

Wolfpack grant brings strategies

BY AMANDA BUNCH
Bertie County Schools

WINDSOR - A total of eight K-2 teachers in Bertie County Schools are benefiting from the advantage of having intensive support from BCS Literacy Interventionist Robin Ventura and Literacy Coach Leah Dias, through a unique partnership between North Carolina State University and the K-3 Literacy Division of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

"Wolfpack WORKS" stands for "Ways to Optimize Reading/Writing for Kids Statewide." As the name of the grant suggests, Ventura and Dias visit schools to provide regular professional development for teachers, to model lessons, and provide resources such as "book boxes" and guided reading level books so together, teachers and struggling readers can dig into existing data to individualize instruction, based on each



Robin Ventura

child's needs.

This all translates into applicable strategies that often take the form of games, activities and other tangible tools for K-2 beginning teachers to use in the

classroom.

"Many teachers these days blame the kids or parents when students do not achieve," said Ventura. "My job is to help every teacher realize and to show them

that it is entirely in their capacity to make changes and help every child progress... The smallest of successes show the teacher that he/she can effect change."

To that end, Ventura said further that her favorite quote is: "Success is like a vitamin we have to have it (experience) it in order to grow (have more successes)."

Ventura, having worked extensively with our K-2 teachers and students, she has seen a number of those successes.

Since she joined the staff as a contracted employee in January, all books in every K-2 classroom are now leveled; she and Diaz covered the first grade classes at one school so the teachers could participate in professional development at Aulander Elementary School; there is more small group instruction, centered upon data; and students are performing better as the teachers become

more responsive to their specific needs.

"We progress monitor with Reading 3-D," said Ventura. "One specific example of success is an autistic student who was non-verbal and could only identify eight beginning sounds when I first came. Well, that student can now identify 23 (sounds)."

"The whole point, though, is for the teachers to learn the ways to bring about these small successes AS beginning teachers," she said, "so the will continue to teach and to grow."

Bertie County Schools are fortunate enough to have been able to expand the services through the grant, so that EC teachers, and even some principals, have benefited from the professional development that has been provided.

Through the Wolfpack WORKS partnership, our beginning teachers in K-2 have been supplemented with:

1. Blended professional development via

in-person workshops and online modules, focused on evidence-based early literacy classroom instruction.

2. Literacy-specific coaching with experienced early literacy teachers (both in-person and online).

3. Resources to implement effective classroom literacy instruction, including one or more LEA-based interventionists to support the teachers in the classroom and with instructional tools.

North Carolina State University is the chief investigator, and all relevant data collected from the Wolfpack WORKS program in Bertie will be shared with the university for research and evaluation purposes.

This one-year grant will technically end on June 30.

However, Ventura stated that efforts are in the works to reauthorize the grant so that it may be sustained for three additional years.

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Quote of the week "Old age means realizing you will never own all the dogs you wanted to." ~ Joe Gores

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