
Use of Microcomputers Growing in Edmonton Public Schools

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As we approach the 21st century, the computer's ubiquitous presence is increasingly pervasive. From the megabyte computers in Ottawa, which chart our life's progress from cradle to grave, to the hand-held calculator we use to check the cost of our groceries, computers will increasingly dominate all aspects of our lives.

Edmonton Public Schools have been responding to the ever-growing presence of computers. Recognizing that it is important to provide students with at least a beginning level of computer literacy, the Edmonton Public School Board initiated a pilot project involving the use of microcomputers.

The pilot project proceeded at three schools - Coronation Elementary School, Stratford Junior High School, and M.E. LaZerte Composite High School. At the elementary level, the project was designed to have students become familiar with the physical operation of a microcomputer, to assess the impact of computers on achievement, to investigate the feasibility and impact of computer-managed in-

struction, and to use the computer to aid the teaching process.

At the junior high school level, the project was designed so that students will understand what computers are, how they work and how they are classified, know the historical development of computers, gain awareness of current and future uses of computers, and appreciate the dynamic nature of the interaction process with computers. Students at this level also learn how to apply the method of flowcharting toward the logical solutions of problems, acquire a basic understanding of the language of programming, and transcribe a flowchart into a functional computer program.

At the senior high school level, the project encouraged teachers to investigate the diversity of applications of microcomputers, to enhance the teaching-learning process through dynamic computer-aided learning, to provide instruction in BASIC (the nearly universal language of microcomputers), to provide instruction in a second interactive language of programming (PASCAL), and to teach the use of computer graphics.

The project is currently being evaluated, and provisional examinations indicate that it has been very successful. In the project schools, both staff and student interest is high. The use of microcomputers in Edmonton Public Schools is growing at a tremendous rate. In September 1980, 19 microcomputers were in use. In March 1981, the number had grown to

43, and by September 1981, projections show that 131 microcomputers will be in use in a variety of situations.

In this rapidly expanding area, Edmonton Public Schools leads the way in providing students with access to microcomputers. We are busy preparing our students today for the exciting world of tomorrow.