



Photo by Elisabeth Podesta

Scott Dunlap gets into computer programming at the Hilton during College of Education's annual summer conference.

## Kids expand their minds with help of computers

By Steve Hooks  
Of the Emerald

A kid's favorite program may no longer be on Saturday morning television. It may be in his classroom's computer, if the annual College of Education's summer conference is any indication.

This year's conference, held Wednesday through Friday at the Eugene Hilton, focused on kids, computers and the classroom. The theme was computers as an extension of the mind.

"The computer can be considered an extension of the human mind roughly the same way as reading, writing and arithmetic," said University computer science Prof. David Moursund, the conference's keynote speaker.

"Kids' brain cells won't drop dead from disuse" if allowed to use computers and calculators in class, Moursund said.

Moursund, president of the International Council for Computers in Education, argued that computers are as much classroom tools as pencil and paper.

Moursund also edits and publishes "The Computing Teacher," a journal concerned with computers in elementary and secondary education.

"In just a very few minutes, a student can learn to use a computer well enough so that it makes a significant difference in the student's life," he said.

The conference featured many sessions on the hows, whys and whens of classroom computer use.

Educators noted for their research in computers in elementary and secondary schools covered topics such as home computer learning systems, computer use in the

early grades and "Creative Programming for Young Minds."

Conference-goers did not ignore the possible problems of using classroom computers.

As computers become "as familiar to American homes as a television," home units could be used as learning tools, making public schools less dominant in education, said conference coordinator Philip Piele.

Public schools will be pressured to adapt to the new technology or "become significantly changed as institutions," said Piele, who is director of the University's ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

Some negative consequences deal with economics, Piele said.

As more middle- and upper-class parents get home computers for home instruction, the parents might be "less and less inclined to support public schools through . . . taxation at more than a basic level," Piele said.

Moursund pointed out in his speech that not every school system will be able to afford classroom computers. The result would be inequalities in education with "the haves versus the have-nots," he said.

"The problem of isolation" could also harm children who rely too much on computers as a learning tool, Piele said.

"Look at video games," he added.

Meanwhile, young conference-goers, perhaps unaware of the computer's social consequences, eagerly seized the chance to switch roles and teach adult educators computer basics.

The computer language emphasized was LOGO, designed with youngsters in mind. LOGO uses graphics and even music as teaching aids.



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