CHEYENNE – Alta Vista Elementary has its first drama club, thanks to enthusiastic fourth-graders and a student teacher.

Every weekday after school, fourth-graders who joined the club gather on the gym stage. They meet with Shannon Skelcher of Cheyenne. Skelcher is a student teacher from the University of Wyoming. She will graduate this week with a degree in elementary education.

The students have rehearsed for an old-fashioned melodrama since February.

“The kids had a professional audition,” Skelcher said. “They’ve been practicing on lines, characters and getting the melodrama style down.”

The melodrama, called “Shootout at Sadie’s Saloon,” has a special meaning for Skelcher. She played the heroine when the Cheyenne Little Theatre Players performed during a summer run at the Atlas Theater.

Skelcher modified the script a tad to fit the fourth-grade performers.

Students have responded. At Wednesday’s rehearsal, the students had their lines down. They had memorized them and also knew their blocking instructions for moving on stage.

The troupe was scheduled to perform the melodrama Friday at the Atlas Theater for an audience of nearly 200 parents and friends. Cheyenne Little Theatre Players director Harry Woods donated the theater space.

The young actors and actresses got some additional help. Some adults from the original show were scheduled to perform parts of the play to give students a better idea about melodrama’s over-the-top style.

Adults Jim Rolf, Sara Lytle and her father, John Lyttle, also were scheduled to perform in the student production. They were to re-create the roles they filled in the production four years ago.

UW students Justin Earnshaw did lights and helped the fourth-graders build sets. He played the hero in the Cheyenne Little Theatre Players production.

Skelcher said she wants to bring the fun of theater to younger people. Some students have never been to a play.

“If I would have been introduced to something like this as a kid, I would have fallen in love with it so much sooner,” she said. Children also learn teamwork. “They’ve had to work together left and right to put this production together,” she said.

She wants them to appreciate the arts. “I hope they find a new hobby that they enjoy,” she said. “They’re wonderful.”

Reagan Johnson, 9, plays villain DeDe Devious. She has a perfect laugh for the part, but she is not sure where it came from. She enjoys performing. “I think it’s fun because you get to play someone who’s totally opposite of you. You get to see what that feels like. This has been a lot of fun.”