

These teachers rank at top of the class

She speaks languages kids learn fluently

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

East Middle School's Kristi Krupa is a foreign-language teacher who can walk the walk.

Recently named an Educator of the Year by the Michigan Foreign Language Association, Krupa believes in immersing herself and her students in the cultures behind the French and Spanish they learn in the classroom.

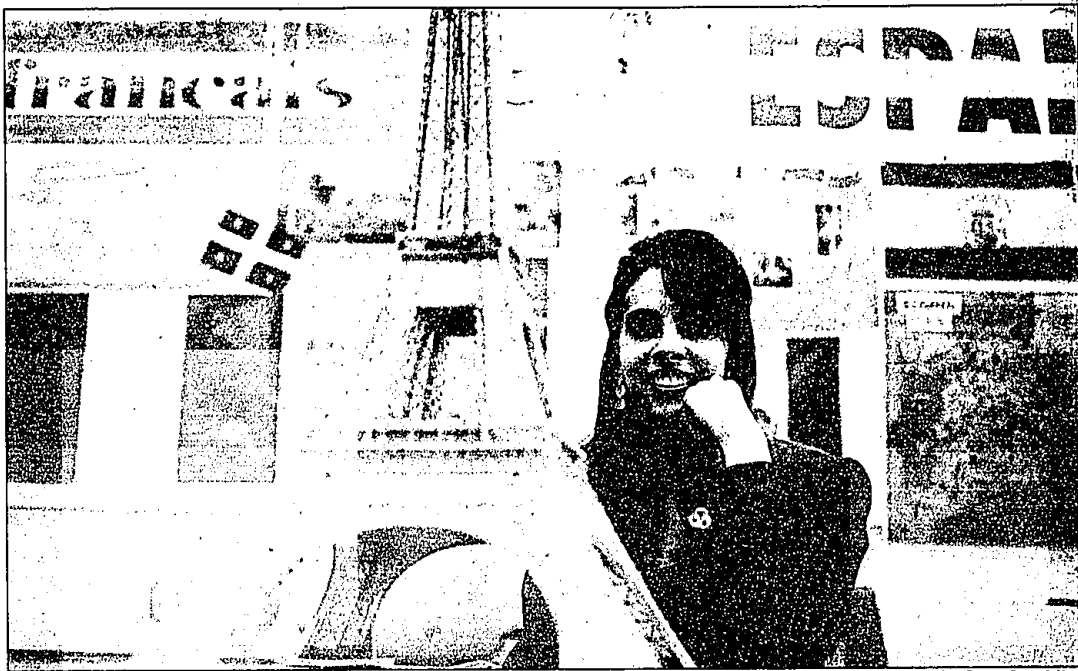
A former resident of France and Mexico, Krupa will head south of the border again next summer to complete her master's degree requirements and will be returning to Paris with some students as part of a foreign-exchange program.

"I don't really have a preference, one language over the other," said Krupa. "None of the stereotypes are true. People think that Spanish is so much easier or they have a negative impression of immigrants, and I saw something totally different in Mexico."

"It's the same with the French. I met lots of wonderful people when I was there. This program will dispel all of those myths firsthand, and that's the best way to learn."

"She's a really energetic, enthusiastic teacher," said East Principal Eugene Seaborn. "She's also involved with Global Village, a class which is a combination of foreign language, social studies and technology and contacts students all over the world. 'Kristi is an outstanding teacher, and someone we can always count on.'"

A Michigan State graduate, this is only Krupa's fifth year of teaching. She said it is rare for



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBERT

Tower of knowledge: Foreign Language Teacher of the Year Kristi Krupa believes students should immerse themselves in the culture as well as the language they're learning. Krupa teaches at East Middle School.

someone so new to win the Instructor of the Year award. "I'm still new at this," she observed. "I've had a lot of help, worked with some great people. I learn from my students, and will continue to learn from them."

Besides bringing the student to the culture instead of vice versa, another of Krupa's teach-

ing methods is Total Physical Response (TPR), a method developed in the '60s. TPR simulates the way in which children learn their first language, stressing comprehension instead of production.

Krupa doesn't subscribe to the sink-or-swim approach to foreign language, where the teacher

speaks nothing but that language to the class.

"In the beginning, kids don't understand," she explained.

"When babies learn how to speak, they don't learn how to conjugate verbs. They're listening and responding to commands. That's a more natural,

easy way for kids to learn. They figure the language out as a whole and then break it into its pieces."

Krupa believes that more and more foreign-language teachers will begin to move away from strictly textbook learning and embrace new teaching styles.

"Instead of just covering the material, they want kids to do something with the language."

Most adults tell me, 'Yeah, I had a foreign language and I can't remember a word of it, I can't say anything.' 'It's all in the approach that a teacher takes.'"

Biology instructor cuts at stereotypes

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

When it comes to dissecting an award, Ginny Lambert wants her recently bestowed biology teacher of the year title to prove a point.

National Association of Biology Teachers named Lambert the top educator in the state in that subject. The association recognizes a biology instructor in each state.

"The reason I did it is I want the public to see that teachers really do care," said Lambert, who has been teaching 28 years, "and that they really do work. 'We're always working to improve.'"

Parents, administrators and other teachers nominated Lambert. She hasn't sought accolades in the past, but feels teachers are too often made scapegoats by naysayers of public education.

Her Biology 1 class is delving into elements. Lambert asks the teens what holds them together and what releases them, folding her arms to her body and then letting them go outward. Body language provides the proper clue.

Lambert prefers hands-on teaching methods. She's developed these techniques at O.E. Dunckel Middle School, Farmington High and Power Middle School before she joined North Farmington 13 years ago.

"She's an absolutely outstanding teacher," said North Farmington Principal Deborah Clarke. "She's constantly researching her teaching techniques, her skills and strategies in the classroom."

"She truly models lifelong learning for all of her students."

Lambert teaches ninth grade to advanced biology classes. Students take part in two to three labs a week, which require considerable time to set up and supervise.

Lambert wants students to feel and see biological concepts rather than merely understanding their purpose. She manages to infuse technology into the subject as well.

Some of her students pursue careers in biology after college.

"I think by your own enthusiasm it helps them with their enthusiasm," Lambert said. "I



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBERT

Hand it to her: North Farmington's Ginny Lambert believes in the hands-on teaching approach.

love the subject."

Her teaching role goes beyond the classroom, Clarke said. During the summer, she works with other teachers in the Evolution and Nature of Science Institute program.

Lambert is the sophomore class sponsor and takes part in

after-school activities.

Clarke recalls seeing Lambert at the tail-end of the school's homecoming parade. The teacher was picking up litter as the school would stay on good terms with its neighbors.

"She's so deserving of the award," Clarke said.



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