

## **How Mount Eagle Elementary School is using the “Balanced Literacy Model” to answer Professional Learning Community Guiding Questions.**

Submitted by Mary Davis with support from Dawn Hendrick, Assistant Principal and Brian Butler, Principal

The staff at Mount Eagle decided to develop a school wide model for reading instruction. Through collaborative meetings and analyzing data, it was decided that “Balanced Literacy” would be the best path available to accomplish our mission statement. We are using five basic questions (DuFour, Eaker) to guide our conversations, meet the instructional needs of our students and plan support for our community. These five guiding questions that are serving as a productive model are:

1. What is it that we want our students to know?
2. How will we know when they know it?
3. What will we do when they don't learn?
4. What will we do when they already know it?
5. How do we engage in relevant pedagogy and professional development to ensure that we are collectively answering these questions?

The entire staff participated in Balanced Literacy Training, through the Language Arts Department and Title I out of the Lacey Center. The training provided a common language, common knowledge, common assessments and common expectations among the administration and staff. The staff also developed a deeper understanding of how to implement best practices during reading workshop.

Our instructional journey in the classroom began with the use of the “First Twenty Days” to develop the routines and procedures necessary for a manageable reading workshop. The First Twenty Days for Kindergarten and First grade was developed over the summer. Grades two through sixth used the First Twenty Days developed by Fountas and Pinnell. Grades two through six implemented the use of reader's notebook; which has served as a resourceful tool in monitoring books read by students during their independent reading time. The reader's notebook also provides continuous dialogue between the student and the teacher which enables the teacher to determine the student's level of understanding about a text.

Sets of books were purchased to support guiding reading during our uninterrupted reading workshop. We have received donations of books for classroom libraries throughout the year. Teachers now have close to 15 books per student to support independent reading. Students are able to select from a broad variety of genres to read independently. Independent reading has

become that special time of the day to enjoy the reading of books. Students across grade levels are able to sustain their reading time from twenty to forty – five minutes.