



NEWS for immediate release

Fremont County School District #1

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Kindergartners learn their A-B-C's through dancing

(Lander) – What's the best way to learn your ABC's?

By dancing, of course. That is the route taken by kindergartners in Fremont County School District 1 this past week, thanks to a program sponsored by Lander PALS (Promoting Art in Lander Schools).

The Dancing Alphabet program came to Lander from just over the mountain in Jackson.

"The Dancing Alphabet activities help kindergartners learn their ABC's by looking at the shape of the letter and translating that into body shapes," said Babs Case, director of the Dancer's Workshop in Jackson, who spent every day in Lander this past week working at the schools. Case was accompanied to Lander by two other dancers from Jackson.

The week culminated with a district-wide performance on Friday, Jan. 29. Kindergartners at each of Lander's three elementary schools were jumping, twisting and bending their bodies into every shape possible and having fun while in the process of learning.

"We help the children look at the shape of the letter, and by using the concept of negative space, we help them learn how that shape correlates into patterns, letters and ultimately words," Case said.

Helping students learn in original ways is one focus of PALS.

"Its about addressing different kinds of learners," Case said. "We teach the kids

visually and through movement. It's a really nice way for them to practice their ABCs as opposed to just writing them out."

The first exercise that Case took the students through is a practice called mirroring.

"They follow my movements very specifically," Case said. "By teaching them how to see clearly, we are able to teach them how to better translate that information into their own bodies. Its really about how if you want to learn anything, you have to be able to see it clearly."

The Dancing Alphabet activity is just one program that PALS has brought to the district this year. "We now do about 20 different programs K through 12 and we have close to 10,000 student contacts with over 12,000 hours of student programming each year," said PALS President Amy Russian. The group also works with such organizations as the Lander Community Concerts Association, providing workshops and special assemblies when traveling musicians, artists and acrobats visit the community.

The all-volunteer PALS group has been working with students in FCSD 1 for the past decade, starting programming in 1999.

The Dancing Alphabet program was brought to Lander by a grant to PALS from the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund.

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Cutlines:
Kindergarten pupil Christian Paniagua dances an "H" during the Dancing Alphabet program at Lander's West Elementary.

"R" is for Ryan and kindergarten pupil Ryan Edinger emerged laughing from a group of dancing letters at the bottom of the pile at West Elementary.

