Instructional Use of Microcomputers in Red Deer Schools

by
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With substantial financial assistance from the local "Alberta 75th Anniversary" committee, the Red Deer Public School District's microcomputer projects now involve 36 APPLEs, seven PETs, four TRS-80s, and associated peripherals.

From the outset, the purchase of hardware, software, courseware, the maintenance of hardware, and the planning for inservice sessions as well as subsequent support for teachers have been centrally coordinated. Due to the initially low level of expertise with computers and a lack of knowledge regarding instructional computing, both locally and provincially, the Red Deer Public School system decided to become an institutional member of the Minnesota Educational Computing Consortium, a decision which has not been regretted.

All of the Red Deer micros are totally devoted to instructional computing. The new DEC 2020 is designed to meet the school system's administrative needs although Computing Science 30 students will have some access to the mainframe beginning September 1982.

The following is a brief indication of the distribution and the instructional use of the Red Deer microcomputers.

Elementary Schools

Two APPLEs, (48k, dual disk drives, printer) mounted on mobile carts, are used to support regular instruction in mathematics. One of these two APPLEs is also used with resource room students to remediate student weaknesses in mathematics and language arts. A third APPLE system is used exclusively with special education students.

Junior High Schools

Effective this fall, each school has four APPLEs available for the duration of the school year. The primary purpose is to teach a system-wide computer literacy course to all students in the Grade 8 and 9 mathematics classes and to meet some of the "NCTM Recommendations for the 1980s." All junior high teachers will also have access to a sophisticated "Class Records" program. This program was written by a local teacher and is designed to manage class lists, student

biographical data, attendance, and marks. The four TRS-80s are used by one junior high school for remedial math and language arts.

Senior High Schools

A total of 11 APPLEs and seven PETs are located in the system's only high school. Last year, a microcomputer lab was established containing ten APPLEs and five PETs in order to teach Computing Science 30, Data Processing 20, the "Challenge Program" for gifted Grade 4 and 5 students, and in order to support instruction in mathematics and science (although currently on a limited basis). This facility is also heavily used for after-school teacher inservice, a microcomputer course sponsored by the University of Alberta, and evening courses for the public. The remaining two PETs are currently used for word processing by the business-education department.

For the 1981-82 school year, the intent is basically to continue working in areas described above in order to gain badly needed experience in the instructional use of microcomputers. This experience, together with some leadership and direction from Alberta Education, is essential before considering expansion or redirection of the instructional use of microcomputers in Red Deer classrooms.