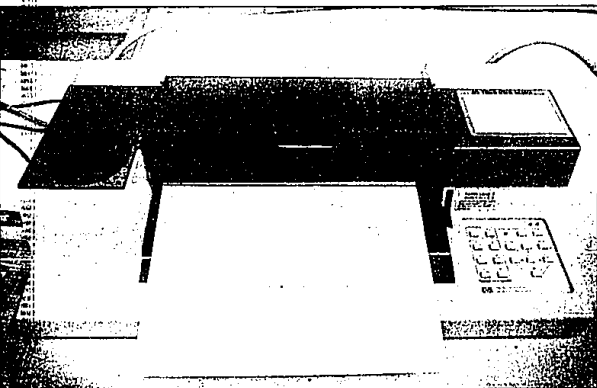


This is what a completed drawing looks like when displayed on the video monitor.

staff photos by RANDY BORST



North Farmington student Dale Elenbaas uses the Graphic Tablet, a pressure-sensitive device that tells the computer where to draw the lines.



The finished drawing is drawn by this machine which is hooked up to the computer.

Teachers back to basics

By Tori Banasz
staff writer

Hoover Elementary School teachers Ronnie Pobanz and Martha Trafford have gone back to teaching with the basics — and there hasn't been anything like it since Henry Ford, and they mean Henry Ford I, went to school.

In their respective first-and-second grade classrooms, the educators have brought together the use of modern technology like Apple II computers with the old-fashioned chalkboards, the kind used in the days of the one-room schoolhouse.

The daily scene of children scribbling on green-colored slates while other classmates type on their Apple IIs strikes a curious contrast.

What are slates doing in the classrooms of the '80s?

For Pobanz and Trafford, who introduced them in Hoover a few weeks ago, the old ways are indeed the best ways.

"THE IMMEDIATE feedback is what we're aiming for," said Pobanz. "We can tell right away if a child has grasped the concept. As soon as they're done writing the answer on the slate, they pick it up over their heads, and we can read the answer."

"What we're trying to do is get away from using so many dittos, when you go home, make corrections and show them to the kids the next day," Pobanz added.

Whether the students realize the slates teaching is significant is not all that important. What is important is that they enjoy using them.

"They like to use them all the time," said Trafford. "It's always been a favorite thing for the kids to write on the chalkboard."

Trafford came up with the idea of resurrecting the use of slates from an advertisement found in

"Instructor," a teachers' professional magazine. The teachers even considered using their own money to purchase the slates at \$1.59 each for their 47 students. Instead, the district bought 140 of them to use in six first and second grade classrooms after administrators were shown how the slates fit into what the district's teacher training program ITIP (Instructional Training in Practice) is promoting. Trafford and Pobanz, recent graduates of the teacher program, say what the slates can accomplish fit in rather nicely with things ITIP promotes, namely increasing classroom participation and reducing the preponderance of dittos.

THE TEACHERS say the slates are great for drilling and practicing lessons from math problems to spelling words. Since each child has a slate of his/her own, everyone gets the chance to respond to the teacher's in-class questions by simply raising the answers up over their heads.

There's also been a certain amount of play-time associated with the slates. Some of the students like to pair up to play teacher with one another and test each other's spelling words: Some like to write notes to one another.

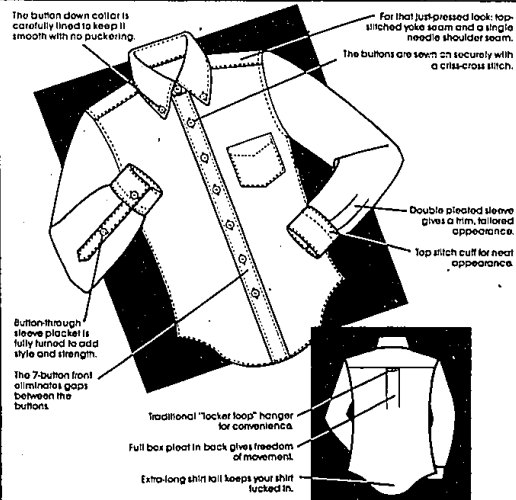
When the slates were first introduced, the children were thrilled to learn they were like the kind their great-grandparents used as children. The new models, though, are updated and now include dotted lines for use in math columns or handwriting practice.

"When we first brought them in, we told them to bring an old sock to school to use to erase with and store the sock in," said Trafford.

"One little girl put the sock on her left hand, and it's so cute when she does her math problems," Pobanz added. "You can see her little fingers counting up and down under that sock."

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