

Professional passion

Teacher's zeal for computers, pupils earns national honors

By LARRY O'CONNOR

STAFF WRITER
After 30 years in one career, Helene Blackman is not bored—she's board certified.

The Eagle Elementary fourth-grade teacher is one of 135 educators in the country to receive certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Blackman earned hers in the area of Middle Childhood/Generalist.

For that, Blackman endured the year-long process that involves writing essays, putting together student work portfolios and videotaping her classroom performance.

"It helped me analyze my teaching," Blackman said. "My goal is to take these kids as far as they can go, realizing they all have different strengths."

"It was a lot of work, but it was worth it. It was a great honor to achieve this."

Professional Teaching Standards was formed in 1987, but started certifying educators in 1993-94. Since then, six Farmington schools teachers have earned the board's seal of approval.

Others include: Marilyn Greenstein; East Middle School; Barbara McCune, East Middle; Jill Fleming, High Meadow Common Campus; Rose Jakab, Cheryl Pelletier, and Margaret Price, all of Alameda Early Childhood Center.

Like those educators, Blackman shares a passion for her profession.

Blackman was instrumental in starting a computer lab at Eagle. She wrote grants and helped

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Sue Johnson
—principal, Eagle School

start the school's technology committee. "At the time when many colleagues were computer illiterate, Helene was one of our school's pioneers," Principal Sue Johnson said in a letter of recommendation.

"Rather than bask in the limelight of being one of the few teachers to embrace technology in her teaching, Helene set out to help others learn."

Her technology expertise is not limited to computers, though. Blackman wrote grants and was able to use AT&T Long Distance Learning Network for three years. She also allowed students to take virtual field trips to the Rift Valley in East Africa through Ted Turner's Learning Network through a

cable TV hook-up.

She started as speech pathologist in Southfield Public Schools in 1964 and joined Farmington schools in 1977 in the same role. She became a classroom teacher at Eagle in 1986.

As a speech pathologist, she worked at Fairview Early Childhood Center when K-12 Instruction Director Don Cowan was principal. As a prank, Cowan removed all the desks and chairs and placed old furniture inside her classroom.

The redecoration still draws a chuckle from Blackman, who stands 5-foot tall.

"I thought it was funny," she said.

The furniture mover is not surprised by her accreditation.

"That's just marvelous," Cowan said. "I know how much time and effort she put into it. I thought at the time she was going through this (certification process), how terrible it would be to go all through it and not get it."



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBLE

Newly certified: Eagle teacher Helene Blackman talks with her fourth graders, from left: Brendan Spiegel, Julie Moss, Jason Masters and Brian Goff.

While going through the certification process, Blackman said she was able to reflect on her teaching career. Her fourth grade class was particularly supportive during the process, she said.

Blackman recently completed her master's degree in Educational Administration at Michigan State University. She has a bachelor's degree from Wayne State University.

Her knowledge of computers appears matched only by a gigabyte of zeal.

"I love working with children," Blackman said. "I love to see their enthusiasm and I love to see them learn."

Computers from page A1

"Don't sell it on the sexiness of it; Don't sell it on the attributes."

"I think that is going to be the screen through which this passes — what benefits does it have for kids?"

The district's Internet project "Stepping into the Future with Technology," features a \$152,000 technology lab at O.E. Dunkel Middle School and a \$69,100 micro-computer physics lab at Harrison High in this year's

budget. Those projects only lay the foundation, Maxfield said.

The \$23 million proposed for technology would:

- Significantly increase the number of classroom computers. Though the four to eight computers per classroom figure given in a bit high, Maxfield said. A more realistic ratio is one computer for every four students.

- Allow for a fiber-optic network that would carry com-

pressed video images and speed up data transmission throughout the district.

Provide access to applied technology through modular computer work stations — like O.E. Dunkel's — at all middle schools and add micro-physics labs — like Harrison's — at all high schools. Such applied technology would simulate what students will likely face in the business world, Maxfield said.

To avoid having obsolete computer equipment, some school districts choose to lease. Farmington district looked into the possibility, Maxfield said.

"Some of those who have done it said, 'You know what? It doesn't work,'" Maxfield said. "The price for the leases are so high that you don't end up saving as

much as you thought you might have."

In the same district survey, 80 percent of respondents said they have home computers. That might lead some people to question adding more to the district's classrooms.

The reason has to do with more than access to a computer, Maxfield said.

"We're not teaching computers for the sake of teaching computers," he said. "They can learn that somewhere else."

"The computer is a tool for problem solving. The computer is a tool for self-expression. The answer isn't, 'It's good to have computers because you might need them sometime.'"

"It's the application."

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TROUBLE WALKING?

Articular of the knee or hip may be the reason you stumble while walking, fall after a minor slip, or find it difficult to arise from a chair or the commode.

However, a number of other medical conditions can cause the same problems. You could have a muscle condition that weakens the legs, or suffer from a poor blood supply to your legs.

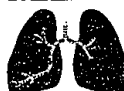
You could have heart or lung trouble that results in insufficient oxygenation to the tissues of your lower limbs.

Possibly previous illness caused you to stop the activities that give your leg muscles their tone. Often a doctor's examination will bring out or eliminate several of the possibilities mentioned above. Seeing if your hips, knees or ankles are swollen, and how well these joints move, is the best way to test if arthritis is present. X-rays assess the extent of joint deterioration.

Checking the arterial pulse of the arteries to your leg and foot gives a good estimate of the adequacy of blood to your lower limbs. Listening to your heart and lungs remains a basic way of determining the adequacy of these organs.

Medical attention to your difficulty walking, does not always require sophisticated technology and repeated trips to the hospital or doctor's office. Often a single visit will uncover the reason and suggest the treatment.

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Dentistry in the 90s

by Herbert M. Gardner, D.D.S. & Martha P. Zinderman, R.N., D.D.S.

SENSITIVE?

Teeth become sensitive when their top layers of enamel wear away or when gums recede to expose the roots. Either of these conditions can result in a sensation of cold or pressure-induced tooth pain that is usually sufficient enough to send people with sensitive teeth in search of a toothpaste specially formulated to combat sensitivity. According to a recent study published in the Journal of the American Dental Association, some products are better than others. The right week study involved patients with sensitive teeth who were asked to use one of three toothpastes that offer sensitivity protection or a standard toothpaste. At the end of the study, the patients were rated their sensitivity to cold.

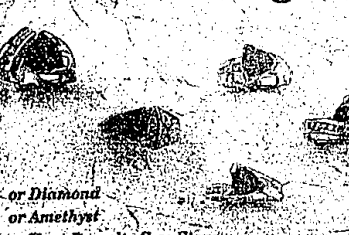


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