

Special Edition

A Newsletter to Parents and Staff

From Butler County School Board Council Special Education Program

Volume 15 Issue 1

Autumn 2002

Andover USD 385

Augusta USD 402

Bluestem USD 205

Circle USD 375

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Everything's new in the early childhood classroom at Towanda

Sharon Bane's classroom is the first early childhood special education (ECSE) program located in the Circle school district. In addition, this is Bane's first year teaching. So it is fitting that the new program is located in the brand new Towanda Primary School. (Towanda Primary opened its doors to its first kindergarten, first, second and third grade students last January.)

"Our classroom is perfect! I really got lucky," Bane said. "We have a large room with lots of storage. We have child-sized restrooms for our children with special needs and we have a very nice playground.

"We're pretty new in this room. We have a new speech pathologist, Shari Borger. She is in my classroom on Tuesdays and Thursdays all day.

"One of my paraeducators, Sharon Kupfersmith, is a retired ECSE teacher. I'm not letting her go anywhere. Another para, Terry Mallatt, has prior experience in an ECSE classroom. My other para, Anita Hildreth, was originally just half time in the afternoon, but now is full time, working one-on-one with a child in the morning class.

"We do a lot of brainstorming in here and bouncing of ideas off each

other. It seems to work really well," she said.

Bane has 10 three- to five-year-old students in the morning session and 8 preschool children in the afternoon session. These numbers include several role models. Bane said the role models are usually placed in ECSE programs in a ratio of two special needs children to one role model.

"Special education language says that special education students are to be included in a classroom with typically developing peers. Children this age do model behavior of their peers. They learn a lot from each other," she said.

"We play a lot in our classroom because children do learn through play. We have a pretty structured program. Some of my students need that. We incorporate a lot of learning in the centers. For example, at the sand table, students learn to measure and to tell the difference between full and empty. They don't realize they're learning, but they are. We also work quite a bit of movement into our day."

Bane said her goal is to help children learn to the best of their ability, to prepare them for life.

"A lot of my students need those life skills," she said. "Teaching academ-

ics is not a prime consideration. We do counting skills, colors and shapes. In the early childhood classroom, they will learn a lot of what they need to be prepared for kindergarten. We also work on writing skills.

"Our special needs students have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) which list goals and we target those goals. Sometimes we work with the student one-on-one on an IEP goal because the goal does not work well into a group lesson."

Bane said speech clinician Shari Borger has group lessons (large group cooking activities and book activities) as well as one-on-one sessions with the students. Besides the speech clinician, an occupational therapist and physical therapist visit the ECSE classroom.

"Sometimes we have as many adults in here as children," she said.

"I love it! I have had such fun. It amazes me that I get paid for something that is so much fun. I think these kids keep you young."

Below, Early childhood teacher Sharon Bane and paraeducator Terry Mallatt watch two Towanda Primary preschool students create with clothespins and popsicle sticks.



*Direct Line
from the
Director*

*By Greg Buster,
Director of Special Education*

Our cooperative recently completed the first phase of a process known as Continuous Improvement Monitoring. Continuous Improvement Monitoring or CIM provides the framework for schools to demonstrate effective special education programs that enable children with exceptionalities to progress in the general educational curriculum.

Congress found that research over the past 20 years demonstrates that special education must maintain high academic standards and clear performance goals for children with disabilities, consistent with the standards and expectations for all students, and provide for appropriate and effective strategies and methods to ensure that children with disabilities have maximum opportunities to achieve those standards and goals. The CIM process helps us to maintain high standards and to develop clear performance goals for the children in our programs.

With the implementation of IDEA-97, the federal law mandating special education, compliance monitoring moved to emphasizing student performance in addition to adult compliance. Schools are required to demonstrate effective special education programs that enable children with exceptionalities to progress in the general curriculum.

IDEA-97 still requires states to ensure schools are appropriately implementing federal and state laws and regulations to ensure students with exceptionalities are provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. However, the focus has changed to determining the effectiveness of educational supports and services in meeting the needs of students with exceptionalities. The effectiveness of special education services is to be measured by the ongoing process of identifying gaps between the current results achieved by schools and desired outcomes. Identifying these gaps facilitates the development of strategies to address them and moves schools closer to effective implementation of IDEA.

Continuous Improvement Monitoring is a collaborative process. It relies on multiple sources of data, such as parent/staff survey data, graduation rates, dropout rates, the data management information system, and the performance of students with exceptionalities on state and local assessments to gauge the effectiveness of special education supports and services. The process is based on a continuous five-year cycle, beginning with self-assessment activities and planning during the first year, followed by implementation of improvement strategies and

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Area educators trained in Student Improvement Team process

A number of Butler County schools have initiated, or are in the process of developing, Student Improvement Teams. The goal of the Student Improvement Team or SIT is to expand the use of various resources and expertise in schools and communities to individually address student needs.

On November 21-22, over 75 people from the south central area of Kansas attended SIT training in El Dorado. The two-day training provided the vision, addressed critical issues and gave school teams time to work together to create a process individually tailored for their schools. A school's SIT team usually includes a counselor, school psychologist, nurse, Building Improvement Team member, administrator, general education teacher, special education teacher and social worker.

The training in El Dorado was conducted by Dawn Miller from the Northeast Kansas Education Service Center, and Kelli Mather, Prevention Services Director at Kansas City Kansas Public Schools.

"The purpose of the training is to guide the teams in the development of their own SIT process, to tailor it to their school district's or community's needs," Miller explained. "We allocate enough time during training so they are ready to implement the plan when they get back to their school.

"A Student Improvement Team will assist any student with an academic or behavior issue. The majority of students referred are general education students. The team will utilize school and community resources and expertise to address the individual needs of a student."

Miller said students can be referred to the team for any academic or social concern by teachers, parents, students, administrators or community agency or individual. After referral, she said, team members gather information concerning the child and then use that information to develop possible hypotheses, or reasons, why the student is having behavior or academic difficulties.

"They discuss what about instruction, curriculum, environment, etc., might be contributing to the problem. Next, the team discusses what strategies could be implemented to help the student. The goal of the SIT process is to determine what levels of supports are needed for the child to be successful," Miller said.

"The parent and student are integral members of the team. The team selects one or two interventions that have a high probability of success. The team monitors progress to see if the interventions are working."

Miller and Mather noted the following changes in the focus of interventions with the Student Improvement Team process:

- Share responsibility by establishing a partnership with the child, school, home and community;
- Inform parents and listen to them when early warning signs are observed;
- Maintain confidentiality and parents' rights to privacy;
- develop the capacity of staff, students and families to intervene;
- support students in being responsible for their actions;
- simplify staff requests for urgent assistance;
- make interventions available as early as possible;
- use sustained, multiple, coordinated intervention;
- analyze the context in which violent behavior occurs; and
- build upon and coordinate internal school resources.

Miller said, "The student should carry the plan with them for as long as needed. When the student changes schools, the team needs to take time to



Above, Dawn Miller from Northeast Kansas Education Service Center in Lecompton makes a point during Student Improvement Team training in El Dorado.

discuss with that student's new school's SIT team what strategies have been tried in order to not lose time."

She said that for a small percentage of referred students, their responses to interventions may raise the suspicion of an exceptionality or need for special education services.

Miller pointed out that a focus of the new federal education law (No Child Left Behind) is accountability. Schools are being asked to look at each child's progress. The SIT process could be used to help individual students who are not showing improvement, she said.

School psychologist Lew Waggaman attended the November SIT training in El Dorado. He said, "The

emphasis with this team is to take care of the problem in the regular classroom through interventions. Sometimes it wouldn't take much to solve the problem."

Besides focusing on the student, the SIT process also focuses on partnerships — sharing between colleagues, district-level resources, parents, community agencies, community members and the school's Building Improvement Team.

Miller said some of the challenges the teams face are: trying to convey the team process to colleagues, parents and students; developing plans of action; and generating a better understanding and involvement of staff, families and community agencies in this process.

Augusta students practice yoga



The yoga terms up dog, down dog, angel stretches, warrior hold and doggie pushups were introduced into the vocabulary of some Augusta Middle School students this school year. Students in Alicia Odom's and Jane Kerby's classes participate in yoga exercises three times a week to improve coordination and balance as well as to learn how to focus and relax. Pictured above are Augusta Middle School students doing "The Bow," a yoga exercise.

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, www.bcsbc.org.

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Butler County School Board Council

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**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE
BUTLER COUNTY SPECIAL
EDUCATION COOPERATIVE**

Watkins & Waggaman share views on school psychologist's role

School psychologist Julie Watkins said her job is to be an advocate for children, not for the parents or the school.

"The child has rights and I'm going to stand up for them," she said. "My educational philosophy is all children have the right to an education, even if they are naughty or have a harder time learning."

Watkins is one of nine school psychologists employed by the Butler County Special Education Cooperative. Watkins serves students in five of the seven schools in El Dorado as well as El Dorado Head Start.

"Each school psychologist is different. We don't all spend our time in the same way," she said.

"The direction our profession is moving is toward a prevention and problem-solving model instead of testing and placing students in a special education program. The goal is to do more for students before they are identified or referred for testing. Right now I don't have time to do much of that. We spend a lot of time in meetings and testing students."

Lew Waggaman, school psychologist in the El Dorado and Andover districts, said, "The majority of students we test are not placed in a special education program. Therefore, we have to look at the child's strengths and match the curriculum to their strengths. We need to focus on their strengths instead of what they can't do."

"In the future there will be a great need for school psychologists to give help in the classroom. There may be some resistance to this because we are not moving the problem out of the classroom. We need to accommodate the different learning styles in the classroom. Maybe use more cooperative learning or one-on-one instruction."

Both Watkins and Waggaman see the role of school psychologist as one of teacher counselor instead of special education gatekeeper or the main person who evaluates students.

"We can help teachers with students who are struggling with behavior or academic issues even before these students are referred to the (special education evaluation) team," Watkins said. "We, as school psychologists, have experience and knowledge of research in the area of what works for students. We can also help teachers understand the functions of behavior — why a student is doing what he is doing, why the student is acting out instead of telling the teacher what he knows. School psychologists need to know how to help teachers deal with behavior issues."

"When a child is referred for testing, our job is to look for a disability under the federal law. If there is no disability, then it is regular education's responsibility. Special education is for children with exceptionalities who need help, not for all

children who need help."

Watkins continued, "One area that teachers and administrators are struggling with right now is the change in philosophy between the old behavior disorders and the exceptionality now known as emotionally disturbed. We exclude those kids who "mouth off" or have a bad home life. A good placement for these children might be in an alternative setting or in an altered curriculum. This is a recent change that has caused a lot of confusion."

Watkins and Waggaman agreed that a large part of their job currently is rule keeper for the federal special education regulations and educator of the general population about what the different disabilities are and what these disabilities look like in a child.

Watkins said she would like to do less testing and more consultation and helping in the classrooms, to help teachers implement strategies to aid children who are struggling.

"We are so busy testing we don't have time to evaluate curriculum or do other things we are trained in — the area of mental health, for instance. I look forward to talking to the students, not just testing them."

"Sometimes we need to help parents and teachers understand the realistic expectations for some children. Thirteen percent of the students are always going to struggle and not be able to do grade level work. Some students require more hands-on instruction."

Waggaman said, "I think there's going to be a lot more changes in our profession. The federal government wants to cut down on the separation between regular education and special education. The new No Child Left Behind law says we need to meet the individual child's educational needs. This is a terribly difficult and hard task for teachers. I don't see anything wrong with grouping students for instruction according to ability."

He said one of the first things he does after a child is referred to him for testing is to go into the classroom and observe the student. He said he wants to make sure the school's staff has tried everything they can first before the child is staffed in a special education program.

"These problems weren't created in a day, so there is an expectation that we might give them some help in the regular education classroom. It should be that you try everything in the classroom first."

There are nine school psychologists working for the Butler County Special Education Cooperative. Besides Watkins and Waggaman, the co-op employs Duane Stone (Bluestem, Augusta, Flinthills), Julie Fisher (Douglass, Andover), Todd Smith (Circle), Wayne Rethman (Augusta), Elwin Plank (Rose Hill) and Thomas Mierau (Andover, Remington, El Dorado).

Providing Wings to Fly!

By Marge Delker
Vision Consultant

For eight years, Bundy Porterfield had worked at Boeing as an Administrative Assistant and Job Status Tracking Specialist. This involved keeping track of the assembly progress as a plane was being built. Her job was to track, chart and report the progress on a daily basis. Bundy now uses those same charting and progress reporting skills in her job as a Technology Support Paraeducator in the Butler County Special Education program for the Visually Impaired.

Bundy left Boeing to become a "stay at home Mom" for seven years. During that time, she volunteered at her children's school where she discovered how much she really enjoyed working with children. Then came the opportunity to work as a Technology Support Paraprofessional. She says that it is a role that gives her the best of worlds working with children and also working with technology.

In order to help support the needs of the students, Bundy has learned the Braille code and has become skilled in using special technologies:

- For producing Braille, she uses Duxbury Braille Translator, software which translates a printed document into a Braille printer.
- For producing large print, she uses a scanner and OmniPagePro, software that translates a picture of a printed page into text that is then printed out in a larger font. She also scans books for students with physical impairments who can't hold books or turn pages but can read them on the computer using a switch to move to the next page.
- For producing worksheets, she uses PDF Writer, software that enables a student to complete a scanned worksheet on the computer.
- To assist with computer-based study skills, she supports a student in learning to use WYNN, literacy software that enhances reading, writing and productivity skills.
- To assist a student with low vision in using the computer, she uses ZoomText,

software that enlarges the images on the screen.

• To assist students who are blind, she is learning JAWS, software that enables auditory access to the computer.

With skills in the use of all of this technology, she is a very valuable part of the Vision Services team. However, the teachers with whom she works say that the greatest skill that she brings is the wonderful way in which she interacts with students.

One student with a vision and hearing impairment started high school this year. Bundy recalls that, "when I started working with her, she was timid about answering questions because she did not want to be wrong. Now she's gained confidence to just give it her best shot and she can use the study skills that we've been teaching to find the answer."

Bundy has assisted her in learning how to use assistive technology aids that enable her to become more independent and successful in her classes. "When I show her a new technique, she enthusiastically asks, 'Can I try it?'" The student has expressed her approval of Bundy's presence by saying, "you can't go away, you have a student to teach!"

Bundy also works with two little girls, ages 3 and 4, who attend Early Childhood Special Education. When she arrives at the classroom, she is met with excited greetings of "Hi, Miss Bundy!" and with eager smiles and hugs. Bundy adds Braille to the children's books to read with them.

Bundy said, "I also help them write their own stories using the Braille writer. We do 'pretend' writing and reading so they can learn that those bumpy Braille lines are sentences that we can read. They are anxious to show me their accomplishments by asking, 'Did you see me do that, Mrs. Bundy?'"

"Working with these students lifts my spirits. They have the big world ahead of them. They are excited about learning and discovering their environment. I am grateful to be a part of that. It brings back the feeling of being a kid again!"

Below, Bundy Porterfield teaches a pre-school student to use Braille Writer.



Search to Find Children in Need of Special Education Services

The Butler County Special Education Cooperative is seeking to identify every student from birth through age 21, who lives within the boundaries of the nine school districts in Butler County, who may have developmental delays or may be in need of special education. If you have a child or know of a child who you think has developmental delays or special needs, contact the cooperative at 800-353-8561 or 316-322-4800.

Areas of special education include: birth through age two (infant-toddler), early childhood—disability, visual impairments including blindness, hearing impairments including deafness, deaf-blindness, autism, traumatic brain injury, emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, speech or language impairments and gifted.

Parents are advised that all special education services are designed to offer the utmost in educational opportunities for each qualifying student, as well as to provide assistance and support in the areas of physical, mental, emotional and social growth. State and federal laws are followed in providing each student with a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

Rose Hill eighth graders complete life skills project

This year Denise McDonald's eighth grade students are tackling a new life skills project each nine weeks. Her eighth grade boys weren't too sure about the first life skills project of the year.

One eighth grade boy's first thought about the project was — that's for girls. "I didn't want to do it, but it was ok when I got started and everything was going good," he said.

The Rose Hill Middle School student was talking about the "quilts" project. McDonald's students made four ragtime quilts — an Americana lap quilt (or wall hanging), two brightly colored quilts and a scrap quilt. All the quilts except the Americana quilt were 90 inches square. Four of McDonald's eighth grade students (two boys and two girls) were involved in the project.

"I have an interest in quilting," McDonald said, "and I wanted to see if the ragtime quilts would be easy for my students to make. (Ragtime quilt blocks have material on the top, the filling or batting in the middle, and material on the bottom with an X sewn across the block.)

"The other eighth grade boy didn't like the idea of quilting either, but he was always the first one on the sewing machines to help us. He hardly ever made a mistake. None of the students had ever sewn before. I was surprised, the quilts went really fast. We didn't have any problems except when the sewing machines broke down."

McDonald borrowed two sewing machines, plus she brought in her personal machine, for the project. The students worked on the quilts on Friday mornings. McDonald said it took them about 20 hours to finish the four quilts.

An eighth grade girl said, "We practiced cutting the material first. I was surprised it took math to do it. We had to measure everything. It was fun. I liked the design part of the project best."

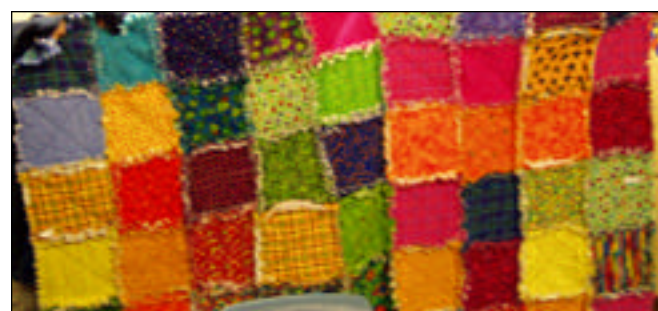
The students laid the quilt blocks out on the floor and then put the colored blocks in the order they wanted them to appear on the finished quilts.

After finishing the quilts, the students sold chances on two of the quilts before school and at the Rose Hill Fall Festival. The third quilt was sold by auction and the remaining quilt will be given to one of McDonald's students during a drawing at the end of the year.

The fabric for the Americana quilt was donated by one of McDonald's paraeducators, Donna Bowen. Donna and the other paras in the classroom, Linda Hicks, Eve McCoy and Barbara James, helped the students with the sewing project.

During the second nine weeks, the four eighth grade students painted murals on McDonald's classroom walls. Their murals are of flowers, a cat, a shark and a ship.

"Next year I would like to have a period or course dedicated to life skills lessons, where for example, students might learn to quilt, crochet or make mosaics," McDonald said.



Pictured above is one of the ragtime quilts made by Rose Hill Middle School eighth grade students.

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 has moved to the Prospect School campus and is located in one of the portable classrooms.

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

Direct Line

From Page 1

measurement of progress during the following four years. Progress will be reported every year on the CIM Self-Assessment which local districts submit annually.

The CIM Self-Assessment is the summary of each district's compliance with special education laws and regulations and documents the effectiveness of each district's special education and related services based on student performance and outcomes. The CIM Self-Assessment contains 66 indicators that each district must address during the first year of their CIM cycle. These 66 indicators can be sorted by both the type of data they require and by the topics they address. Sorted by the type of data required, there are three basic types of indicators:

- indicators that review and evaluate co-op level policies and procedures;
- indicators that use sources such as file review, surveys, and Management Information System (MIS) data to measure compliance with special education

laws and regulations; and

- indicators that use student performance data, such as the state assessments, suspension/expulsion, graduation and dropout rates, plus other student outcome data to determine the effectiveness of special education and related services.

The indicators can also be sorted topically into six categories:

- General Supervision;
- Parent Involvement;
- Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment;
- Child Find, Initial Evaluation, Reevaluation and Eligibility;
- Transition; and
- IEP Development and Content.

For each CIM Self-Assessment indicator, the districts will gather the appropriate data, analyze it, and then determine their own level of performance using the CIM Self-Assessment Performance Level Rubric. Using this rubric, the Local Education Agency's performance on each indicator will be ranked as one of the following: strength; meets requirements; needs improvement; or non-compliant.

OVERVIEW

Districts begin their Self-Assessment by collecting and analyzing data to iden-

tify strengths and areas for improvement in relationship to special education supports and services for children and youth with exceptionalities. The self-assessment process is driven by data: performance data, survey data, observation data, and data from the review of student files.

These data are useful not only for special education monitoring, but are also important elements of the school improvement process. The CIM Self-Assessment will be used by local districts to record the findings of their data analysis, to describe their plan of action, and to measure progress. This process will utilize data obtained from a variety of sources, including file review, administrative review, MIS, assessment data and surveys, as the basis for the development of a plan of action.

As we proceed through the process, we welcome parental involvement or inquiry. The results of the parent and staff surveys will be available in February. The entire self-assessment document should be completed by April. If you have questions about the process or would like to view the results of the surveys or the self-assessment document, please contact our office.

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:

December 6	Andover
January 10	El Dorado
January 31	Towanda
February 21	Rose Hill
April 4	El Dorado

Count Your Kid In screenings in the Augusta school district are offered throughout the year by appointment. To schedule an appointment in Augusta, please call Wayne Rethman at 316.775.7313.

