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## **Mount Airy Schools staff busy with professional development**

by David Broyles  
Staff Reporter



School may be out for students but the Mount Airy City Schools staff is busy preparing for a new school year. Professional development is being offered in all schools over the next several weeks.

Thirty teachers and teaching assistants at Tharrington Primary School have been working with mathematics author Kathy Richardson from Bellingham, Wash. She has published numerous math books for teachers to use in their classrooms, focusing mainly on assessing students and providing strategies to assure students internalize math concepts.

The concepts in Richardson's books are used extensively by the math division of the NC Department of Public Instruction. As stated by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, "when teachers use the Developing Numbers Concepts curriculum and Assessing Math Concepts assessments in their classrooms they have the tools that they need to help their students learn to value mathematics, become confident in their mathematical ability and become a mathematical problem solver and learn to communicate and reason mathematically."

According to Mount Airy City Schools Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Vickie D. Cameron, the assistance of Sheryl Russell and Kay Ringer for professional development events has proven to be another tool to assist students in developing mathematics skills at the primary level.

Lydia Lovell, principal at B. H. Tharrington, said she feels this is a good opportunity for the teachers to learn from an expert who has done thousands of assessments on students across the United States and understands how children best learn math and provide the needed strategies to bring students to a higher level of mathematical reasoning. She added that research indicates math skills are foundational and if students miss out on these K-2 skills it will be difficult for students to have the good math foundation.

Richardson indicated she has been impressed with the teachers and teaching assistants at Tharrington. She stated they are receptive to the concepts being presented and go beyond in learning and researching the materials.

“Mount Airy City Schools are very pleased that we will be able to provide students a rigorous math curriculum that will meet the needs of all learners,” said Cameron.

“The Leader in Me” program is another example of a development event that city teachers are participating in. Three years ago, this program began at Tharrington. Now The Leader in Me will continue with the students at Jones Intermediate Schools.

All Jones School staff members attended a three-day workshop to learn more about the concept of leadership and that all students need to reach their fullest potential when using their leadership skills.

The Leader in Me, as stated by Jonathon Catherman, is a process of helping discover and develop the leadership potential in every student. Catherman is a senior consultant for the Franklin Covey firm who served as facilitator for the recent workshop.

The process’ goal is to develop student leadership skills for the 21st century. It applies the “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” concepts principles, espoused in the book of the same title by Stephen R. Covey, to foster interactive leadership among students and teachers to nurture skills students will need for success.

City Schools Instructional Technology Facilitator Carrie Venable added yet another program city school educators and staff had participated in.

“Technology and curriculum are no longer viewed as separate entities. These must be integrated and done so effectively to enhance student learning,” explained Venable. ” As our curriculum changes to Common Core and Essential Standards, we are providing teachers with technology training that shows them ways to integrate technology as part of a creation piece for student learning. iPod touches aren’t just devices for music, movies and games but they are devices that allow students to create their own product of learning and be published.”

Toward this goal, a one-day training seminar for several teachers, assistants and support staff was held. The group learned QR codes, how to use the devices as student clickers, how to create QR codes, create quizzes, allow students to create digital books, record themselves for fluency and more. Venable said Tharrington will have this training before school starts in August.

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