On Saturday, October 4, members from across the central part of the state gathered in McPherson to hone their classroom skills. UD 114 and Ark Valley UniSers hosted a conference, *Succeeding with Special Needs Students in the Classroom*. Ten presenters shared their expertise and provided nearly 40 educators with tips, strategies and techniques they can use every day in their classrooms to help all their students be successful.

The day started off with Dr. Rich Harrison of Project STAY as the keynote speaker. Dr. Harrison spoke to the attendees about the importance of building a relationship with their students. He stressed the need for a three to one ratio of positive versus negative interaction with students. He also pointed out that students who do not understand at least 97% of what they read will become frustrated and more prone to outbursts in the classroom. Harrison also worked with participants in two breakout sessions answering their individual questions and providing suggestions for improving the success of students with difficult behaviors.

Licensed Clinical Social Worker and retired KNEA member, Shirley Muncie, provided practical tips on how to help students reduce their stress levels. She reminded the attendees that the same techniques that work for students work well for adults in the school setting as well.

Two Directors of Special Education, Rhonda Bird of Salina and Rebeckah Helget of Wamego, and school psychologist, Christy Hasch, UD 114’s UniServ President, Concordia, shared their expertise on placement procedures and options for disruptive students.

Sheila Mortimer, the Autism Consultant from Central Kansas Cooperative in Education, shared the characteristics of students with Autism and the criteria for diagnosis. She also provided tips for working with students who have been diagnosed with Autism including ideas to prevent the most common behaviors exhibited by students with Autism.

Tracey Pettijohn, Reading Specialist, shared her passion for the issues around dyslexia. She discussed what dyslexia is, and the myths about dyslexia. She also shared some strategies for teachers to use in the classroom to help students with dyslexia flourish.

Wamego Middle School principal, Vici Jennings, used her expertise and training in classroom management to help teachers understand that students take their behavior cues from the adults who interact with them. She then provided a number of simple and straightforward strategies to reclaim control of the classroom.

Two local presidents shared their extensive special education knowledge, too! McPherson Education Association president, Inge Esping, helped participants understand how to efficiently and effectively work with a paraeducator in the classroom. Inge’s tips included ideas on how paraeducators can work more effectively with students and the importance of sharing the teacher’s expectations of the paraeducator. Tambra Stucky, Hutchinson president and Director of the Alternative Learning Placement program was also a presenter. She shared a number of ideas and strategies that participants could easily implement on Monday to help keep students with behavior issues on task and in school.

Strategies for gifted students were shared by Sheri Nakai. Sheri is a member of the McPherson Education Association and is the Gifted Educator for the McPherson County Special Education Cooperative. Topics were designed to help regular education teachers better understand the social and emotional make up of students identified as gifted. She also shared why it is necessary to differentiate lessons for them.

Participants ranged from a Fort Hays State University student member to general education and special education classroom teachers to paraeducators. All walked away from the day with techniques to implement in their classrooms on Monday morning and expressed appreciation for the knowledge they gained from this day long experience.