Training Newsbeat...

Children Study Computers At the "College For Kids"

KENTFIELD, Calif. – Quick, what would a one dollar investment be worth in five years if it earned six per cent interest compounded daily?

Solutions to this problem and others like it are being calculated this summer on an IBM computer programmed by a bunch of high-potential youngsters at the "College for Kids."

The computer workshop class and a dozen other courses ranging from astronomy to marine biology are offered under the special enrichment program at the College of Marin near San Francisco.

When the "College for Kids" was launched two years ago as a summer session experiment, it had a student body of 14 "undergraduates." Today, it's a year-round program with some 300 boys and girls, aged 5 to 16, enrolled for the 1974 summer quarter. More than 1,000 children will have the opportunity to participate during the 1974-75 academic year.

Thirteen-year-old Carolyn Deasy, a student in a computer class offered at the "College for Kids," experiments with the console of an IBM 1130 under the guidance of teacher Elaine Reber. By the end of the course, she'll be able to run it on her own.

The philosophy underlying the program is "enhancement, not advancement," according to Dr. Jared B. Sharon, head of the project, assistant dean of instruction at the College of Marin.

"Our program is not intended to advance a student beyond the grade to which he normally would be assigned, but rather to enrich his background," Dr. Sharon says. "Our central purpose is to make available unique learning experiences, such as working with computers, that any single school district could not provide by itself."

Students are nominated for the "College for Kids" program on the basis of criteria determined locally in each of Marin County's 12 school districts, and they do not have to be among the so-called "identified gifted." The typical student is a child of above average intelligence, generally with an intense interest in one of the courses being offered.

Other classes taught this summer include "The World of Invertebrates," "Creative Writing," "Video Workshop," "Speed Reading," "Mime" and a survey of fantasy and science fiction literature called "Aliens, Mutants, Robots and Ghosts." Among the courses offered last spring were "Biochemistry Inside and Outside Your Body" and "Reptiles: Past and Present."