

## Coach adds depth to math

### La Grange Elementary values Cox

By Sara Cunningham • [scunningham@courier-journal.com](mailto:scunningham@courier-journal.com) • December 15, 2010

Oldham County Schools has many literacy coaches who work with teachers and students in different schools, but Missy Cox is one of just three math coaches in the district.

Cox said her job at La Grange Elementary School is important because just like reading, math is fundamental and students' skills in the subject are heavily tested. South Oldham High and Oldham County High also have math coaches.

"I think we in education focus a lot on literacy because if kids can't read, well, they can't do anything, but math is equally important as far as them being successful," Cox said. "I just really want to keep working at bringing math to the forefront, too."

Cox, who has taught at La Grange Elementary for 21 years, including teaching third and fourth grade, was trained as a math coach through the Kentucky Center for Mathematics four years ago and worked as the school's math coach for three years. But last year's budget cuts meant she went back to a regular classroom because the school couldn't afford a separate math coach, she said.

The position was brought back this year

because of its importance, said principal John Finch.

"We really feel, as a school, that having that person who can work with students who need either extra intervention or an extra challenge in math and who can also work with teachers to improve their math instruction is very important," Finch said. "It's a wonderful resource."

Among her duties, Cox plans training for teachers and has set up math nights for parents in past years.

Cox also spends part of her morning with a group of second-graders who are working at a third-grade level and part of her afternoon with fifth-graders who are either approaching or already are at a sixth-grade level in math.

"They are high-functioning students who can really get through the curriculum more quickly than most, and my job is to help them push further," Cox said.

Cox said she ties in a lot of writing in her lessons. Students are constantly being asked in class practices and in homework to write about why they did a problem a certain way or how they came to a certain **answer**.

"That's the big push," she said. "Students who are problem-solvers can explain their thinking and reasoning. Along the way, they are also getting more practice with literacy skills, so the two connect."

Fifth-grader Kayla Witters, 11, said she loves the math class.

"She explains it to us in a lot of different

# courier-journal.com

ways and is always making it harder so we get **smarter**," Kayla said.

Cox has collaborated quite a bit this year with the kindergarten teachers as well, Finch said.

Kindergarten teacher Lee Combs said Cox comes to her class once a week and helps with lessons.

"I can tell a huge difference," Combs said. "Usually we try to make sure we've got them adding and subtracting single-digit numbers by the end of the year, but we're already there, and the students are begging for more."

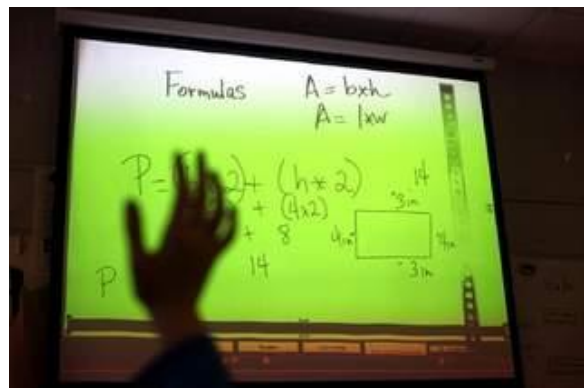
Combs said the students especially like talking about problem-solving.

"(Cox) has helped us a lot in talking about how you attack a problem, and they really like that," Combs said. "She's a great resource for us, and at the same time, I think we're being challenged more as far as coming up with more rigorous lessons, and those are both good things."

Reporter Sara Cunningham can be reached at (502) 582-4335.



Matthew Presley, left, gets help with a math problem in Missy Cox's class at La Grange Elementary School. (By Aaron Borton, Special to The Courier-Journal) Dec. 6, 2010



Students work on math problems in Missy Cox's class at La Grange Elementary School. (By Aaron Borton, Special to The Courier-Journal) Dec. 6, 2010