



April 5, 2010

Message from the Superintendent



Putting "Literacy First"

Everyone would agree that the ability to read is essential to being successful. If you can read this, you should thank a teacher. That's right, your teachers! The process of learning to read is a complex one. Hickory Public Schools wants to ensure that our students master all of the necessary steps involved in learning to read at an early age so that for the remainder of their school years, students are reading to learn.

In recent weeks the faculties at our elementary schools have engaged in research and discussion of the most effective approach to teaching reading. They have gathered information and made decisions regarding which instructional process will best serve their students. Jenkins, Longview, Southwest, and Viewmont will be implementing **Literacy First**, a research-based, systematic, systemic and comprehensive reform process that accelerates reading achievement of all students in grades Pre-K to 12. Teachers had the opportunity to visit schools across the state that use this process and spent time with the **Literacy First** trainers.

Literacy First is designed to close the achievement gap of all groups of students, to refine teachers' instructional skills, to strengthen principals' instructional leadership skills, and offers flexible models that meet the needs of individual schools. Students will spend a considerable amount of time focusing on literacy each day and will be able to move forward at their own pace as they master skills. Many of our students who are reading above grade level will have the opportunity to move ahead at a much faster rate.

Literacy First will require teachers in grades K to 5 to participate in professional development for two years. The teachers will have an instructional coach working with them on a daily basis and will have many visits to their classrooms by the **Literacy First** coaches throughout each year. Principals will also be trained in the literacy process.

At the middle and high school levels, a few teachers will be trained to teach literacy skills, and students who are struggling with reading will be scheduled into those classes.

We are excited about the opportunity to provide a comprehensive reading process for our students that addresses individual needs and builds the capacity of our teachers as well.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lillie Cox

***Making a difference
for all students!***

*Literacy First
is a three year
process which enables
teachers to
become experts
at teaching reading
to students
at all levels.*

Messages will be posted throughout the school year on important topics which affect and impact our school community. Visit the HPS website www.hickoryschools.net for the most recent Message under the News section. Archived Messages can be found on the Superintendent's page.