

Oriole Corner

Guest Columnist: Mark McGarry, Principal of Charlotte Upper Elementary School

Charlotte Upper Elementary: Opening The Gate

Reading is a gateway skill that can open up a whole world of possibilities from being able to comprehend stories, to helping in science, social studies, and math.

This year the Charlotte Upper Elementary has put an increased emphasis on reading. We have tweaked our WIN (What I Need) system in order to offer additional reading support to more students. The What I Need system has always been about providing students with the instruction they personally need to succeed, but the result of our changes last year have allowed us to service 167 fourth and fifth grade students who need reading support. That is 100 more students than we were able to help last year. These students receive 90 minutes of instruction in our core reading program, *Wonders*, 50 minutes of additional reading instruction during WIN, and some of them get 45 minutes more of small group instruction 2-3 times a week during an encore (classes like gym or art). All in an effort to help every child reach grade level expectations.

We have not forgotten about math either. We are also pulling small groups of students from encore classes 2-3 times each week. Each grade level has created groups for students to reinforce lessons in *GO Math!*, our core math program.

While the 167 students are receiving additional reading instruction, what are the remaining 190 fourth and fifth grade students doing? Those students are with grade level teachers diving deeper into reading, math, and science. They are working in book clubs, on research projects, and science experiments.

While all of this sounds great, the absolute best part of what is happening at Charlotte Upper Elementary is that these offerings are not static. Every 60-90 days we will be evaluating data to determine if students are properly placed. If we see students showing growth before that window, we are progress monitoring the student regularly in order to determine the appropriateness of their placement.

Our goal is for students to not stay in an intervention any longer than he/she needs it, and for any student who needs a reading intervention to get it.

Learning occurs at different paces for different people. We want to move beyond saying that every child must learn at the same pace, and move to a system that challenges every child, but respects who they are as individuals. It is through high standards, diverse offerings, and a flexible system that we plan to create a school where all children can prosper and grow.

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