

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 Flinthills USD 492 Remington USD 206 Rose Hill USD 394

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Prospect students put finishing touches on new greenhouse

As soon as they finish building the tables, the students at Prospect Special Day School will be able to move their plants from the classroom to the new greenhouse constructed on the south side of the school building. The greenhouse was delivered last year but sat in storage until Jeanne Britt, a paraprofessional at Prospect, offered to help get the project "off the ground."

"Last August we started preparing the site. The USD 490 maintenance department started putting up the greenhouse the second week in September. It has been a long process. We had to wait to move the plants in until the lights and furnace were installed," Britt said.

Britt wanted the construction of the greenhouse to be a hands-on experience for the 12 students who attend Prospect.

She said, "So far the students have leveled the rock floor inside the building. They have hauled the excess rock outside and placed it around the foundation of the building. Some of the students helped the maintenance staff while they were building the greenhouse, handing them tools, etc."

The final step in the construction project was building the tables. The students under the guidance of Britt built screen-covered frames which will hold their plants.

"We are integrating the greenhouse project into the curriculum," Britt explained. "We make it fun but at the same time give them a grade for what they are doing. We do math, just change it to make it more fun. We talk about acreage and do worksheets with gardening terms. The younger students are growing sweet potato plants. It is their responsibility to check on their potatoes every day to see if they need water and to talk to their plants."

"I want this project to be successful for the students. We will probably plant tomatoes, peppers and squash in the greenhouse to sell before school is out in the spring. The money from the sale of the plants will be put back into the greenhouse to purchase materials."

"We also have a garden plot on the south side of the greenhouse. The students have done a lot of work in the garden. Everybody planted a couple of mums in the garden and mulched around their mums. The students painted their names on survey stakes and these will be placed in the garden next to their mums."

The garden has been named the "Prospect Garden of Youth." Britt said she hopes to spend more time on the garden project next school year and said that in the future plants started in the greenhouse could be planted in the garden.

Britt received help on the greenhouse and garden projects from numerous people. Friends, staff and community members have donated pots, plants, etc. Home Lumber of El Dorado donated lumber. Albert Hogoboom of El Dorado supplied horse manure for the garden plot. Hummel Tree Service of Towanda donated mulch and Lewis and West, Inc. of El Dorado donated sand. The El Dorado Wal-Mart has allowed up to \$25 each month to purchase materials for the greenhouse such as, potting soil, watering cans, flower bulbs, watering hoses, etc.

Britt is taking a college course on ornamental horticulture

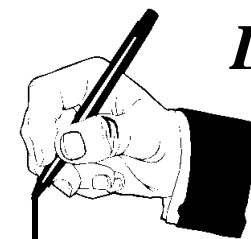


Above, Junior Jeremy Cheek (in foreground), Erik Boone (freshman) and Les Collins (freshman) position and level the cement block legs for the plant tables in the new greenhouse at Prospect School. Below, (l-r) Johnny Baldwin (6th grade), Brice Sands (3rd grade), Ted McAdams (7th grade) and paraprofessional Jeanne Britt build one of the plant tables for the greenhouse.



and she has received guidance from area professionals like Larry Crouse of the Kansas State Extension Service.

"Prospect is a place to start over again. It is not a discipline place. The goal of the greenhouse project is to give students something to be responsible for, to build self-esteem, and maybe develop a skill they could use when looking for a job," Britt concluded.



Direct Line from the Director

By Greg Buster
Director of Special Education

The three most important components of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) are the Present Level of Educational Performance (PLEP), the goals and the benchmarks or short-term objectives. There is direct relationship between the PLEP and the subsequent goals and objectives written for a student. Parents play an integral part in working with IEP teams to determine PLEP and to write appropriate and meaningful goals and objectives for their child or children and it is important for you to know and understand these components of the IEP.

The Present Level of Educational Performance (PLEP) is a summary describing the student's current achievement in the areas of need as determined by an evaluation. It specifically addresses the student's strengths, effective teaching approaches, and interventions to enable student success. It explains the needs of the student and states how the student's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum. The PLEP contains current specific, measurable, objective baseline information for each area of need affected by the disability. In addition, it links the evaluation results, the expectations of the general curriculum, and the goals for the student.

Goals are descriptions of what a student can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a 12 month period with the provision of special education services. There are four critical characteristics of a well written goal: it is meaningful, measurable, able to be monitored, and useful in making decisions. When a goal is written it must be stated so it is meaningful. The "meaningful determination" is made by considering a number of factors:

- The skill the goal represents is necessary for success in current and future environments;
- The family believes the accomplishment of the goal is important;
- The goal specifies a level of performance and an expectation that is reasonable; and
- Its accomplishment is related and significant to the behavior.

Goals must reflect behavior that can be measured and monitored. There are multiple increments in performance between the present level of performance and the criteria stated in the goal. The goal should be written so it can be monitored frequently and repeatedly. Finally, goals are useful in making decisions regarding a student's education.

Monitoring the goal results in data used (See **Direct Line** on back page)



Since 1994, a training program for Butler County special education staff members has given teachers and paraprofessionals the skills needed to de-escalate crisis situations.

"Of the 199 staff members we trained this fall, each one will go back and work with at least five to ten students in their own classroom," trainer Shirley Taylor explained. Taylor along with Jean Fry and Eunice McBeth teach Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc. (CPI) training each fall to employees of the Butler County Special Education Co-op.

Fry and Taylor, who are elementary counselors in El Dorado, have been teaching the class since 1994. McBeth who took their original class in 1994 began teaching the course with them in 1996. McBeth is a resource room teacher at Leon Elementary.

"The Crisis Prevention Institute is a national organization which started out in the law enforcement and hospital setting but they have expanded more into the educational field," Taylor explained. "The actual name of our class is *Non-Violent Crisis Prevention*. The main thing we teach is verbal and physical de-escalation of aggressive individuals."

Fry said, "It is an intensive two-day training. The first day is on verbal de-escalation skills. The second day is on physical de-escalation."

Both Taylor and Fry said the verbal skills training session is the most important because they want to train staff members to not escalate a situation.

Fry said, "During the verbal skills training we talk about getting into people's personal space. We show the trainees the model of a crisis. What to look for and how a crisis develops. We show them what to do at each step to try to de-escalate the situation."

Taylor explained that these levels range from the first level—questioning, either rationally or irrationally—to the top level—intimidation, threatening you or your family or property. She said it is important to know what to say to get a situation under control and to help students with their anger.

During the second day of the training, McBeth, Fry and Taylor talk about physical safety and what staff members can do and can't do legally. Trainees are taught how to safely physically control an out-of-control person and when and where to do that.

"We try to have fun," Fry said. "It's really educational for them and us. The teachers and paras bring with them valuable classroom experience as well as suggestions."

All Butler County Special Education teachers and paraprofessionals are encouraged to take the course. There is no charge for the training. Individuals who pass the test for the two-day initial training are certified for one year. To be recertified they must come back each year for a three-hour refresher course.

Six refresher courses were offered this fall. The topics were: setting limits, documentation, breaking up fights, advanced verbal skills, debriefing, and verbal and physical skills review. All the refresher courses talk about the levels of crisis and all review the physical de-escalation skills.

Taylor said, "If a person lets their original certification drop, then they have to come back for the two-day training. We have some people who have been with us since 1994. The more they use this stuff, the more it sinks in and they get better at it. Almost all the special education staff in the county are trained as well as all the elementary and middle school administrators in El Dorado. The cost of this program is minimal and I think it is well worth the time."

Two sign language classes in the Andover school district came about because of the expressed interest by Andover district staff members who wanted to be able to communicate with all the students in their building.

Monette Bulstrode, educational interpreter for an eighth grade student, taught basic sign language and American Sign Language to six staff members at Andover Middle School this fall. The class was offered for ten weeks on Tuesdays from 3:00-4:30 p.m.

Terry Ziegler, educational interpreter for a kindergarten student, taught sign language classes to Martin Primary School staff members. Fifteen

individuals took her course, including two high school students. She said her class came about because many of the teachers at Martin wanted to be able to communicate with her student.

"The staff loved learning sign language," Bulstrode said. "They are always talking to my student now. The kids pick it up on their own, but we may offer something in the future during school hours for students."

Both Bulstrode and Ziegler are certified with the State of Kansas as educational interpreters. Anyone interested in future sign language classes may contact either Bulstrode at Andover Middle School or Ziegler at Martin Primary in Andover.

Special Education Co-op staff members (left to right) Brad Reynolds, Karen McAnulty, Barbara Kroeger (in back), Eunice McBeth and Hazel Jones (in front) practice a Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc. (CPI) training skill.

McBeth along with Shirley Taylor and Jean Fry teach almost 200 people each year verbal and physical de-escalation skills as part of the CPI Training. Classes are held at the Butler County Community College.

To be certified in the crisis prevention-training, staff members must complete an intensive two-day training and pass the course test. Trainees recertify by completing a three hour refresher course each year.

Turn the winter break into quality time with your kids

Holidays can be a great time to spend with your kids. Or they can be a nightmare. To make your time count with your kids this winter break, consider the following:

Let your child talk. In order for your child to feel comfortable, he or she must be able to freely speak his or her mind. This means you limit your speaking, providing ample time for your child to talk. Concentrate on what your child says, validating his or her thoughts. You don't have to agree with what your child says, just be respectful and listen with an open mind. This improves your child's thinking ability while bringing you closer in touch with each other.

Listen to the silences, too. Allow for periods of silence. Spending quality time includes being with your child, not just doing things together. Much is shared in a wordless communication between you and your child. This acknowledging also helps you be thankful for your child.

Build rapport. Find ways to relate harmoniously. This can include using your child's words, just avoid mimicking or over repeating them. Also, match your child's posture. If your child sits, you sit. If she stands, you stand. Relating to the young person's body language connects you with your child.

Share your thoughts and feelings. Disclose your experiences in a way that will help your child. Avoid trying to be all knowing, yet still uphold your standards and values.

Find ways to appreciate your child, regardless of current problems. Acknowledge the young person's self-worth and uniqueness. Offer sincere compliments such as "I am glad that I am your parent." And "I love you." Help the child realize that "My family cares about me."

Have fun. Do the above activities in a way your child will enjoy. This can involve games and activities. It can also include volunteer work and donations, such as delivering food to the needy. Holidays are a time to get away from the rush and routines of daily life. Celebrate and enjoy the time together.

By letting your child talk, building rapport, disclosing your thoughts, and having fun, you should have a memorable winter holiday break.

Source: *It Starts on the Frontline*/November 1999

**The next meeting of
the Butler County
School Board Council
will be
January 17, 2000
at the El Dorado
Administration Office**

Direct Line

Continued from page 1

to determine the effectiveness of the individual's education program. Appropriate changes may be made to the student's IEP in order to help him or her achieve optimum success.

Either benchmarking or short-term objectives are used on the IEP with the goal. Benchmarks are major milestones which specify skill or performance levels a student needs to accomplish toward reaching his/her annual goal.

The IEP Team should evaluate skills and performance levels to meet goals and select those for possible benchmarks in the IEP. Short-term objectives are measurable, intermediate steps between a student's present level of educational performance and the annual goals established for the student. Their development is based on a logical breakdown of the major components of the annual goals and they measure progress toward meeting the goals. They set the general direction to be taken by those that will implement the IEP and are the basis for developing a detailed instructional plan for the student.

Ultimately, a well written IEP should be able to pass the "stranger test." In other words, is the IEP written so that someone who did not write it could use it to develop appropriate instructional plans and assess student progress.

As you participate in the development of your child's IEP keep in mind the relationships between PLEP, goals and objectives. If there is not a distinct relationship between those three components and the IEP does not pass the "stranger test," ask the IEP team to clarify, expand or rewrite the vague or confusing parts of the document.

Andover third graders have four-legged classmate

Sandy has an assigned place to sit in Amber Birdwell's third grade classroom at Andover Martin Primary School. She is on the class roster and she had her picture taken with the class. Sandy is not the average elementary school student, she is third grader Lauren Herren's helper dog.

"When Sandy is wearing her collar, she is working and the students know if they try to distract her, Sandy gets into trouble," resource room teacher Susan Reusser explained. "This is the second year Sandy has attended school with Lauren."

Reusser said that when the school's administrative staff looks at classroom placement for Sandy and Lauren, they take into account allergies or if a student has a fear of dogs.

"At home Sandy retrieves things for Lauren. She helps Lauren take her socks and shorts off. We are looking at training Sandy to open doors at school so Lauren can independently go throughout the school building," Reusser said.

Sandy went to camp last summer with Lauren and Reusser.

"Sandy was the first service dog that ever went to Camp Talk," she said. "She participated in all camp activities including riding the horse with Lauren." (Camp Talk is a five-day summer camp in Centerville, Texas, specifically designed for kids who use augmentative communication devices. The campers participate in typical camp activities—swimming, camping, canoeing, archery, etc.)

Reusser said, "The kids are having camp while direct service providers like myself are learning how to program and uti-

lize the communication devices. What Camp Talk did was give Lauren a vision — that her Delta Talker is more than an academic tool but a tool to communicate in sentences. Lauren has gone from communicating with facial expressions to one word answers, and she is now speaking and writing complete sentences.

"This year she has really learned the power of her device (Delta Talker). Yesterday she had quite a conversation with her friends about birthdays."

Reusser explained that the Delta Talker has a capacity of over 40,000 words and be can expanded by programming in additional words. It uses software called "Minspeak" which is a system of icons (pictures) that go together to access the word. The students "hit" a series of icons on the keypad to speak individual words, sentences or spell words. Each icon or picture on the keypad has a meaning and the student must memorize the meanings in order to select the correct sequence to speak or write specific words. After Lauren "hits" the first word in a sequence with her infrared head pointer, the machine lights up all the possible combinations to make the choice easier.

"Lauren really grasps the concept. If she doesn't know the right sequence for a word she uses the icon predictor feature to figure it out," Reusser said. "We can attach the Delta Talker to a word processing program and print out her work. The next thing we are looking into is how to give her access to regular computer programs using her infrared head pointer."



Pictured are Martin Primary (Andover) third graders Lauren Herren and Sandy (Lauren's dog). Also pictured is Susan Reusser, inter-related classroom teacher at Martin. This is the second year Sandy has attended school with Lauren.

Durch wins youth award

Susan Hatcher, activities director at Andover Health Care describes Andover High School sophomore Matthew Durch as "an asset to our facility and our community." Susan was so impressed with Matt's work at the health care center that she nominated him for the national Life Care Centers of America Annual Youth Award.

Matt was one of six young people across the United States to win the award. He was the winner in the Heartland Division representing 12 surrounding states. He received a music box from the national organization and a \$500 check and a plaque from Andover Health Care Facility.

Matt has volunteered at the facility for two years. This year he works there three days a week, one hour each day. Matt receives high school credit for his vocational experience at the health care facility.

"Having Matt has been absolutely wonderful," Hatcher said. "He has adjusted so well this year to the change in his assignments and

his additional duties. He has blossomed so much since the first day he walked in here. He just fit right in. He takes on each assignment with the understanding that it is a job. He takes great pride in what he does."

Some of Matt's assigned duties at the health care facility include: filling the 10 plus bird feeders around the outside of the building, repairing the feeders if needed, serving ice cream to the residents in the ice cream parlor, taking the library cart around to the rooms, popping corn and watering plants.

"My favorite parts of the job are the residents and the activities," Matt said.

The Andover Health Care Facility has 152 residents in the main building where Matt volunteers. Hatcher said that having high school student volunteers has been a very positive experience for the facility and its residents and said she hopes to continue the association in the future.

Pictured are Matthew Durch and Susan Hatcher during the award ceremony earlier this fall.

