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LOCAL: COMPUTERS IN HOMES

■ Andrew Bonallack

Seeing children learn computer skills quicker than their parents is probably a truth the world over, even when you've travelled half that world to learn it.

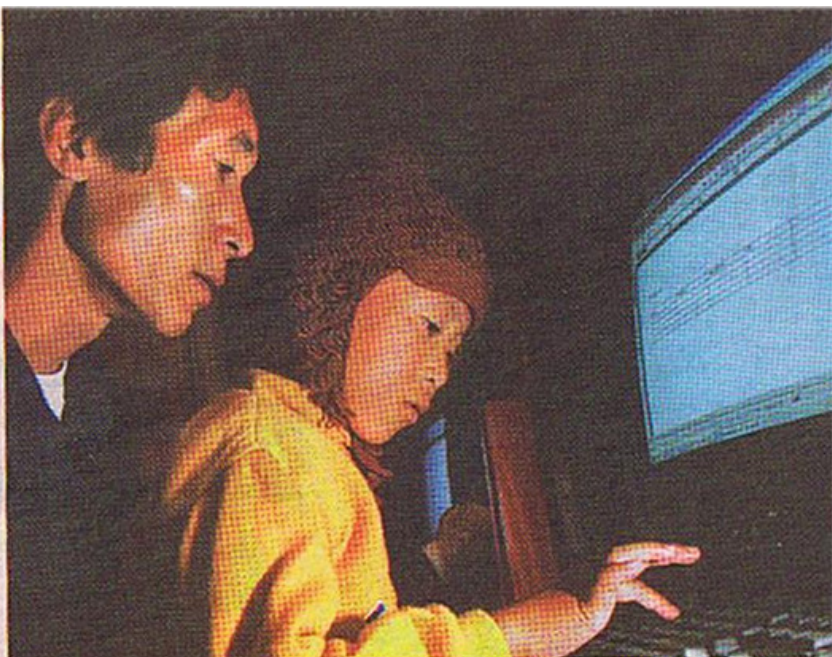
Members of the Burmese migrant community in Porirua have just completed an eight-week computers in homes programme organised by the Ministry of Education and e-learning Porirua.

E-learning project manager Michael Stevens says the Burmese families spent two evenings a week in a classroom above the Porirua RSA learning word processing, internet and email.

Mentors assisted, providing their email addresses so the students could practise sending and receiving emails via their new accounts.

He says that at the graduation on May 15, the 20/20 Communications Trust provided each family with a reconditioned computer. "The computers get delivered to the homes and a technician will install them and set up an internet account. They get free internet for six months and ongoing support for a year." He says the idea of the programme is to develop community capability and sustainability.

"It helps them integrate into New Zealand and access websites for job searches and get more integrated into the community. "Plus we don't want school-age children to be



NEW AGE: Mông Ngo, left, from Porirua East and son La mu, 8, create an address table for friends.

Photo: Andrew Bonallack

left behind. Homework is often set from the internet and they can get stuff off the internet. "Everything depends on getting access to technology."

He says many of the migrants have never touched a computer.

"However, the learning curve is dramatic, especially when the children help the parents.

"In fact, we find the children are the best tutors."

He says the computers in homes courses has been working in Porirua for six years and is funded from local trusts.

Mr Stevens, who used to work for a software

company, started as a volunteer and now it "consumes" him full-time, he says.

"We've got links with the marae and Pacific island groups and they send people along.

"The whole point of the scheme is to help families who don't have computers and there's a great need in the community."

Translator Titus Lian says the course is good education, especially for the children.

"We have never had this in Burma. Computers were just for rich families."

■ For more information about e-learning Porirua go to www.e-learning.org.nz