

Go virtually anywhere

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Lions, tigers and bears?

No. Snakes, spiders and reptiles were the topic of discussion for third and fourth graders at Hubbard Lake Elementary School on Tuesday.

Students were able to see — up close and personal — the teeth of a 25 pound American Alligator, the skin shed of

a snake that was taller than every student and probably teachers in the room and a couple of very large live snakes without actually leaving the safety of their own classroom.

The Hubbard Lake students went on a virtual field trip to Au Sable Primary School and were able to participate in a presentation called Outside Inside.

Alpena Public Schools, as part of a Technology Literacy Grant through the Alpena Montmorency Alcona Educational Service District, has the capability to bring virtual field trips directly into the classroom.

Previously, teachers had to

arrange to get their students into the Alpena Montmorency Alcona Educational Service District either through bussing or parent drivers.

Niki Crevier, third grade teacher at Hubbard Lake said this was so much easier that she plans to use it often. Last year, she took her students into the AMA-ESD office for a trip to the Columbus Zoo for a program on

manatees.

Gerald Krans, part of the technology team for the district said this was the first time the V-Brick was used in a class and it went pretty well.

"There's a wide variety of trips, related to curriculum, available," he said.

Many of the programs can be tailored to grade level and subject matter, Krans said.

The virtual field trips cost anywhere from being free to up to \$250, some are very flexible while others are rigid in their time and subject offerings. It all depends on who the presenter is.

Set-up takes only about 20

minutes said Mark Samp, director of information systems for Alpena Public Schools. It is a matter of hooking up a remote controlled camera, plugging in a computer monitor, microphone and the V-Brick transmitting box. The V-Brick allows the transmission of both audio and video information to be sent along telephone lines.

Students can not only travel to places like NASA, the Columbus Zoo, the Museum of Tolerance or an aquarium in California, they can do so interactively.

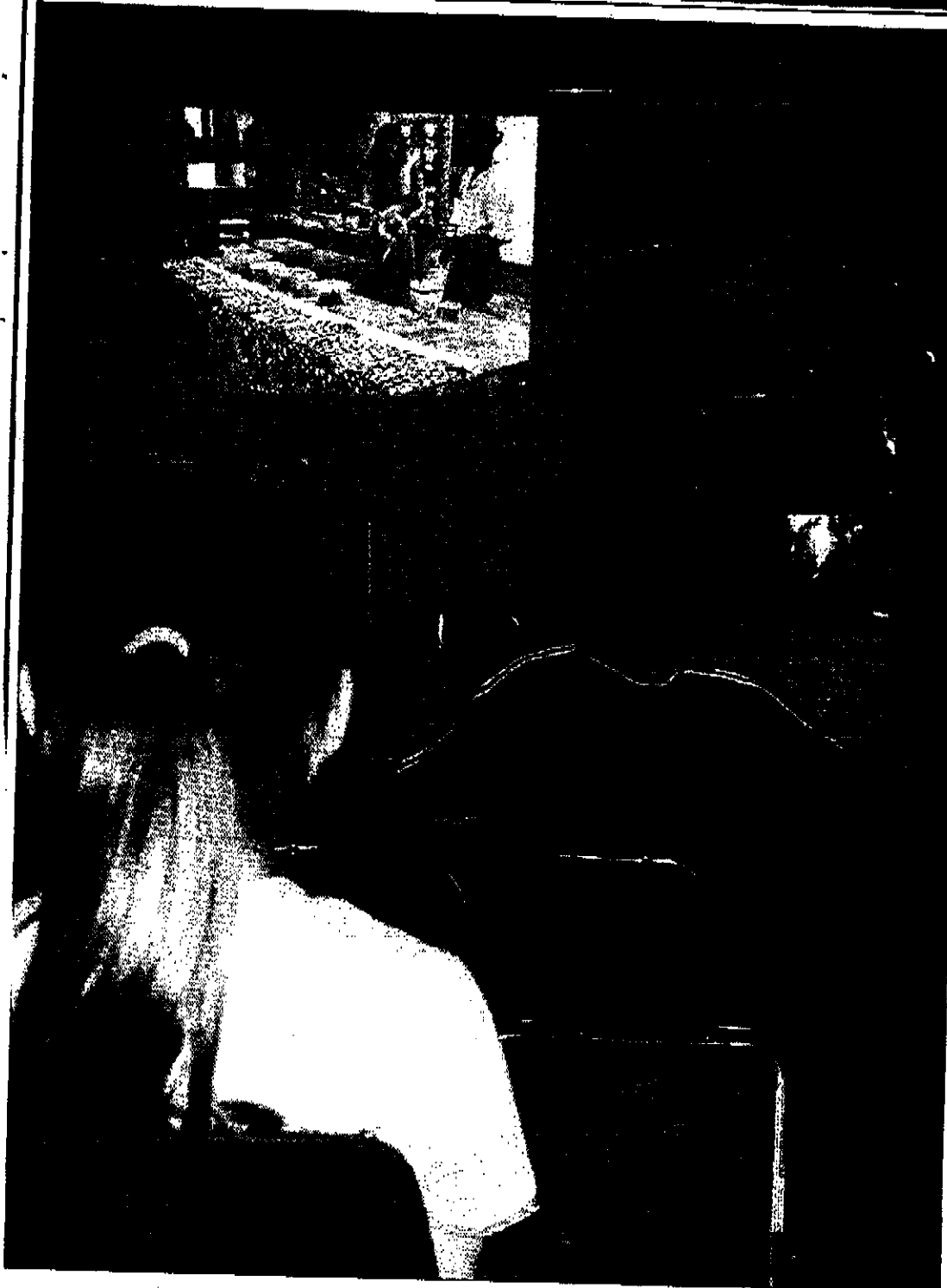
Through the V-Brick the audio and visual information travels both ways. With only the slightest bit of hesitation, conversations can be held almost as if all the participants were in the same room.

Because it is getting so late in the school year, many of the free programs have already been scheduled and are very busy, Krans said, so scheduling is beginning for next year already.

Today it's reptiles and arachnids from Midland, tomorrow who knows where students may "travel."

Alpena

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Students at Hubbard Lake Elementary School took a virtual field trip on Tuesday to Au Sable Primary School to learn about snakes, spiders and reptiles. Students watch a live presentation on the screen and are able to interact with the other class via camera and microphone located in the center of the room.

News Photo by Kerrie L. Miller