

OEA member's book aims to simplify teaching tasks

OEA-R member **Bill Hazlett** retired from his public-school classroom in Vermilion several years ago. But he hasn't forgotten the nagging little challenges of his profession.

Teaching, he said, is burdened with tasks that could be made simpler by the use of computer technology—for instance, how to make charts, keep attendance, dash off mailing lists and calculate the costs and quantities of supplies for school purchase orders.

"There were forms for the eighth-graders recommending what courses they should take," he said. "And forms showing who returned what textbook and, if they had a fine, did they pay the fine?"

Hazlett, a former industrial arts and math teacher, helped write *Excel for Teachers*, published by Holy Macro! Books in Uniontown, Ohio. He and his fellow authors hope the guide to the popular Microsoft spreadsheet software tool will become the bible for those searching for a way to cope with daily management tasks.

The 236-page paperback is organized by topic, and each section is based on real-world examples that teachers encounter every day.

Hazlett, who now teaches developmental algebra at the University of Akron, authored sections on attendance chart tracking, creating lesson-plan sheets, checking a list for grading charts and evaluation forms, purchase requisitions and a method for randomly selecting a student to call on.

"One of the things that bothered me was that even though there was a big push for technology there never seemed to be enough time or money set aside for teacher in-service on how to access it as the timesaver it was meant to be," he said.

Hazlett fell into the book project last year while taking a one-day database brush-up seminar for the business community at the University of Akron. Trainer Bill Jelen said Hazlett stood out.

"He was pretty sharp," said Jelen. "We went through some charting tips and he was giving me answers. He was right there with me."

At lunch, said Jelen, "Bill mentioned he also is a teacher. I said, 'Hey, you would be really interested in this book project.'"

Hazlett was enthusiastic. He finally would get to help fellow teachers in an area most of them found confusing, and one he's been preaching about since the 1980s. That was when he got his Tandy 4P and spent hours figuring ways to standardize certain repetitive tasks. For instance, he figured out how to store student names so they could be printed for various purposes (even on envelopes for mailings).

He found a way to tell his computer which responses to include on a grade report.

"We had to give up to three comments per grade card," Hazlett said. "For example, 'missing too many classes,' 'teacher desires conference with parent,' 'student is disruptive,' 'student comes unprepared,' and 'student does excellent work.'"

He wrote commands, "if" statements, that counted the numbers of student behaviors (such as repeated absences or repeated As on assignments) and applied certain comments based on

the totals.

When Excel came out in 1987, it simplified things even more. The spreadsheet software includes point-and-click buttons that sort, arrange and count data and allow the user to write math formulas to calculate grade averages and percentages of students who pass exams.

Hazlett also created customized math worksheets, reordering the problems for each student to prevent cheating. He also made individualized progress reports by selecting each student's entire class record and printing it out.

"They had a copy of their test grades and could see how many assignments they had turned in," he said. "I also used it as a way to check my data entry skills. They were very good at finding mistakes."

Hazlett now wants to write an Excel book aimed at math teachers. "There are lots of applications," he said.

Excel for Teachers by Colleen Conmy, Bill Hazlett, Bill Jelen and Adrienne Soucy, is available for sale at www.mrexcel.com.

