

## **ORA/IRA Exemplary Reading Program Award Goes to McLoughlin Middle School in Medford**

### **Thurston Elementary in Springfield Wins Award of Merit**

*Submitted by Beverly Farris, Program Chair*

The ORA Exemplary Reading Program Award committee had a busy January visiting finalist schools for this award. The committee consisted of President Gayla Clark, Past President Karen Antikajian, State Coordinator Carol Brown, Gretchen Hamilton and Chairperson Beverly Farris. Several schools with excellent reading programs applied. Our committee found this a difficult decision to make!

Medford's McLoughlin Middle School was truly impressive with an excellent reading plan in place. A team of teachers and administrators designed the program after reading and studying many excellent professional books, visiting other secondary schools, and working with the Jackson County ESD. They began implementing their reading program in the fall of 2005.

There are two main components to McLoughlin's reading program. The first is the incorporation of a literacy class into the daily schedule first thing in each morning. All students go to either a strategic literacy class, taught by an English teacher, or an advanced literacy class taught by a social studies teacher. The strategic classes address the specific needs of the struggling readers and reinforce English content. The advanced classes explore a wide variety of text structures and genres, often around a common theme. Because these teachers stay with the same students for both years at the Middle School, they know their students well and can address strengths and weaknesses, address students' needs, teach reading and thinking strategies, and further develop fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension. The English and social studies teachers coordinate the content of their literacy classes and collaborate with the literacy coach.

The second main component of the reading program is the school-wide emphasis on effective reading and writing instructional practices in the content areas. All teachers are expected to reinforce the reading strategies being taught in the literacy classes. All teachers receive support from the reading coach in order to implement best practice strategies to support student learning. A wide variety of materials are used with an emphasis upon authentic reading and writing. Teachers have developed text sets, which include textbooks, trade books, magazines, and other materials to support the units of instruction.

Our committee was hosted by Principal Amy Tiger and Reading Coach Kiernan Hodge, who met with us to explain the restructuring of their program and then toured us through their building. Literacy instruction and enjoyment was evident in every classroom as we observed students engaged in a wide variety of reading and writing activities. In addition, the staff has a professional library of books that they have read in groups and have used to implement many of the practices that are in place.

As a result of McLoughlin's efforts test scores are up, attendance is up and school referrals are down, certainly an indicator of a high level of student involvement. Our congratulations to McLoughlin Middle School, the winner of the ORA/IRA Exemplary Reading Program Award!

This year an additional award was given, the **ORA Award of Merit**, to Thurston Elementary School in Springfield. Thurston is a school that loves reading! You see it when you walk in the front door, in every classroom, and in the wide variety of literacy activities that are woven throughout the year. Congratulations to Principal Sheri Furtwangler and the Thurston staff for an outstanding program!