

# Promotion of Valuable Resource Brings about Increased Usage of the Empowered Desktop



KAN-ED -- WHERE KANSANS ACCESS THE INFORMATION AGE

Melva Barlow, Library Media Specialist at Buhler USD 313 high school, has been pushing the use of the Kan-ed Empowered Desktop to students and teachers alike since she took her position two years ago. At that time, the school already had the Desktop for a couple of years, but it was not being used widely. Today, thanks to Barlow's efforts, K-12 teachers and students from 4<sup>th</sup> grade through high school are utilizing it regularly.

Two of Barlow's favorite Desktop features are the databases and the Backpack. She mentioned databases such as World Book encyclopedia, Ebsco, and Gale; she also shared that the net-Trekker educational search engine is used quite often. While some databases contain encyclopedia type entries on virtually every topic imaginable, other databases contain actual articles that come out of scholarly journals, magazines, and newspapers. The databases allow searches for age-specific information.



In speaking of the databases, she said, "The databases are very important to me. In high school, that's one of the features that I plug the most. I couldn't do without them. It would cost a ton of money if I would have to give up access through the Desktop."

In terms of the Backpack feature, she shared, "I especially push using the Backpack in high school. I explain that if you put your work in the Backpack, you can go home and work on it, or you can work on it any place you can get on the Internet. They're starting to really pick up on that. It took a while because they all wanted to use their flash drives. Our technicians have run into several problems with flash drives, including the possibility of introducing computer viruses. So, I've really pushed and I have the teachers saying, 'Use your Backpack, use your Backpack'."

The biggest challenge Barlow has experienced is getting students to access the Desktop databases rather than heading straight for Google or Yahoo search engines. To circumvent this challenge, Barlow constantly promotes the Desktop resources. She said, "When I first came here, the students all wanted to Google everything, and you know what Google gets you: everything! First of all, they don't get good sources when they do that; half the sources don't have authors. I preach to the kids, 'Anybody can put anything on the Internet. When you're thinking of reputable sources for your research, then you have to go to a reputable place to get it. The Empowered Desktop is reputable, dependable; all the sources are cited for you once you get there.'" Further, the school has attempted to customize the Desktop to make it more attractive to students. Barlow stated, "We try to make the Desktop a place where they can do everything. We just keep listening to their needs and adding to it." For example, they have added links on the Desktop to the school homepage and the Kansas Career Pipeline. An additional draw is access to ePALs email accounts, which allow students to send emails during the school day; all other personal email accounts are prohibited.

Barlow has been keeping up with Kan-ed's progress since it was originally formed. In terms of the Desktop, she stated, "It's just grown, and I think it's a wonderful tool. From the teachers to the students, there's something there for everyone."

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**Buhler USD 313**  
**Serves: 2,250+ students,**  
**180+ educators**  
**Kan-ed member since:**  
**May 19, 2003**