



Among the educators-turned students in the Farmington Public School District learning the ways of a computer in late August was Norm Dickson (left), assistant principal at North Farmington High



School. Leo Simmer (right), a special education teacher at East Middle School, works with Helene Bloch, a speech therapist.

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Educators tackle the ways of the computer

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

Teachers, teachers aides, administrators, school secretaries and some substitutes got back into the classroom early this fall for computer lessons.

"We offered every possible type of class, from just turn-on-the-machine to a special program for the administrators that would pertain only to them," said Lou Wickert, winding up her second summer as administrator of school for the teachers.

"Some were there for a brush-up and some for catch-up, but I don't think we'll ever catch up with high tech going at the rate it is. Now that we've started this I am sure we are going to have to get more sophisticated every year."

About 165 signed up for one or more of the 31 computer classes that were offered in the program, initiated and designed by Wickert and funded by the school district. The program, both in scope and number of participants, was about double of what it was last summer.

Overall, Wickert thought of the summer school for teachers as professional development, an enrichment for their professional lives and a necessary factor for pulling up a technical slack.

"Our average age is 50 now," she said. "With a declining enrollment we just don't have that new blood coming out of college every year. We just haven't hired any, or at most, very few teachers in the past three or four years, and we can't afford to let a 'so-what' stagnant attitude happen here."

THE EDUCATORS and staff who met in Warner Middle School for the past two weeks evoked a camaraderie that Wickert said "just wasn't there before."

She said, "There was a back-to-college spirit throughout the whole two weeks. Some goofing off, some helping one another, everyone very relaxed. We wound it up with everyone getting in on an evaluation."

And in true academic style, they staged a graduation with certificates handed out by members of the board of education."

The computer school for teachers is somewhat of a spinoff of Computer Camp for Kids Wickert started a couple of summers ago through the school district.

A media specialist who works out of East Middle School, Wickert learned about the ways of a computer during a sabbatical. While studying at Oakland University she became a teacher-in-service for Computer Mart. In that job she acted as a consultant to schools which had bought a computer and was on-call for any problems the purchaser might have.

The computer school for teachers came about when Wickert became aware "of the frustrations of so many that had no opportunity to learn," she said.

"Some (of the students) had access to a computer in their department that they never used or never used to its fullest degree. Some knew they will be getting a computer this year and want to be ready for it. Some knew how to use a computer but never had time to practice on it," she said.

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