

At Welty, education keeps on in summer

Computer links class to world

By MARY KROCKER 15-6-94

School's out for most kids, but students in Ann Stein's "Classroom Extension" program at New Philadelphia Welty Middle School still are eager to get to class on Tuesdays.

In fact, they can't wait to see their old friends Ira, Sadie, Oscar, Amelia and Reba McIntosh - the names of the five computers used in their classroom. Each computer has a different name and different capabilities, Stein said.

"I like to come in to check my mail," explained 8th-grader Mindy Alpeter.

Actually the mail is "E-mail" - or replies the gifted students receive via computer from students in Australia. Through FreeNet, sponsored by Case Western University at Cleveland, the students are communicating with students at Unley High in Adelaide.

"It's like writing a letter," said 8th-grader Kristen Matter as she attempted to go on-line to communicate with her Australian friend, Esther Douglas.

"It takes about 10 minutes to write and send a message. "Esther told me she is in her ninth year of school, has an older brother, a dog and four budgies which I think are parakeets."

The students also are participating in a challenging contest - a scavenger hunt - with the Australian students.

Welty students, such as 7th - grader B.J. Hothem, study the 50 states, turn facts about them into clues and send them, via computer, to the Australian students.

"They'll research our clues and try to identify the states or cities," Stein said.

Sample clues have included the following "Was once the capitol of the United States, home of the Liberty Bell and located in Pennsylvania" and "location of the tallest skyscraper in the world, the Sears Tower, nicknamed the Windy City and located in the state of Illinois."

"This is common knowledge to us, but it will be hard to them to come up with the answers," said student Lissa Charnock.

To continue the ongoing scavenger hunt, their Australian friends will send back clues about their country. Corresponding with the students from "down under" is especially interesting, said, 8th-grader, John Hawkins, who has already received responses from four teenagers.

"They seem to do a lot more outdoor activities than we do," added Jonathan Septer. The Australian students have told about their love for surfing, -

mountain bike riding, canoeing, horseback riding, netball and rowing.

"They want to know about fashion, music and movies ... a lot of it is socializing," Larissa Domer explained.

Most of the students were surprised to learn the Australian students go to school throughout the year. Stein noted Unley High is for students in grades 8-13 and classes are in session for 10-week periods with brief breaks in between.

The Australian students' teacher, Louise Nordestgaard, claims two of her male students exaggerated their height in their correspondences. "I think they thought they might be a little more attractive to the cheer leaders in your class with the added height!" she said.

The Welty students earned money to finance the project by selling refreshments at basketball games and getting contributions from area businesses. Greg Kimble volunteered to get the computer operational for the program and maintain it.

Later this month, the class will be participating in a pilot program through a state computer project with seven other schools around the state. Students will be able to contact Yugoslavia and some schools in England.

"The students have a lot of fun," said Stein, "but I also see a lot of learning here."