

Let's cybertalk

On-line chat connects students with young Mexican friends

By TIM SHUTE
STAFF Writer
tshute@cc.ohio.com

Thanks to the wonders of cyberspace, Farmington elementary school students hooked up Tuesday, Feb. 1 with fourth graders at Lincoln School in Guadalajara, Mexico, for some chat chat.

Most of their computer dialogue focused on kid stuff, including MTV, pop star Ricky Martin, sports and fashion. "How much do jeans cost?" read one question.

But for a little while, the subject turned to politics.

Mexican student: "Who is the U.S. President?" read the on-line question viewed in the Eagle Elementary School media center and computer lab.

American student: "Bill Clinton, You Don't Want To Know Him."

Eagle students weren't the only ones in the Farmington district participating in the interactive hour-long program made possible by Farmington district resident and renowned chef Keith Fannie and coordinated by Curtis & Associates of Keego Harbor.

Beechview, Highmeadow, Lanigan, William Grace and Wooddale elementary schools also joined in, although some had trouble getting on-line for a while. Meanwhile, youngsters in the Birmingham and Troy school districts also communicated with Sonora Champion's fourth-grade class in Mexico.

One problem was that American schools such as Eagle had multiple computers from which students could pound out their pressing question or response to something already posted on the screen.

But at the bilingual Mexican school, there was only one available computer. As a result, many more entries from American kids



STAFF PHOTO BY HILL BEECKLER

The question is: During the recent cyberchat with children in a fourth-grade classroom in Guadalajara, Eagle Elementary School teacher Flora Chinchilla helps student Hannah Cohen phrase her question in Spanish, rather than English. Other schools in the Farmington district also participated.

made the screen than did those from their counterparts in Guadalajara.

"Once the kids figured it out, they got into it," said event spokeswoman Melinda Curtis of Curtis & Associates. "It's a different form of communication."

No passport needed

Kathy Nyberg, World Language coordinator for Farmington Public Schools, said the interactive program makes learning about other cultures more real and applicable than

reading about it, for example.

"They see that yes, there are people out there who are from a different culture and ... they're kids," Nyberg said. "It's kids talking to kids ... I think it's a win all the way around."

Nyberg listed the following Spanish teachers as being involved: Nancy Roma; Flora Chinchilla; Barrie Schoessl; and Jenny Seide.

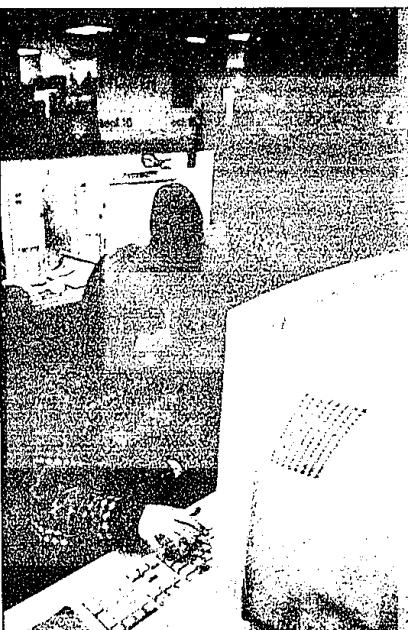
At Eagle, Chinchilla helped prep youngsters for the over-the-Internet program by wearing an authentic Mexican outfit and

bringing her passport.

"I wanted this to be as real an experience as can be, to make them feel like they're taking a trip to Mexico" without boarding an airplane, Chinchilla explained. "... They can see that these kids (in Mexico) are just like them."

Fannie's "Mexican Adventure 2000" web site (www.fannie.com) helped the students prepare for the chat.

The site contains recipes, educational features, a fully interactive



Interactive: Eagle Elementary media center technician Ann Marie Smith and student Jenny Abramoush converse with elementary school students in Mexico.

"Kid's Page" as well as the exploration of Mexican food, culture and traditions.

Carole Kersten, Eagle media

center specialist, said students were excited to be "able to participate in a cultural happening that's here and happening right now."

CAMPUS PIPELINE

STATE DEAN'S LIST

Jason Smith of Farmington Hills was named to the dean's list at Michigan State University following the fall semester.

U OF M GRAD

Bryna Podwoski received her bachelor of science degree in industrial & operations engineering from the University of Michigan in December. She is a 1996 graduate of Harrison High School in Farmington Hills and is now employed with Johnson Controls in Plymouth.

STUDYING ABROAD

Albion College's Rebecca Naglik is currently spending the semester studying at the University of Sussex in England as part of Albion College's off-campus programs. Naglik is a junior majoring in chemistry and the daughter of Raymond and Ocene Naglik of Farmington Hills.

HILLSDALE DEAN'S LIST

Andrea Delle-Monache and Jessica Jorissen were named to the dean's list at Hillsdale College. Delle-Monache is the daughter of John and Patricia Delle-Monache of Farmington Hills and Jorissen is the daughter of Jeff and Joanne Jorissen of Farmington Hills.

ALMA DEAN'S LIST

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