

Special Edition

A Newsletter to Parents and Staff

From Butler County School Board Council Special Education Program

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Andover USD 385 Augusta USD 402 Bluestem USD 205 Circle USD 375 Douglass USD 396 El Dorado USD 490 Flint Hills USD 492 Remington USD 206 Rose Hill USD 394

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Guided reading program increases reading speed

Many things can contribute to a student's success. A group of Douglass High School students attribute their reading improvement to the Reading Plus Program, a computer software program. One student said when he began the program he was reading 90 words per minute. When last tested he was reading 323 words per minute.

Mark Culbertson, Douglass High School senior, said of the Reading Plus Program, "It's helped me a lot. I'm reading a lot longer books now because I'm reading a lot faster. I'm not patient and it used to take too long to read books."

Mark, a student in Jolie Verbeck's classroom, uses the Guided Reading element of the Reading Plus Program twice a week.

He said, "I like the guided reading because it helps me track. I used to get lost in a story."

In guided reading, students read a short passage at a specified rate of words per minute. After reading the passage, the students answer 10 questions about what they have read.

"These questions test 25 major comprehension skills, including things like sequencing, drawing conclusions, identifying main idea, and recalling information and details. In addition each story in the program hits different skills, so we can choose the passages according to what skills the student needs to work on," Verbeck explained.

"The guided reading exercises are designed to help increase reading rate, so that at the high school level and college level, students can get all their reading done and at the same time have good comprehension and enjoyment in reading."

"Sometimes comprehension suffers if they read too fast. If students miss a question, they have to reread the passage."

The student is given immediate feedback on how well he

or she did on the test. The test report lists the percent of correct answers, how many times the student had to reread the passage, how long it took to read the story and the rate they read, or the words per minute.

The Reading Plus Program contains other elements in addition to the guided reading. One element is the computerized placement appraisal, which Verbeck administers to all her students in order to determine their reading level. This reading level is where the students start out in the guided reading program. Verbeck said if a student is placed on a level where they consistently earn 90 to 100 on the tests, then she moves the student to a higher level. She will drop a student to a lower reading level if he or she is having comprehension problems.

Verbeck said that although the program has exercises for students reading from the first grade to twelfth grade level, the topics or titles are of interest to secondary students. The program has 30 different topics for each reading level.

Another element of the Reading Plus Program is PAVE, a software program which is designed to increase visual memory and develop tracking and left-to-right eye movement.

"Vocabulary building is another aspect of this program," Verbeck said.

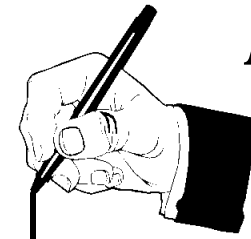
In one exercise, the student must fill in the blank in a sentence with a word that completes the sentence.

Mark said, "This used to be the hardest part for me. If I spell the word wrong, the program makes me redo it. This has helped me the most. It has also helped my typing a little."

Verbeck said, "Not all students think this is a great program. It isn't for everyone. Those students who see the value in it are the ones who see the most success."



Above, Douglass High School senior Mark Culbertson demonstrates how to use the Reading Plus Program. Reading Plus is a software program many Douglass High School students use to improve the speed of their reading, their visual memory or their eye movement skills.



*Direct Line
from the
Director*

*By Greg Buster,
Director of Special Education*

Technology Applications

We have recently provided inservice training to many of our staff members in the use of several computer programs that help students organize their thoughts and produce written material. The programs include *Co:Writer*, *Write:OutLoud* and *Inspiration*.

Co:Writer is the writing assistant with intelligent word prediction that helps struggling students build and write complete and correct sentences. It reduces the number of keystrokes needed to produce a word or sentence, so students aren't frustrated by writing.

As the student writes, *Co:Writer* uses its built-in intelligence to prompt the student with words that fit into the sentence. There are three dictionaries built into the program: 2,000 words for beginning writers, 10,000 words for intermediate writers and 40,000 words for students of all ability levels.

Writing with *Co:Writer* helps teach students many basic writing process concepts including, spelling, word decoding, simple sentence structure, contextual practice, and more complex sentence structure development.

Write:OutLoud is a talking word processor that encourages writing and reading. Students can listen letter by letter, word by word or sentence by sentence. The program has a talking spell checker that reads misspelled words in context and it provides auditory feedback, turning this word processor into a reading tool as well as a writing tool.

From a leading expert in student writing "The beauty of *Write:OutLoud* is that children can check to see if their text sounds right, providing them with a powerful and natural strategy for hearing where changes are needed. This can also be very motivating for children, as they can hear as well as see their accomplishments."

The final program, *Inspiration* is designed to help students develop their ideas and organize their thinking by allowing them to create pictures of their ideas or concepts in the form of diagrams. Users are encouraged to play with ideas, to arrange them and group them, and to find and correct any gaps that may exist.

Many types of visual diagrams can be created with the program, including concept maps, idea maps, webs and storyboards. Multiple tool bars allow students to point, click, type and edit, creating pleasing looking diagrams with ease.

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Free Developmental Screenings for Preschoolers

Count Your Kid In is a free developmental screening for infants and preschool children. The screenings are sponsored by the Butler County School Board Council Special Education Program and authorized by the Kansas State Department of Education.

The purpose is to help parents identify potential learning problems and find help. If your child has difficulty walking, talking, seeing, hearing, or learning please call the Special Education office at 322-4800 or 1-800-353-8561 to schedule a free appointment.

Following are some screening dates and locations during the next few months:

January 12 — El Dorado
February 9 — Whitewater
March 30 — Leon
April 6 — El Dorado
April 20 — Augusta



Above, Garfield Elementary students in Karen McNulty's class and Marci Walton's afternoon early childhood class release balloons on the school playground.

Bright Beginnings offers free therapies for infants and toddlers

"Sometimes I don't think anyone knows we're here. The children who do need services are not finding us," Susan Harsh, coordinator of Bright Beginnings, said.

Bright Beginnings is a federally funded program established in July, 1997. With offices in the Community Building located at 206 North Griffith in El Dorado, Bright Beginnings provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers throughout Butler County. At this time the program serves 47 children from birth to three years of age.

"I don't think we've scratched the surface. We aren't serving the children we could be, especially, in the Flinthills, Bluestem, Remington and Douglass areas. All children may be eligible.

"Our goal is not to get a child on and keep them forever. Our goal is to get them early and get them where they need to be developmentally through early intervention. For example, we put a child on in August and took him off in October because he had met all his goals."

Harsh explained that when children are initially referred to Bright Beginnings, they are tested in five areas — fine and gross motor, receptive and expressive language, cognition, self-help and social skills. She said children are offered services if they have a 25% developmental delay in one of these areas or 20% developmental delay in two of the areas. Bright Beginnings can provide 14 different services based on educational need.

She said, "Our early intervention services are play-based to make it functional for the family—so the family can take an active role. We work with the caregiver so they can work with the child. We provide our services in the least restrictive environment, wherever the child is during the day. This could be at home, in day care centers, at grandparents' houses, at laundromats, etc. We depend on the parents to help their children make developmental gains.

"Bright Beginnings is a service of Rainbows United of Wichita. We can access Rainbows' resources like a vision specialist, an infant health care specialist, and full audiological exams. Evaluations are free. All the therapies we provide are free. We don't access people's income information. We do access medical cards and medical insurance if parents allow it."

The Bright Beginnings staff currently includes a part-time physical therapist, a part-time occupational therapist, one full-time and one part-time speech therapist, an early childhood teacher and the program coordinator.

Harsh stresses the importance of early intervention. She noted a study that reports that children learn all the math skills they need by the time they are two years old.

Parents who have a concern about their infant or toddler's development, or who have questions about the program, can contact Bright Beginnings at (316) 320-1342 or toll free (800) 650-9260.

Garfield students launch balloons

October 30th turned out to be a great day for a balloon launch at Garfield Elementary in Augusta. The sky was clear and the wind was strong. The only glitch occurred when one student's balloon was temporarily stuck in a neighboring tree but it eventually caught in the wind and took off.

Karen McNulty's students as well as the afternoon early childhood class at Garfield took their balloons out to the playground and released them together. Attached to the balloons were cards listing the child's name and Garfield Elementary's name, address and phone number.

The card also contained a message asking the finder to call or drop a note to the school letting the students know where the balloon was found. McNulty said the first balloon was found in Platte

City, Missouri four days after the launch.

"The students were real excited when they heard a balloon was found. They wanted to see where Platte City is located on a map," she said.

"Leading up to the balloon launch we talked about measurement and distance in our classroom and looked at maps of Kansas. This will be an ongoing project as we get letters and calls from people who find the balloons."

McNulty also used this project as an exercise in making predictions. She asked her students to make guesses about where their balloons might go.

"Most of the students guessed their balloon would be found within 40 miles of the school. One student said his guess would depend on which way the wind was blowing. So he made four guesses," she said.

Happy Holidays from the Butler County Special Education Cooperative

Special Edition

The newsletter *Special Edition*, from the Butler County School Board Council Special Education Program, is intended to provide information to parents and staff about special education activities and classrooms throughout the county.

Special Edition is published semi-annually by Butler County School Board Council, USD 490 Director of Information, Jacalyn Clark. BCSBC Special Education Program, 124 West Central Avenue, El Dorado, KS 67042, (316) 322-4800.

Greg Buster, Director

Karen Wright, Assistant Director

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Pictured above are Andover Sunflower Elementary fifth grader Mikki Hebert and Sunflower teacher Karla King.

Andover elementary student featured on ABC news magazine

At age 11, Andover fifth grader Mikki Hebert is an expert on washers and dryers and he loves car washes and sprinklers. He makes detailed drawings of washers and dryers and has built a model of a downtown business district at his home. He said he wants to be an architect when he grows up.

Mikki was featured on the ABC news magazine, 20/20, earlier this fall. The producers came to Andover, KS and filmed segments at Sunflower Elementary and at Mikki's home. They also drove Mikki through a local car wash.

"We got to go through five times and we didn't have to pay!" Mikki said.

The news story was about children who have Asperger Syndrome, a high functioning form of autism. Children with Asperger Syndrome display some form of fixation.

"Mikki showed an interest in washers and dryers as soon as he could talk," Joan Hebert, Mikki's mother, said. "His fixation includes drawing. He started drawing washers and dryers when he was two years old. A fixation is part of Asperger Syndrome. These children don't want to stop. Mikki is very happy with his love of the machines. Medication helps quite a bit. Eventually he will learn how to fit in socially. He's had to learn how to keep it

in proper perspective as he gets older. He sees nothing odd or eccentric about it (his fixation)."

One of Mikki's teachers at Sunflower Elementary, Karla King, pointed out his exceptional artistic ability. She said he makes blueprints and diagrams of houses and he has made cardboard models of his favorite washer and dryer, the Kenmore 1981 model.

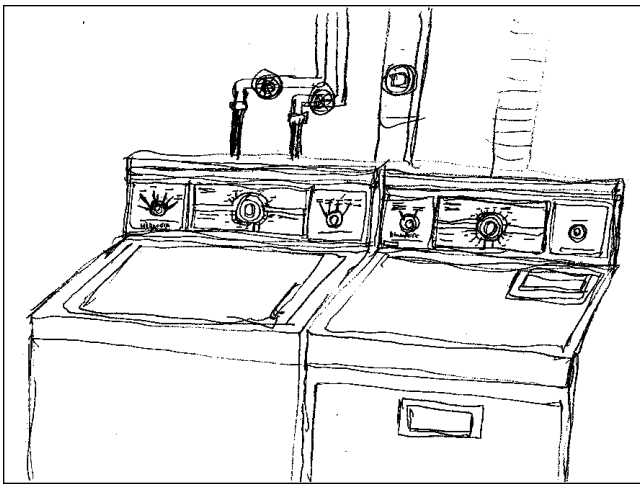
A Wichita Sears store gave Mikki a new washer and dryer of his own. Mikki said he once charged his sister \$5 to do her laundry in his machines.

King explained that

Mikki is part of the mentoring program at Sunflower. She said his mentoring duties include cleaning the teacher's lounge and running the dishwasher.

"He also takes the towels from the school kitchen home and washes them for us," King said.

Mrs. Hebert said Mikki has a tough time learning by traditional methods and she is grateful that he has teachers in Andover who are willing to try different and innovative approaches.



Washer and Dryer by Mikki Hebert, Sunflower Elementary, Andover, KS.

Picture exchange system used to communicate

A four-year-old early childhood student at Rose Hill Primary is improving his communication skills by exchanging pictures of things for the items themselves. For example, if he wants scissors, chocolate milk or crayons he grabs a picture of these objects and gives them to his teacher or another student and he receives the object that he wants in exchange.

Brenda Vest, speech clinician at Rose Hill Primary, is using the program called Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) with her student as a way to get him to initiate communication with communication partners.

"The first phase of the program was to have someone help him grab a picture from the notebook and put that picture in my hand," Vest explained. "I started with an open hand, then later closed my hand so that he would stick it in my hand to get my attention. He moved through this phase pretty fast.

"The next phase was to distance myself from the notebook and him, to get the pictures from a greater distance so he would learn that we don't have to be sitting next to each other to communicate. We did this by moving our chairs around."

Vest said she is currently working in the third phase of the PECS program with her student. This phase is called Discrimination Training.

"This is the longest phase. Right now he doesn't know that the picture he is holding represents chocolate milk for instance. The discrimination training will help him discriminate or know that the picture does represent something like a napkin or spoon," she said.

"The other students have seen him using this program and when he was needing cuing at the beginning, they would help give him the cues. At snack time, a little boy sitting next to him

would hold a bag of chips and my student had to give his classmate a picture of chips.

"He has started talking a lot more since we've been using this approach. As soon as he is discriminating, his parents will use the picture exchange system at home with him. Using it at home will increase his spontaneous approach to people."

Vest said, "As my student continues in the PECS program, he will work on vocabulary expansions and start making sentences such as, 'I want the chips.'

"The picture exchange program is good for any child who is not communicating. The reason I like the program is it doesn't take away from the student learning to talk. It can eventually be phased out if the student is to that point."

Vest along with several other special education teachers in the Butler County Special Education Co-op attended a conference in Wichita this fall to learn how to implement the PECS program. Several teachers throughout the county are currently using it with one or more of their students who are non-verbal.

Deanna Crawford, speech clinician, and Jan Milbradt, early childhood teacher in Leon, use the picture exchange program three hours each day with a three-year-old boy who has autism. Crawford and Milbradt have been using the program for six weeks now. Their student is also in the discrimination phase.

"At snack time he gets a choice between two things and he can now take a picture and tell us which one he wants," Crawford said. "The picture exchange system is giving him a way to tell us what he wants. In addition, his parents are very involved and that is what makes it successful."

Special Families Lending Library Hours:
Tuesdays, 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. and by appointment —
(316) 320-8932 Lillian or (316) 752-3208 Katherine
The Lending Library is located at 605 N. Main, El Dorado
(south side of Ace Hardware).

The library is a source for assistive technology,
adaptive aids, games, gross motor items, wheelchairs,
language materials and visual aids.

The Butler County School
Board Council Special Education
office has moved to 124 West Central
Avenue in El Dorado. Phone
Number: (316) 322-4800.

**The next meeting
of the Butler
County School
Board Council will
be April 16
at El Dorado.**

Co-op welcomes new staff members

The Butler County Special Education Cooperative welcomes the following new staff members for the 2000-2001 school term:

- ▶ Adam Bancroft, BD teacher at El Dorado Middle School.
- ▶ Kenda Belknap, early childhood teacher at Ewalt Elementary in Augusta.
- ▶ Theresa Cheatham, hearing impaired teacher at Cottonwood Elementary in Andover.
- ▶ Ben Emerson, speech clinician at Washington Elementary in El Dorado and the Rosalia school district.
- ▶ Virginia Guerrero, speech clinician at Ewalt Elementary in Augusta.
- ▶ Alexa Harrelson, vocational coordinator for the county. Her office is located at Augusta High School.
- ▶ Jane Harwell, vocational coordinator for the county. Her office is located at Cottonwood Elementary in Andover.
- ▶ Melvina Jones, interrelated classroom teacher at Towanda Grade School.
- ▶ Mary Maloney, interrelated classroom teacher at Benton Grade School.
- ▶ Denise McDonald, interrelated classroom teacher at Rose Hill Middle School.
- ▶ Deana Mercer, interrelated classroom teacher at Meadowlark Elementary in Andover.
- ▶ Thomas Mierau, psychologist for the Remington district, Washington Elementary in El Dorado and Andover Middle School.
- ▶ Carol Moore, LD teacher at Skelly Elementary in El Dorado.
- ▶ Gayle Oaks, interrelated classroom teacher at Benton Grade School.
- ▶ Kristi Pugh, interrelated classroom teacher at Rose Hill Primary.
- ▶ Julie Watkins, psychologist for the El Dorado school district.
- ▶ Stacey Scribner, interrelated classroom teacher at Haverhill Elementary.
- ▶ Rhonda Scoggins, speech clinician at Garfield Elementary in Augusta.
- ▶ Janice Tucker, occupational therapist for Butler County.
- ▶ Brenda Vest, speech clinician for the Rose Hill school district.
- ▶ Lora Voth, speech clinician at Lincoln Elementary in Augusta.
-
- ▶ Mary Good, an LD teacher, transferred from Towanda Grade School to Jefferson Elementary in El Dorado.
- ▶ Anna Cox, an LD teacher, transferred from Andover High School to Augusta High School.
- ▶ Chris Diller, an interrelated classroom teacher, transferred from Rose Hill High School to Andover High School.
-
- ▶ Brandy Underwood, TMH teacher, Karla King, interrelated classroom teacher, Sheri McCoy, speech clinician, and Julie Fisher, school psychologist, transferred to Sunflower Elementary in Andover when this new school opened September 5, 2000.

"Knowledge is power, but enthusiasm pulls the switch."

—Ivorn Ball

Direct Line

Continued from page 1

Inspiration also provides an outlining section to help students develop their ideas into organized written documents. In this section, or 'view,' users input and edit as with word processing programs. Because the program is fully integrated, users can switch between 'views,' converting diagrams to outlines, and outlines to diagrams.

These are but a few examples of the many programs and techniques our teachers use to assist students in becoming independent, productive learners. Our teachers are very excited about introducing these powerful learning tools to their students.

Below, Kristin Wiebe (standing at right) conducts an inservice for county teachers over the software programs: *Co:Writer*, *Write: OutLoud* and *Inspiration*.



Prospect greenhouse reconstructed after wind storm destroys first building

The greenhouse located at Prospect Special Day School was destroyed by straight line wind late last school year. The students had sold most of their plants and cuttings prior to the storm (making a profit of approximately \$150).

The new greenhouse is almost ready for use with the heater being installed last weekend. This greenhouse is 24' x 36' with an all-steel frame covered with insulated plastic panels. The finishing touches will be added in the next two weeks and the greenhouse will be ready for student use early in January. The students already have cuttings in pots in the classroom awaiting the opening of the new greenhouse when the plants will be transferred to the greenhouse. Jeanne Britt, the paraeducator at Prospect who coordinates the greenhouse project, said the students are excited to get started working in the greenhouse again.