

Special Edition

A Newsletter to Parents and Staff

From Butler County School Board Council Special Education Program

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Winter 2002

Andover USD 385

Augusta USD 402

Bluestem USD 205

Circle USD 375

Douglass USD 396

El Dorado USD 490

Flinthills USD 492

Remington USD 206

Rose Hill USD 394

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“Catching” on!

County students use exercise program to improve concentration

Many Butler County teachers and students have embraced the exciting and innovative exercise program Bal-A-Vis-X, developed by Wichita school teacher Bill Hubert. Bal-A-Vis-X, pronounced bala-viz-ecks, is short for Balance, Auditory and Visual Exercises.

Hubert bases Bal-A-Vis-X on educational kinesiology—the idea that movement is key to learning. Students perform ball or bean bag exercises “to integrate students’ minds and bodies, sparking both sides of their brains increasing academic performance.” Exercises include bouncing different colored balls—left hand to right, right hand to left. Some students bounce the balls in pairs; others bounce the balls while standing on a balance board.

The rhythm of bouncing, catching and clapping in sequence is at the core of this program. The exercises develop coordination while students keep their eyes and ears focused on the “big picture.” Hubert says that every student who finishes a year of Bal-A-Vis-X improves in reading, math, spelling, etc., including classroom behavior.

Deana Waltrip, interrelated classroom teacher at Meadowlark Elementary in Andover, said she has seen results in her students who are using this program. She said she had one student who could not read at all and who could not retain math facts. That student is now able to do both.

She said, “The biggest result, how-

ever, is the change in behavior. The students learn to do something together, helping each other. If students drop their balls, other students will get the balls for them. All the students get along well when they do this program. They have no problems following directions when they are bouncing the balls.”

Waltrip, who attended one of Hubert’s training sessions a year ago, implemented the program in her classroom immediately after the training.

She said that it is difficult to do bouncing exercises with a large group of her students at one time because they are all at different skill levels. (She has students in kindergarten through fifth grade in her room.) She said her highest-skilled students right now can bounce and catch two balls with partners. Waltrip moves her students up to working in pairs once they have mastered a skill individually.

“Students use the balance boards to do their spelling, to read sight words—almost any activity where they don’t have to write,” she said. “My students get more answers right while standing on the balance board.”

She said that standing on the board helps her students focus their nervous energy. That energy she says will all go into balancing on the board.

Brenda Clarkin, adaptive physical education teacher for the special education cooperative, also started using

the program a year ago.

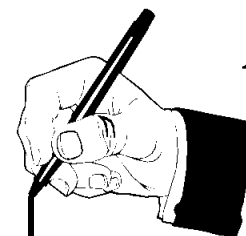
She said Bal-A-Vis-X takes a huge commitment of time to get started. A component of the program she uses with many of her students is called Brain Gym, a program of 26 physical activities developed more than three decades ago.

Clarkin equates Brain Gym exercises with trying to integrate the different areas of the brain by using touch techniques or movements that are cross lateral. (Laterality or having bilateral integration means the ability to cross the midline that separates the right side of the body from the left side — the right hemisphere of the brain from the left hemisphere.) Crossing legs and arms in a prescribed sequence is one Brain Gym exercise which helps students get refocused and ready to learn.

Clarkin said, “Crossing arms and legs causes a calming effect. Touching stimulates the electrical current in your body which focuses your attention and gives you the ability to concentrate better, to listen and to settle down. We can use the Brain Gym activities to unlock students when they get stuck. For instance, rubbing your ears, or putting on your listening ears, helps us concentrate more on listening.”

Clarkin has seen results with the Bal-A-Vis-X program. She said she

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Direct Line from the Director

By Karen Wright,
Assistant Director
of Special Education

Need for Paraeducators in Butler County Schools

Paraeducators are an integral component of our special education programs in Butler County. Butler County Special Education Cooperative employs nearly 260 paraeducators throughout the nine county school districts. Many of our students with special needs would not be able to achieve at their highest potential without the aid of these dedicated people.

Paraeducators’ duties range from teaching computer skills and aiding in algebra and geometry assignments, to assisting students who are unable to do school work or speak without assistance to be able to do these skills with assistance, to changing diapers on toddlers.

After employment paras participate in an initial two-hour inservice training session. This inservice is designed to teach paras basic skills such as working with special needs students in an inclusive setting, and how to handle situations involving bloodborne pathogens, as well as the general duties of a special education paraeducator working with students with special needs.

Some paraeducators receive specialized inservice training on how to work with students with autism, how to work with students who are physically impaired, or how to work with students with behavioral or emotional concerns. Some paras also work with high school age students at on-the-job training sites and with these students’ work release employers.

Paraeducators should have a high school diploma, or the equivalency, be able to work well with students with special needs and be able to work well and accept supervision from adults in a school setting. An effective paraeducator should possess flexibility, patience and be self-motivated. A genuine interest in working with students with special needs and some knowledge of basic academic skills would be a plus.

Interested individuals should contact Butler County Special Education, 124 W. Central, El Dorado, Kansas, 67042, or call for an application (316) 322-4800. Individuals may also apply for any position on-line at www.bcsbc.org.



At left, three Andover Meadowlark Elementary students demonstrate one of the exercises which is part of the Bal-A-Vis-X program.

Some students may bounce up to four balls at a time while balancing on a balance board.

The pictured students are members of Deana Waltrip’s class at Meadowlark.

Alternative school moving to Prospect

ACE (Alternative Continuing Education) School will move to the Prospect School campus this spring. Prospect Special Day School is located five miles east of El Dorado on Bluestem Road. (ACE is currently located in a converted storefront on South Main in downtown El Dorado.)

ACE serves special education students from the nine school districts in Butler County who have been suspended from their home school due to drugs or weapons violations or felony charges at school or on school grounds. These students are suspended from their home school for 45 to 186 school days.

Two mobile units were purchased from the Andover Public School District last summer and will be moved to Prospect early this spring. Site preparation, including the installation of utilities lines and foundation work, has been ongoing since early fall.

ACE director Terry Gulick said she is looking forward to the move. She said the ACE program, which is in its fourth year of operation, has long since outgrown its present location.

"We will have two portables at Prospect; each of these buildings is larger than the building we are currently in," she said. "We're confined. There is a lot of invasion of personal space here."

Gulick said one of the portables will be used for classrooms. The other will house a computer lab and a conference area where students can meet with counselors, school psychologists, probation officers, etc.

ACE teacher Robert Land said, "Right now we don't have a kitchen, so we have no place to cook, wash dishes, etc. After the move we will share some facilities with the staff and students at Prospect. Our students and program, however, will continue to be separate and apart from the students and program at Prospect."

Land said ACE started the 2001-2002



Left to right, Jerry Clark, Greg Buster and Mitch Miller, pour cement in the footings for one of the mobile units which will be moved to the Prospect campus early this spring. (In the background is the northeast corner of Prospect School.) The mobile units will house ACE School which is currently located downtown El Dorado.

school year with eight students and is currently serving five students in sixth through twelfth grade. He said ACE has served about 50 students in the first four years of operation and out of those 50 students four have been girls.

Land said, "We've had two students graduate while attending ACE. Our students walk with their high school class if they have finished their suspension."

ACE operates from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. On Tuesdays and Thursdays paraeducator Tiffany Weber takes the students next door to work out with free weights at El Dorado Martial Arts. On Wednesdays, the students travel to the El Dorado Public Library.

"We use our own books but we abide by the student's specific plan making sure our curriculum meets their district's standards," Gulick explained.

"In addition, every student goes

through a social skills curriculum. We talk a lot about social skills because that is what got them in trouble at their home school, not academics.

"We have a really good group of students. They like that they know we trust them and they trust us because we follow through with what we tell them. We can demand more and they do it. They will work hard for us.

"In addition, we have a pretty close relationship with our students' parents," she continued. "We call the parents a lot to report the good things that happen."

Gulick and Land agreed that the students like the flexibility of their schedule at ACE. For example, they explained that if a student gets frustrated in biology, that student can go on to English and then come back to biology when he is ready.

Gulick said, "In the regular classroom they can't stop one subject and go to another because they are upset."

Gulick said that although they are looking forward to the move to Prospect, she is sad to be moving so far away from the community. Land, Gulick and Weber involve ACE students in a community service project each year. Gulick said they will be looking for a new service project once they move to the Prospect community.

Catching On!

(Continued from front page)

worked with a student who couldn't read an entire book and had difficulty writing essays before starting the program. This student is now checking out a library book every three days and independently writing essays.

Clarkin said, "I asked this student what has made the difference in reading. She said, 'I just understand it better—it flows better.' I think this is a program that truly has benefits if the teacher has time to dedicate to it. As the developer Bill Hubert says, 'The only children who can't learn this are the ones who refuse to.' I'm a true believer in the Bal-A-Vis-X program.

"The key to the whole program is the visual piece and the Brain Gym. That is what is unlocking them, allowing the program to be more successful and the students to coordinate eye/hand, ear/brain, etc. It helps them concentrate, sit still, develop rhythms and ends up helping with their self esteem," Clarkin said.

"Bal-A-Vis-X helps allow students to develop the weaker parts of their bodies. If they are dominantly left-handed, their right hand is going to improve because it has to keep up."

Waltrip and Clarkin have encouraged other teachers to implement the program. They would like to see the balance boards in the regular classrooms as well as the special education classrooms once these teachers have received Bal-A-Vis-X training.

Clarkin noted, "Without Greg Buster's (Director of Special Education) and Karen Wright's (Assistant Director of Special Education) commitment to this program, it wouldn't be as successful as it is."

Good named Outstanding Educator



Butler County Special Education Cooperative teacher Mary Good was named the 2001 Golden Apple Outstanding Educator presented through the El Dorado Chamber of Commerce Education Committee. Mary teaches kindergarten through fifth grade students at Jefferson Elementary. In her nomination Mary was described as "a unique, dedicated, enthusiastic, animated, energetic, intuitive and compassionate" educator whose "first priority is always each and every one of her students." Pictured above with Mary Good is a Jefferson fifth grader.

"Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends."

Benjamin Disraeli

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

Butler County School Board Council

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None at this time-Member	Gary McEachern	USD 205
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Vocational coordinators explain job responsibilities

Lorna Holmes, Sally Peterson and Jane Harwell have jobs they love. They are the vocational coordinators for the nine school districts in Butler County. Each believes the title Transition Coordinator better describes their position, however.

Their responsibilities include attending all IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings for all students in their assigned districts who are 14 and older, or in eighth grade through twelfth grade. Their role in the review of the student's educational plan is to help develop a plan for after high school.

"That's what we call transition," Harwell said. (Harwell serves Andover, Remington and Circle school districts.) "We look at what other services the students require. We help them find information and bring a different perspective from that of the school counselor."

Sally Peterson, vocational coordinator for Augusta, Rose Hill and Douglass school districts, said, "Transitioning students from high school to life, that's our job. We look at independent living skills, job readiness skills and future needs. We're resource people. If there is a need, we hook the student and the parent up with the community service that can help."

Harwell said, "We also help the student recognize what is in their IEP. By knowing what is in their educational plan, they can become advocates for themselves and be able to ask for help if they need it."

"Some students have greater needs and have to have help with living arrangements or guardianship after graduation."

Holmes, who serves students in the El Dorado, Bluestem and Flinthills districts, said, "Whatever we can do for our students while they are in school affects what they can do after graduation."

Holmes, Harwell and Peterson also coordinate the work experience program for their students.

Peterson explained, "The vocational work experience program is community-based, non-paid job training. We want to encourage all employers in Butler County to open their doors to our students. Everyone benefits from this program. The students are learning a skill which makes them more employable and the employers benefit from their interaction with and involvement with youth in their community."

Students participating in the work experience program receive school credit for the time on the job. The students are transported to the job site and most have a job coach (paraeducator) who is available to the student according to need.

"Most of our students look forward to going out to work. It really is a confidence

builder," Harwell said.

Peterson added, "We start at an earlier age to give them the training and the exposure to different job situations as well as careers available to them."

Peterson has 17 students placed in jobs at this time. Harwell has 34 students placed and Holmes has six students placed in jobs during school hours.

Harwell explained, "The vocational work experience program is not appropriate for all students. We don't want to disable those students who should and can do this on their own. Many special education students can get jobs on their own."

"Some of the students in the program continue to work for their employer after the work experience program is over. The students may not ask for employment but the employers can offer future employment to the students."

"The most demanding part of our job is coordinating the work release program—coordinating transportation, para coaches, employers, students' schedules, etc. Sometimes the placements have to be reworked. The para coaches help find what job situation best fits a student. The paras have more one-on-one experience with the students than we do," Harwell said.

"The students on work release are evaluated twice a semester by their employer. Occasionally some of the evaluations are done by the paras to help the para get a better idea of the employability of a student."

Peterson said, "The work release program can also be a very rewarding part of our job. I have had employers call and ask when they can get another student. One employer called me last week to say, 'This is the greatest program!'"

In addition to organizing the work release experience, the vocational coordinators take their students to career fairs, on college tours and set up job shadowing opportunities for the students. Job shadowing gives the student first-hand experience "shadowing" someone who has a job in which they have expressed an interest.

The coordinators also connect students to job readiness training programs. Students who take part in these programs usually have not participated in the work experience program during the school year.

Peterson said, "Out in the community things change. Government programs change constantly. We have to know the in's and out's. It is an evolving job."

Harwell concluded, "We're always seeking information and resources to help students and their parents. I've learned a lot. It's a great job—a great opportunity to be with students, administrators and teachers."



Members of the new Interpersonal Skills class at Douglass High School participate in an activity called Funky Dunk in which team members with one hand on a "noodle" raise a basketball off the floor and eventually dunk it in the goal.

Douglass HS class offers unique opportunity for student interaction with peers

"It's fun! We've learned how to work together and I've learned to communicate much better," junior Candice Godwin said of the Interpersonal Skills class offered for the first time this year at Douglass High School.

The Interpersonal Skills class, taught by resource room teacher Joli Verbeck, and paraeducators Peggy Hatmaker and Vicky Bergley, currently has 11 members—five mentors and six mentees. Verbeck said the role of the mentor in the class is to pair off with his/her mentee each day to talk about the specific social skill of the day.

Targeted social skills include such things as expressing empathy for others, understanding fear, staying calm under stress, making wise decisions, etc. Verbeck said the goal is that everyone improves communication, teamwork and models correct positive participation. Each day she has some sort of group-building activity during class.

She said, "The first thing we did was go to Mosey Outdoor Challenge Course near Valley Center as a team building/get acquainted activity. I wanted the mentors and mentees to get to know each other really fast because not all of them knew each other before this class."

Junior Jordan Foland said the trip to Mosey's is his favorite activity so far.

"It was pretty tough to get everyone to become a group and work as one. Everyone had to really listen and cooperate to do the events. The spiderweb (of bungee cords) was the most challenging because we had to use teamwork to

move someone with our hands across the top of the web without touching the bungee cords," Foland said.

Another activity the class took part in was financed through a grant from the Douglass Arts and Humanities Council. The students took photos capturing life in Douglass and submitted the photos to a Douglass Frontier Days contest. Two of Verbeck's students won first and second place in this contest.

Verbeck has also been awarded a grant for a horticultural therapy program. (Horticultural therapy is a process using plants, through which people receive social, psychological, physical and/or educational benefits.) The grant will provide plants, supplies and pay for the inservice by a horticultural therapist. Verbeck and her students hope to create a small garden area on the Douglass High School grounds.

Verbeck said this project will provide an opportunity for the students to work together to accomplish a goal with each student doing his or her part.

Her class has participated in fundraisers to raise money to help pay for the activities. They have operated concession stands at football games and sold donuts during school break time. Verbeck said these activities teach the students about budgeting money at the same time they learn how much these events cost.

Students are graded mainly on participation, but the students also work throughout the year on a portfolio showing photos and artwork of class activities.



The first field trip students in the Douglass High School Interpersonal Skills class took was to Mosey's Outdoor Challenge Center in north Wichita. At the center students worked on getting acquainted and working together as a team. Activities included the one at left where a student prepares to slide down a zip line 35 feet off the ground. One of the social skills reviewed in the class is overcoming fears.

Resource Fair for Parents

of high school students looking for services after high school

Monday, February 11, 2002; 7:00 p.m.
Andover High School Commons

Resources available at the Fair: Flinthills Services, ARC of Sedgwick County, Creative Community Living, an expert on Guardianship, an expert on Social Security and much more.

Horticultural therapy program includes new Serenity Garden

This year the students at Prospect Special Day School (El Dorado) are expanding their gardening/greenhouse project to include a Serenity Garden adjacent to the greenhouse and existing outdoor garden plot. The new garden is the brainchild of paraeducator Jeannie Britt.

Last fall Britt was aided by paraeducator Teresa Smith in getting the project going.

"The kids just love it out here," Smith said. "When they finish their work inside (in the classroom), they want to come out and work on the garden. They want to get it finished. The students removed all the rock from the area by the bucket, and filled holes in the driveway with the rock. It was a lot of work. In art class the students will make stepping stones for the garden. In addition, the students may build birdhouses and birdfeeders to put up in the garden. We want to make the garden a serene place to be."

Britt said a local contractor, Gary Harder, donated the top soil for the new garden. When the soil came in, the students helped rototill it and plant grasses, shrubs and perennials.

She said, "We salvaged bricks a couple years ago from the contractor of the El Dorado Civic Center. The students loaded the bricks up and delivered them to Prospect before they were taken to the landfill. The students made flower beds from the used bricks and may use the rest to make walkways. We eventually hope to have benches or a picnic table in the Serenity Garden. We may build them ourselves."

Britt took a class on horticultural therapy and believes what she learned in that class can help Prospect students. She likened it to starting a garden. She said when you start a garden, you clear the land and then plant rows. For the students, she explained, this is an opportunity to clear their slates and get their life in order.

She explained, "Each student at Prospect School has a task he is responsible for in the greenhouse or garden. When the students perform their duties and see the results, they feel good about themselves. Horticultural therapy teaches them to take possession of something and make it their own. It's amazing the difference in the students' behavior when they are working in the greenhouse or garden."

"When the Serenity Garden is finished, we will be able to send students out there to find peace and calm down so they can come back inside and participate fully in class," Britt said.



Above is the new Serenity Garden at Prospect School (rural El Dorado) before the topsoil was delivered and the grasses, shrubs and perennials were planted. Plans for the garden include brick pathways, benches, birdhouses and birdfeeders. Pictured are Prospect paraeducators Jeannie Britt (left) and Teresa Smith who helped the students create the garden.

Special Families Lending Library Hours:
Fridays, 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and by appointment —
(620) 752-3208, Katherine or (316) 321-3797, Michelle.
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.

Early childhood class coming to Towanda

Students in kindergarten through third grade at Towanda Grade School began class in their new school, Towanda Grade School Primary, January 22.

However one class, a new Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) class, will not relocate until the fall of 2002. At that time the Towanda Grade School Primary building will become a Pre-Kindergarten through third grade building. (The new building is located at 501 North Sixth in Towanda, about two blocks northeast of the original Towanda Grade School.)

Melissa Wells has been hired to teach the early childhood class in Towanda. She is getting a head start with the program this semester at Grandview Elementary in El Dorado. Wells graduated from Emporia State University in December. She did her student teaching in the kindergarten and second grade classes at Grandview last fall.

The ECSE program is temporarily located at Grandview because there was classroom space available in the mobile unit which also houses an early childhood class taught by Sandra McCuiston.

Wells said, "It's going great and I'm excited about the new students coming in the next few weeks. I'm ready to get the kids in. It's wonderful being next to Sandra. She's a great resource and I have been asking a lot of questions."

"There was a need for another early childhood program in the county because existing classes are full," Wells said. "I am located in El Dorado temporarily to get the ball rolling. My program will be

identical to Sandra's with four models per session. The role models are here to model social skills and appropriate behaviors."

Wells has five students at this time but anticipates a full morning class within the next few weeks. In Towanda next fall she will teach both a morning and afternoon early childhood class.

"When the program moves to Circle district, most of my students will reside in that district. The new classroom will be great because the room will be set up for pre-kindergarten students. It will have small toilets and kid-sized sinks. That's important because some of the early childhood students aren't potty trained. It will make it a lot easier for them."

ECSE students are between three and five years of age. They are identified for

the program based on need through Count Your Kid In clinics or are transitioned from the Rainbows United, Bright Beginnings or Head Start programs.

Towanda Grade School Principal Don Coffman said, "The early childhood program will be an exciting addition to our district."

Coffman is principal at both buildings on the Towanda Grade School campus, the primary building and the intermediate building. In regard to other special education programs in Towanda, he said Rita Johnson and her paraeducators will travel between the primary and intermediate buildings based on student needs. Lonnie Mills, a resource room teacher at Towanda Grade School Intermediate, will move to the new middle school in Benton next fall.

Pictured below are ECSE paraeducator Joan Barnes (left) and ECSE teacher Melissa Wells. Wells' early childhood classroom, which is presently located in a mobile unit at Grandview Elementary in El Dorado, will move to the new Towanda Grade School Primary building next fall.



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 25—Towanda
 February 8—Whitewater
 February 22—Rose Hill
 March 8—Leon
 April 5—El Dorado
 April 19—Augusta

