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Kids gain from special programs

By SANDRA SEFCIK
Battalion Reporter

If you ever get down in the dumps about your life, there are some children in the A&M Consolidated School District who will lift your spirits.

These children are in the special services programs in the various schools.

Most of the children in the programs are physically handicapped, but this doesn't stop them from leading active lives. In their words, "We're doing it our way," with help from teachers willing to with them.

It's not easy for either teachers or students, but through the special services programs, the children are

making great gains.

A typical day begins with the children getting on a specially adapted bus, said Toby Brewster, a

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special services teacher at A&M Consolidated.

The bus has 19 seats and a hydraulic lift for children in wheelchairs, Brewster said. Texas law states that besides the bus driver there must be another adult pres-

The children have the same schedule every day. They are on a timetable where activities change every 15 minutes. The children cannot mentally handle a different schedule day every day, teachers' aide Debbie Spence said.

The first activity of the day is music at 9:45 a.m. At 10 a.m., the children work on language development. Next on the agenda is breakfast, Brewster said because most kids don't get breakfast at home. Then at 10:30 a.m. comes art.

Group game-time is next. Lunch, at 11:15, is brought to the room. The food is prepared and arranged for the children for more ease in

eating.

For the next hour, the children have a play-rest period. Finally, the teachers get a rest and a chance to

They are on a timetable where activities change every 15 minutes. The children cannot mentally handle a different schedule everyday.

eat. The afternoon consists of a physical education class for most of the children.

Some of the children go to regular classrooms and others go to different special education classes to help them in certain subject areas. Still others stay in Brewster's class for help from therapists.

One of the classes that Brewster's students go to is a vocational adjustment class (VAC). Andrea Davidson is in charge of this class, which handles the more advanced and least handicapped students.

Davidson has four students receiving pay for jobs at school. They work on campus, doing odd jobs such as cleaning cafeteria tables. Davidson said the children get paid a small amount but feel as if they are accomplishing something. "Eventually some of the students will be able to work in the real world, mainly on assembly lines," Davidson said.

Brewster and Spence work with the children. There are many out-

Andrea Davidson, in charge of the vocational adjustment class, has four students receiving pay for jobs at schools, such as cleaning cafeteria tables.

side people who contribute to the children's education.

Texas A&M University students taking Dr. Marty Abramson's Special Education III class, volunteer to help the A&M Consolidated School

District. They come to help teachers as much as possible mainly to come into contact with children, Brewster said.

Other students from A&M and observe a child for a day, then plan an activity to help the child carry out a certain task.

Along with Texas A&M students, occupational and physical therapists come and work with the children. An adaptive physical education teacher takes the children out for exercise.

In addition, the parents observe their children and some of the shortcomings of in-home training. "There is a

Every 12 weeks there is a conference with the parents and progress reports are read and discussed.

deal of parental contact with school," Brewster said.

At least once a week, Brewster contacts a set of parents. Every week there is a conference with the parents and progress reports are read and discussed. Brewster will be the first such conference with parents this year, Brewster said.

Parents are encouraged to consult with the teachers. It is much easier when parents demand for the child's progress.

"What the child learns at school can be continued in the home, most children make progress."

When Brewster and Spence receive a new child they "play ear" for the first couple of weeks. Sometimes, it takes several days to realize what the special needs of a child are. When specific needs of a child are ascertained, Brewster and Spence can plan that child's daily schedule. Brewster and Spence feel their job is to take care of their children every possible way.

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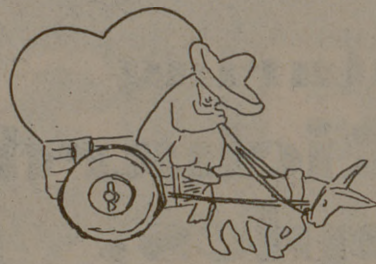
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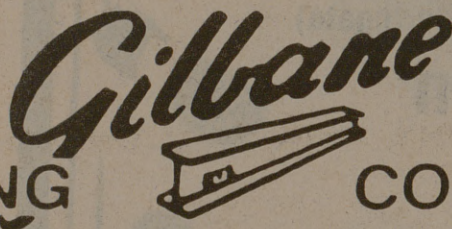
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