

# Device helps teachers be heard in classrooms

**Phonic Ear uses microphone hung from teachers' necks**

**By Sean LaFavor**  
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FARIBAULT — Julia Wanous doesn't like to raise her voice with her students, but with a classroom full of first-graders that get unruly from time to time, occasionally a little extra assertiveness is necessary to restore order.

Luckily, she doesn't necessarily have to yell to get their attention. Every classroom at Jefferson Elementary is equipped with a Phonic Ear system, which provides each teacher with a microphone to wear around their neck. It utilizes four speakers placed around the room that project the instructor's voice so everyone can hear clearly, no matter where their desk might be located — or how closely they're paying attention.

"I think it's useful," Wanous

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said. "Right now I have a cold, and if I had to be using my regular voice, I wouldn't have a voice."

Wanous said there have

been two years where she's lost her voice in October, a couple months into the school year, because she wasn't used to speaking in the summer then suddenly had to talk for hours every day.

"Now each child can hear clearly around the room, no matter what they're doing," she said.

"They've been a great addition to our classrooms. I know when I'm in the rooms observing, the difference is very noticeable," said Jefferson Elementary Principal Sharon Hull. "It's very clear and concise, and it keeps the students engaged."

The systems, which can also be connected to the television, VCR or DVD players in the classroom, were paid for by district technology dollars the school had left two years ago. Each school determines for it-

self how to use those dollars, and the Jefferson faculty elected for the Phonic Ear systems. There is also a system in the media center.

"There was one day where it was just absolutely off the wall here, and I had to bring my voice up to what I call my 'grumpy' voice, and they don't like the grumpy voice," Wanous said. "All I have to do is speak calmly, and they can still hear me and they know I mean business. I don't have to yell over their voices."

"Some people's voice just don't carry well, and my voice is one that doesn't," Hull said. "I've had many teachers say they're not as exhausted at the end of the day."

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First-grade teacher Bonnie Peterson uses her phonic ear microphone system in class on Friday afternoon. The microphone and speaker system helps teachers amplify their voices without too much strain and keeps students on task. (Jackson Forderer/Daily News)

