



GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS

TERRY B. GRIER, ED.D., SUPERINTENDENT

October 18, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, twenty five elementary schools began training in the Literacy First Process for best practices in reading instruction. These schools, our most highly impacted schools by poverty, made the choice to focus upon intensive reading instruction for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Eighty percent of each faculty voted to use this process as it addressed the components of effective reading instruction. The problem with most reading initiatives is the lack of follow-up, coaching practices and evaluation. The coaching days included in this model were critical to the success of the administrators and teachers in the school.

Since we began Literacy First training in 2000, the third grade reading achievement gap between Caucasian and African-American decreased every year. The reading gap between fifth grade Caucasian and African-American students decreased from 24 percentage points in 2000 to an all-time district low of 13 percentage points. End-of-Grade state reading scores, and math as well, have continued to increase since 2000 and thirteen additional schools requested this training in 2002 – 2003. While this process focuses upon strategies for highly impacted schools by poverty, all of our 64 elementary schools have requested training in Literacy First practices for continuous improvement.

Teachers from our 19 middle schools and 22 high schools are in the process of completing Literacy First - Reading in the Content Area Training. Each school has an on site staff developer, the Curriculum Facilitator, who trains every teacher in the school to use vocabulary and comprehension strategies in every class, from physical education, chorus, to biology and algebra. We started this process at the secondary level in 2001 and our SAT scores rose from an average of 999 to 1,011 in 2004, as 64% of Guilford County Seniors take the SAT compared to 48% nationally. The focus upon vocabulary development in the training has contributed significantly to our success. Additionally, we have made tremendous strides in increasing the numbers of high school students taking Advanced Placement courses and exams. In 2000, 1,715 students took 2,864 Advanced Placement courses, with 52% of those students scoring "3" or higher on exams. During this past school year, 3,565 students took 6,880 Advanced Placement courses. Each of these categories represents all time highs for the district, as 45% of students scored a "3" or higher on exams. The Literacy First process has been instrumental in helping us focus our attention upon best instructional practices to increase student achievement at all levels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry B. Grier", is written over a circular stamp or watermark.

Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.
Superintendent