

# High schoolers do their bit for computers

By **JOHN ACCOLA**  
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With all the seriousness of a college professor explaining the rudiments of a simple equation, 16-year-old Peter Bailey, a mathematical whiz kid from George Washington High School, took the visitor aside for a frank computer software assessment.

"I have learned linear programming, polynomial analysis and Gaussian reduction in computer math before I learned them in algebra, trigonometry or calculus," he said, tapping the space bar on his computer keyboard.

"This computer is a means to an end. I'm not dominated by it. Whatever I do, I have to understand first."

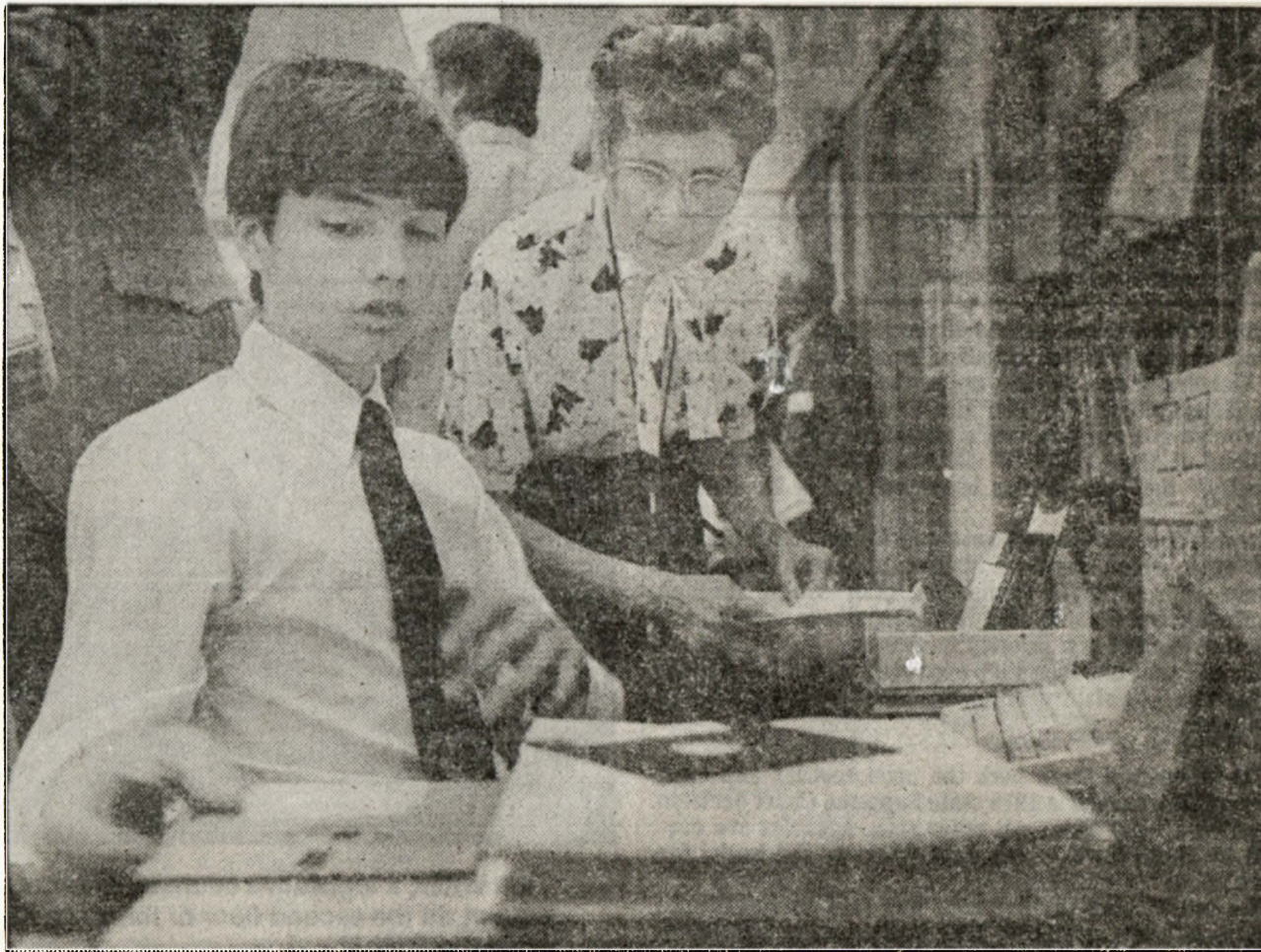
**BAILEY**, a Washington High junior, was one of the dozens of pupils on hand Thursday at the school's "Preservation of Excellence" computer exposition. Organized largely by Irwin Hoffman, director of the school's computer science department, the exposition attracted nearly 100 Colorado university officials, state educators and computer industry representatives, some from as far away as Atlanta and Houston.

The exposition's purpose was to demonstrate how the school's nationally acclaimed computer education courses are being applied to basic courses in mathematics, business and English, Hoffman said. More than a third of the school's 1,600 students are enrolled in some kind of computer curriculum, ranging from term paper writing to advanced accounting and developing computer software.

George Washington High, recognized in the early 1960s as the first public high school in the country to offer a computer curriculum, has 82 computer terminals available to its students. All the courses are electives and the school's two third-floor computer labs have become so popular that they remain open two and a half hours after classroom hours and sometimes on Saturday.

"**THIS BACK-TO-BASICS** movement is so strong people forget there are other aspects of education," Hoffman said. "We need to go back to the basics, but not with an Industrial Age model. We have to continue living in this century."

Bailey, one of Hoffman's prized students, may not be typical of 750 pupils enrolled in George Washington High's 14 computer education classes. But he certainly is one of the most enthusiastic, having accumulated a class portfolio that would impress math, political science and English teachers alike.



FRANK MURRAY/Rocky Mountain News

Peter Bailey, 16, a junior at George Washington High School, demonstrates the IBM Assistant series of software to Betty Kirbens, a records clerk at the school.

His latest project — a 22-page term paper on the problems of U.S. policies in Central America — represents 50 hours of homework, of which he estimates 20 hours were spent in front of a word processor.

The most devoted of Washington High's computer wizards use the computer courses for their own self-styled projects.

**ALAN GOLSTON**, a senior who plans to major in business at the University of Colorado, is enrolled in the school's technical writing course. His project entails a

research report on the United Bank of Denver, complete with graphs and charts.

Calvin Ma, a junior, is working on an analytical report on the types of students enrolled in computer courses. With the aid of a word processor, he recently authored an article on biorhythms in the January issue of "The Consortium."

A brief biography of some of the school's computer students asked Thursday's visitors to remind Calvin to talk slowly. "He thinks faster than he talks," it stated. "He has only been in the United States for five years. His native language is Chinese."