

Special Edition

A Newsletter to Parents and Staff

Volume 19 Issue 2 Spring 2007

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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AMS students have success with new math series

Jill Springer's Augusta Middle School students improved their scores this spring on the state math assessments.

Springer said much of her students' success can be attributed to the implementation of the *SRA Connecting Math Concepts* series. She explained that the SRA (Science Research Associates) series uses the Direct Instruction Program method. SRA describes direct instruction as having the following attributes:

- Children are grouped according to their levels of ability, rather than according to age or other factors.
 - Teachers use pre-designed scripts when teaching. The scripts are based on extensive research regarding student retention, and every aspect of every script is based upon results that were demonstrated through research.
 - The scripted sessions consist primarily of sequences of stimulus/response pairings, wherein the teacher stimulates the class with a description of a concept, an illustration of the concept through an example, and finally a request that the class repeat the example. The class responds orally, usually as a group.
 - The group does not move on until everyone in the group understands the material.
- "I adopted the SRA program this year

because of the wide range of math levels in my classroom," Springer said.

"We've had a lot of success. "I gave each student a placement test at the beginning of the year so I had an exact idea where to start them in the program. I then created groups based on the skill levels they're at.

"The program is hands-on and repetitive. Students continue to build on the skills that they learn. In addition, there is a lot of interaction between the students and me.

"In addition, it has helped with behavior problems because it is more structured. It has also helped me track progress toward students' IEP goals. The students have workbooks, so they can work independently to reinforce what they've learned and I can make sure they have understood the concepts," Springer said.



Augusta Middle School teacher Jill Springer reviews a math assignment with 8th grader Nathan Frye.

Direct Line from the Director

By Kristie Melkers, Guest Author

Leadership and Self-Determination Among Children with Disabilities

The role that parents play in fostering leadership skills in their children who have disabilities is critical. Recently, this particular facet of parenting has begun to receive a great deal of attention as researchers who had previously studied this topic almost exclusively in the school setting are now expanding their focus to the home environment.

Because traditional understandings of leadership have not always taken into account children and young adults who have more significant disabilities, the concepts of leadership and self-determination have commonly been presented together — in complement to one another — thereby broadening the definition of leadership so that is more meaningful and accurate for those with various types of disability. Self-determination is described as the ability to make ongoing choices throughout one's day and to have access to participating and contributing fully in home, school, and community life with supports as needed.

The recognition of leadership skills among children with disabilities is not a given. In considering your own impressions of what leadership is, it may be helpful to consider various definitions of leadership in order to better understand how our children are, in fact, already innate leaders.

One definition that speaks to the far-reaching influence that children with disabilities possess was presented by Lance Secretan in *Industry Week* from 10/12/98: "Leadership is not so much about technique and methods as it is about opening the heart. Leadership is about inspiration—of oneself and of others. Great leadership is about human experiences, not processes. Leadership is not a formula or a program, it is a human activity that comes from the heart and considers the hearts of others. It is an attitude, not a routine."

When supported appropriately and given opportunities to develop valuable self-determination skills, children with disabilities begin to advocate for themselves, making choices for their lives, teaching all of us valuable truths. Children who have disabilities expose their peers to new and different ways of communicating, learning, and playing, giving them a whole new perspective from which to view the world. Furthermore, they constantly endeavor to grow and learn, sometimes despite significant challenges that are foreign to many of their friends. So often the children show us what real courage and perseverance look like, through taking

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Taste of Brazil

By Ana Paula Mumy

Students at Washington Elementary School got a "Taste of Brazil" on May 16, as they took an imaginary trip to Brazil and learned about its culture, people, language, economy and much more!

Ana Paula G. Mumy, speech/language pathologist at Washington, who was born and raised in Brazil, obtained a Partners in Education (PIE) grant for this schoolwide event to teach students about Brazil and international travel. The idea came from Brazilian foreign exchange students who arranged a similar activity in Parsons, Kansas last year.

Students began their journey by learning about and obtaining play American passports and taking an airplane ride on "Varig Airlines" where they watched an instructional video about Brazil's history, major cities and attractions.

Students then visited a "Casa de Cambio" or money exchange house where Shannon Mitchell, a local banker and Washington parent, taught students about money, Brazil's currency, and how it compares to the U.S. dollar. Students were able to exchange play American dollars for the equivalent in Brazilian Reals for use throughout the remainder of their trip.



Ana Paula Mumy stamps the passport of Washington Elementary 4th grader Nathaniel Hertzog prior to his "trip" to Brazil.

They spent their Reals at the "Mercado Brasil" (market), buying a bag of potatoes, which is one of Brazil's staples. There they also learned about Brazil's main industry, crops, and exports. Students ended their travel experience at "Doces Brasil," a bakery where they purchased homemade Brazilian goodies and received a special souvenir, a lapel pin of Brazil's flag, to serve as a

reminder of their travel experience and all they learned.

In addition to Partners in Education, many contributed to this event, including Dillons and Wal-Mart, who assisted with the purchase of more than 250 pounds of potatoes, and also classroom teachers and staff who played different roles from passport clerks to market vendors to confectioners!

Team advocates for students with autism disorders

"It has been estimated that one in every 150 students is autistic," said Molly Noon-Quattlebaum, a speech/language pathologist at Grandview Elementary in El Dorado.

"The mission of the new Butler County Special Education Cooperative Interdisciplinary Autism Team is to ensure that all students who exhibit behaviors consistent with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (including Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, PDD-NOS, etc.) receive an education that is both behaviorally supportive and academically challenging, according to the needs of the individual student.

"In order to accomplish this goal, the autism team will provide training to general education staff, special education staff and students. The team will also offer consultative services to educational staff and families who have concerns regarding specific students."

The autism interdisciplinary team is made up of two school psychologists (Julie Watkins and Robyn Jackson), one speech pathologist (Molly Noon-Quattlebaum) and one interrelated classroom teacher (Erin Nowicki).

This team is "on call" for teachers and administrators throughout Butler County. They travel to the schools to observe and provide interventions and suggestions to the educational teams of regular education and special education students who have shown indications of autistic behaviors.

Noon explained that some of the deficits of students with autism are in social communication skills and emotional regulation. She said the student can't help the behavior they are exhibiting.

"We have to spell out the appropriate behaviors because these children can't guess what other people's reactions will be," she said. "A lot of children with autism respond better to visuals. As a communication specialist, I show the student's team how to write a social story, all in first person. These are written to help prepare a child for something coming up that can be 'spooky' or are written to teach the child more appropriate behaviors."

Noon shared an example of a social story she made for one of her fifth graders that shows through photographs and text what attending the middle school next school year would be like.

Noon said another role of the autism team is to go into the classroom when invited to help an autistic child's classmates understand autism.

She said, "In addition, we provide a report and written materials to help sup-

port the classroom teacher or whoever is working with the student."

Julie Watkins said, "Part of our philosophy about educational achievement and needs is that students aren't just in school to learn straight academics but also to develop the skills that employers want—how to get along with others, how to work as part of a team, etc. If a child has a mild autism disorder, they might be considered kind of quirky. They don't always have academic needs but may have no friends and no good social skills to market. These kids are stuck in a development stage that others got through at a very early age.

"We help students with autism to be self-advocates, to understand others, to read other people, and to understand those subtle teenage jokes. A child with autism is often thought of as spoiled, defiant, rude and self-centered but the child doesn't get it. Our job is to help adults understand the basis of this behavior. It requires understanding instead of a power struggle."

Watkins went on to say that most schools are equipped to deal with children with autism but they just need a little more information.

"That is this team's job," she said. "Additional training would make the teacher's day go easier.

"We are here to help other people do what is right for students with autism. It is important to make sure they get the services they need and they are entitled to."

The Butler County Special Education Cooperative has two other teams in place—the Assistive Technology Team and the Traumatic Brain Injury Team.

- The Assistive Technology Team of Kristin Wiebe, Kathy Muñoz and Marge Delker works with teachers, support staff, parents and students to find appropriate assistive technology for students. This technology ranges from low-tech to high-tech and might include things like software, adaptive equipment, highlighters, textbooks on tape, etc. The Assistive Technology Team works with both individuals and classrooms as a whole.

- Traumatic Brain Injury Team members include Lisa Arndt, Julie Strickler, Barbara Holmes, Shelly Herrmann, Carrie Larcom and Brenda Clarkin. This team provides support to special education and regular education staff who work with students with traumatic brain injuries. A team goal is to have a plan in place for the student by the time he/she comes back to school after suffering the injury. The team also coordinates services for the student between outside agencies and educational personnel.

Free Preschool Screenings

Count Your Kid In is a free developmental screening for infants and preschool children. 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. Dates/locations of screenings:

August 17, 2007 / Andover
August 24, 2007 / El Dorado
September 7, 2007 / Haverhill
September 14, 2007 / El Dorado

Quiz Bowl Winners

By Dorothy Boucher, Gifted Facilitator

A quiz bowl event named COLTS (Capturing Outstanding Lifelong Scholars) featured nearly 40 sixth grade students from the gifted programs in Butler County schools. Mrs. Nancy Thomas, gifted facilitator for the Flint-hills and Remington school districts, and her students hosted the event on Friday, April 20 on the Butler Community College campus in El Dorado.

When students arrived, they were randomly divided into five-person teams and after making up their own team names and getting to know their teammates, the squads faced off in an

afternoon of questions and answers covering the academic spectrum plus a little trivia.

The first place team consisted of Christine Conway, Circle; Joel Findley, Andover; Josh Frost, El Dorado; Ali Frost, Andover Central and Tyler Swada, Rose Hill. The second place team consisted of T.J. Lancaster, Andover Central; Jake Poyner, Augusta and Daniel Wagner, El Dorado. Third place winners were Rachel Bohm, Rose Hill; Shannon Henry, Andover; Christine Ng, Andover Central; Cason Perry, El Dorado and Joe Phiergo, Augusta.



COLTS Quiz Bowl winners: (l-r) Christine Conway, Josh Frost, Joel Findley, Ali Self and Tyler Swada.

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chances and continuing to try, even with the realization that they may or may not be successful in the attempt. When we choose to listen, people with disabilities, young and old alike, have caused many of us to better align our daily decisions and actions with our core beliefs and values. Leadership epitomized.

Here are some practical ways for parents to nurture leadership and self-determination in their child:

- Offer ongoing opportunities to make choices throughout the day (food, clothing, play, outings, etc.)
- If needed, ensure availability of communication aids that allow your child to express choices

- Think seriously about creating more access within the home so that your child can be more autonomous
- Seek out and support age-appropriate relationships with typical peers and opportunities to develop skills in age-appropriate activities that typical peers enjoy as well
- Research leadership opportunities/programs together that are available at school and in the community for elementary, middle, and high schoolers

Take a step back and let your child do it! Children and young adults who have disabilities are capable leaders. By recognizing this leadership and allowing self-determination skills to flourish, the foundation for achieving a rich, full life is certainly within reach.

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.

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County gifted education students participate in robotics competition

By Dorothy Boucher, Gifted Facilitator

Robotic vehicles navigating courses, moving objects from their paths, head-to-head standoffs with other robots and timed speed tests were some of the challenges facing young designers and programmers in the first-ever Lego Mindstorms competition for Butler County seventh grade gifted education students.

The event, one of several team-efforts by the Butler County Special Education Cooperative gifted facilitators, was held Friday, May 5 on the Butler Community College campus in El Dorado. The facilitators plan one county-wide event for each age group each year. For the seventh grade students, there were five teams of three students that designed and assembled the robots to compete in six separate challenges. Each challenge required different programming and in some cases, different robotic designs.

The six "challenges" or courses included "Can-Do" where the robot had to knock 10 soda cans from a three-foot diameter circle in two minutes, "Sumo-Bots" where two robots line up head-to-head and attempt to push each other from the circle, "Ziggety-Zaggety" where the robots must navigate a zig-zag maze, the "Oval Track" where the robots use line sensors to navigate around a race-track shape in the fastest time, and the speed courses, where the fastest to race across a five-meter distance, as well as the slowest robot to travel one-meter (without stopping and staying in a straight line) claim victories.

Students spent the morning of May 5th studying the challenges, programming the robots on their laptops and hav-

ing a chance to meet and talk with their peers from other Butler County school districts. The interaction allowed students to learn and share their ideas with their peers. The actual challenges came after lunch, when students from Augusta, Circle, El Dorado, Douglass and Rose Hill competed.

Since the event was so well received by the students and others who

attended, the county facilitators plan to make this a yearly event. Mrs. Dorothy Boucher, gifted facilitator in Augusta, and her paraprofessional, Kathy Stahlmer, coordinated the event this first year. Already in the planning for next year, the teachers are discussing randomly placing students on teams after they arrive and letting them work more with students from other schools.



Lego Mindstorm competitors: (front to back) Circle Middle School 7th graders Andy Winningham, Adam Ronnebaum, Jessica Fay, Adam Pyle, Logan Breault, and Lucas Dugan.

Summer Opportunities for Children with Special Needs

Tutoring and Speech Therapy

Special Families will offer free one-on-one tutoring and speech therapy sessions this summer in El Dorado and Towanda. The once a week, 30-minute speech therapy sessions will be offered in June. The once a week, one-hour tutoring sessions will be offered in June in Towanda and in El Dorado in July.

Mary Martha Good will provide the tutoring services in El Dorado and Kristi Torrey will tutor students in Towanda. Speech Pathologist Tina Wilbur will provide the speech services.

Families are responsible for transportation to the sessions and some gas grant money is available to help families with transportation costs.

For more information about this summer opportunity, contact Kathy Donovan (316-393-4074) or Karri Schenker (316-321-9356).

Special Families is funded through the United Way.

ROCKO (Respite Outreach Care for Kansans Organization, Inc.)

Weekend (often evening) activities are available for those with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 23 through ROCKO. ROCKO events last from 3 to 4 hours. Each month an event is held in Augusta, El Dorado and other locations throughout the Wichita area. Events are staffed by special education teachers, therapists and paras and many other helping hands. Kids are grouped by age and ability for fun activities, giving the parents the opportunity to take time for themselves.

To receive a ROCKO calendar and/or to learn more about ROCKO, call 316-687-5700 or email www.rockoinc.org. More information can also be found at rocko_info@yahoo.com. Siblings are welcome. ROCKO costs \$5.00 an hour for those with special needs and \$3.00 an hour for their non-disabled siblings.

Butler Blazers Special Olympics Team

The Arc of Butler is now sponsoring a Special Olympics team, the Butler Blazers. This team is involved with a number of different activities giving your child the opportunity to be involved in those you choose. This is an activity for people with developmental and/or physical disabilities of all levels who are age 7 through adulthood. For more information, contact Dave Mathews at 316-320-6132.

Tennis

The Arc of Butler is sponsoring a summer tennis team for those with developmental and/or related disabilities ages 8 through adulthood. This is not a group where you need to worry about skill level—all levels are accepted. Participants start by learning to bounce the tennis ball and work up. The goal is to have fun and learn new skills. For more information, contact Sandy Simklet at 316-733-8192.

Rose Hill students make quilts for co-op directors & secretaries

(l-r) Director of Special Education Greg Buster, Special Education Secretaries Valarie Williams and Anita Farthing, and Assistant Director of Special Education Karen Wright display quilts made for them by these Rose Hill Middle School 8th grade students: Chris Boivin, Jordan Campbell, Tristen Engels, Bobbie Howard, Heather Huff, John Lay, Keli Leger, Jennifer Nutsch and Devery Pendland.

Sewing is one of the skills Denise McDonald's students learn in her Fundamentals You Need course. In this 8th grade elective class, students also learn to crochet, knit, wood burn, scrapbook, and make string art and stained glass. This is an integrated class for regular education students as well as students with special needs.

McDonald's students made 19 quilts for needy families at the holidays. In the spring, they made quilts for employees retiring from the Rose Hill district as well as for anyone who had been in the hospital



during the year. In addition, the class is making three quilts for a Rose Hill teacher's in-laws and grandmother who lost everything in the Greensburg tornado.

McDonald said, "My students also made the RHMS 8th grade social studies

teachers two quilts depicting the 43 presidents of the United States. They are really cool. In addition, one student, Cody Noble, made a quilt from cartoon characters that he drew. It was awesome! I have some extremely good sewers this year."

Retiring: Betty Meade

Betty Meade began teaching in 1974. Her first job was as a teacher of educable mentally retarded students at Eureka Junior High School. Since then she has taught students with special needs at Clay Center Middle School, Cooper Elementary in Derby, Augusta High School, Andover Middle School and Andover Central Middle School.

Betty said some highlights of her career include:

- Going to Kansas City to surprise a former student who is now the manager of a Firestone Store;
- Having a young man visit this year, bringing his beautiful baby daughter;
- Knowing that one of her most troubled students is a wonderful mother of three;
- Getting wedding invitations and graduation announcements for high school and college graduations; and
- Having a parent stop her in the mall and thanking her for teaching his son to read.

Betty said, "To sum it all up: The highlight of my

teaching career has been seeing my students become successful adults and knowing that in some small way, I was a part of it!"

"My most valuable advice to others is to find JOY in what you do. Look for joy in the small things every day. For example, my joys today include laughing at a joke my normally shy student told, watching my student make an "A" on a science test, and enjoying my students as they gather around my desk before school."

Betty plans to continue teaching for a few years (at Derby Middle School next fall) and said she will continue to save for her "dream" house in Divide, Colorado.



Pictured with Betty Meade is Andover Central Middle School 6th grader Michael Wurzer.

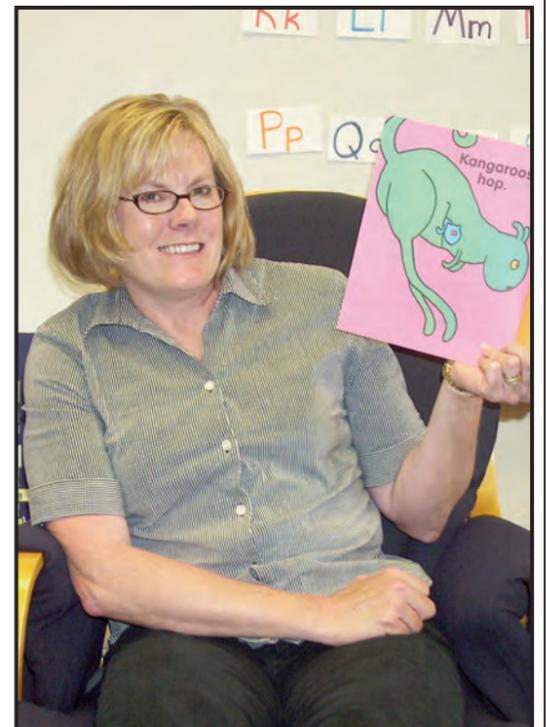
Retiring: Cheryl Lyda

Cheryl Lyda said, "I love young children. They are so full of life and anxious to learn everything they can about their world. One highlight of my career has been all the wonderful children that I've had contact with and hopefully I've made a positive difference in their lives.

"Also, the opportunity to work with the dedicated professionals that the Cooperative has on staff. They truly care about the students and always are ready to go the extra mile to help a student reach his or her full potential.

"It's been rewarding to see how special education has changed in a positive direction over the years. Students of all disabilities now work together and this has led to children growing up with a respect for and acceptance of differences."

Cheryl has been a teacher for 34 years—seven years in Shawnee Heights near Topeka, two years in Wichita and 25 years as an early childhood teacher for the Butler County Special Education Cooperative (15 years in El Dorado and 10 in Andover).



Cheryl said her retirement plans include traveling and spending more time with her grandchildren. She also plans on becoming involved in lots of volunteer work, possibly as a Red Cross disaster volunteer or a CASA volunteer (an advocate for children in foster care or going through the court system). In addition, she has lots of household projects to finish and many books to read.

Program pairs students with their regular education classmates

The Circle of Friends program has been a life-changing experience for some special education and regular education students in Butler County. Circle of Friends was created by a former special education teacher to make entire schools more comfortable with students with special needs by pairing up special education students with their regular education peers.

A Circle of Friends Club was established at El Dorado High School this year.

"What a great school year this has been!" said Connie Unger, EHS interrelated classroom teacher. "The special education students look forward to the time when Circle of Friends has monthly meetings and events. Members have gone bowling, roller-skating, to the movies, to

the zoo and to the mall. They are excited to do these events together as buddies. This time together helps them with acceptance and social skills."

EHS junior Mariauna Mays said, "I like the fact that we have regular education students to help and to have fun with."

This year the EHS freshman team of Amanda Standlee and Julia Riddle were selected "Buddy Pair of the Year." They received their award at the Sedgwick County ARC Award Ceremony on May 10.

Andover High School interrelated classroom teacher Jackie Bishop also initiated a Circle of Friends Club this year to teach tolerance of diversity and understanding of special needs.

Bishop said, "We had approximately 30 members this first year of our Circle of

Friends Club. We were very excited to see so many regular education students wanting to participate and getting to know our special education population as friends.

"Our students participated in activities during our club time on Wednesdays. This time together allowed our students to interact and get to know each other through activities such as arts and crafts, games and just socializing. All of the students seem to really enjoy themselves during club time!

"They have fun getting to know each other and I think the regular education students have really gotten to know the special education students for who they are as a person. It's also very nice to see the kids interact in the hallways, at lunch, during passing period, etc., with hellos and high fives. I have seen a lot of growth with all the kids as the year has progressed. I hope to see much more next year and in the years to come!"

The Circle of Friends Club at El Dorado Middle School was organized in April. EMS interrelated classroom teacher Connie Allmond reports that ten special education students and 11 buddies participated.



El Dorado Middle School Circle of Friends Buddies (l-r) Danielle Gregg and Taylor Harker.

Allmond said, "We went to the Sedgwick County Zoo last month and during May we went swimming at the YMCA and to the park afterwards. My students now have regular education students who say 'hi' to them in the hallways and my students feel more like they are a part of the school.

"The buddies and my students have had a wonderful time and are anxious for next school year to get going. My students have really enjoyed it. They have talked with students that they would never have talked to before and the buddies are watching out for my students now. I think Circle of Friends is a wonderful program and I look forward to doing it for years to come."



El Dorado High School Circle of Friends (l-r) Thomas Sprenkle, Richard Scheuerman, Chris Smith, Kris Smith, David Wage and Remington Rebstock.