

## Lincoln Park Academy—St. Lucie County

### KEY THEMES:

- Academic Magnet School
- Tech Prep Academies in Pre-Engineering and Teaching
- Open door, facilitative, proactive, innovative principal
- College Prep curriculum
- Offers International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, Honors, and Pre-IB courses
- Partnership with Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute
- Internship with renowned scientists
- Technology used across the curriculum
- Instruction in character and citizenship education
- Strong Emphasis on Reading across the curriculum
- Traditional Academic School
- Well-defined discipline policy
- Extra Curricular activities that support and enhance student development
- Expectation of Mastery of Sunshine State Standards
- Parent commitment and involvement in the school program
- Career Days with business partners
- Emphasis on critical thinking skills
- After school tutoring program
- Bloom Taxonomy used as method of instruction
- University of South Florida team-building and global education program
- Outstanding School Achievements
  - Florida School Report – High Performing School Award – November 2003
  - Received national ranking from Newsweek Magazine and the Washington Post for “Challenge Index” (Rated 21<sup>st</sup> in the nation)
  - SLC Spelling Bee Champion – 2002, 2001
  - SLC Governor’s All Star Student – 2002, 2003
  - SLC Academic Top Scholar Award Winner – 2002, 2001
  - SLC Youth Volunteer of the Year – 2002
  - SLC Minority Educator of the Year – 2002
  - State Music Demonstration School (one of four in the state) – 2002
  - Seven National Board Certified Teachers
  - News Tribune “Reader’s Choice – Best Local School” Award
  - The only International Baccalaureate Program in the county
  - Highest test scores on all state and national tests
  - Award winning sports program
  - Over 4 million dollars in scholarships for the Class of 2003
  - “A” Ranked School – 2003, 2002, 2001, 1999

### BEST PRACTICES:

- School wide Reading Program
- Staff Development based on needs of staff and driven by mission of school
- Communication log kept by teachers
- Math Solutions Program
- Writing Portfolio kept for each student
- Middle School Teaming
- Parent/Community involvement
  - Active P.T.A.
  - Well attended School Advisory Council
  - Large athletic and music booster clubs
  - Alumni groups
- Parent Communication
  - L.P.A. Newsletters
  - E-mail
  - Web-Page
  - Progress Reports

- Report Cards
- Telephone Calls
- Open House
- Newspaper
- Student Planner
- Good News Post Cards
- Technology Across the Curriculum
  - Wireless Network
  - Computer Labs used mostly by Science and Math
  - Technology Inservice for faculty members
- Professional Development
  - Time allotted to meet as departments in regular school schedule
  - Opportunities to attend outside workshops
  - CRISS (Reading) training provided
  - I.B. workshops provided
  - A.P. inservice offered regularly
  - Veteran teacher mentoring of new teachers
  - Offerings based upon mission of the school and needs of faculty

## THE PRINCIPAL

This is the first year for the Principal of Lincoln Park Academy (LPA), who was promoted from the position of Assistant Principal. She began her school career in 1977 as a classroom teacher but left soon after to raise her four children. She returned to the classroom in 1991 and eventually worked her way into administration. She was chosen by the Florida Association of School Administrators as the Outstanding Assistant Principal for the State of Florida in 2003. She comes from a family of educators, including her parents and four sisters who were all school administrators.

The Principal believes in an “open door” policy, strong parental involvement, and working with curriculum and classroom techniques that encourage students to continually improve. She also expresses to her faculty that all students can learn; just in different ways. She strives to make every class, every day, actively engaging for students.

## PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

Principal Leadership will be described as it relates to the following standards, which are aligned with the National Standards of the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

### Standard 1: Facilitating a Vision of Learning

A committee of stakeholders reviews the vision and mission of the school on an annual basis for accuracy and updating purposes. The vision is communicated to all stakeholders through newsletters, website, open houses, e-mail, grade level newspapers, brochures, orientation programs, and word of mouth. The vision and mission are also posted throughout the school and addressed by faculty and staff on a daily basis.

The vision is a priority in communicating to parents and community that high-order academic skills will be the focus throughout the four-year course of study at the high school level. Parents, teachers, students, community members as well as all other stakeholders are involved in the development of the school's instructional plans. Needs assessment data, test scores, teacher comments are all used as well as the Sunshine State Standards in developing the rigorous curriculum offered L.P.A. students.

The School Advisory Council, a vibrant part of the school, continually monitors the vision and mission of the school as they work with the administration in formulating an annual School Improvement Plan. These Advisory members serve as communicators to the whole school community.

The vision and mission statement of the school has been written with clear purpose and direction and serves to inspire faculty, parents, and students. It is apparent when one visits the school that there is a concerted effort to ascertain a level of consistency between the stated mission and the actual practices and programs of the school.

The School Mission Statement reads “*LPA is a well-disciplined, traditional academic magnet school providing intensive instruction in the core subjects that are the foundation of a sound, quality education. The mission of the school is the development of students academically, socially, and personally in a safe and caring environment within a racially integrated setting.*”

**Standard 2: School Culture and Instructional Program**

L.P.A. is a magnet school of choice with an emphasis on a college preparatory curriculum. It is the top ranked magnet school in the district and one of the best in the state as well as the nation. Recently, L.P.A. was named the 21<sup>st</sup> best public high school in the nation by Newsweek magazine. Schools were ranked according to Washington Post education columnist Jay Matthew's Challenge Index; a formula based on how many students at each school took the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests divided by the number of graduating seniors.

With an "A" grade from the state last year, the county's highest F.C.A.T. scores, highest graduation rate, and a zero percent dropout rate, L.P.A. has a way of distinguishing itself. The average wait on the application list, to be admitted to the academic magnet school, is five years. The students at L.P.A. truly come from families that value education. Parents understand and support the higher order academic skills required throughout the four-year course of study at the high school level. Many students and parents must make sacrifices to meet the demands of the early transportation schedule for the school.

All curricular offerings are based on the Sunshine State Standards with emphasis on higher order thinking skills. There is a strong commitment within the student population to matriculate to higher education upon graduation and to succeed in this endeavor. Consequently, 97% of the L.P.A. graduates are accepted into college.

Cultural sensitivity is emphasized throughout L.P.A. The extra-curricular activities within each academic discipline are encouraged as a means for cultural mixture. The faculty encourages respect for every student in the school. The contributions of all cultures are emphasized in each area of the curriculum. An annual cultural fair has become a tradition. Parents of all cultures are encouraged to become a part of the School Advisory, P.T.A., and school booster groups.

**Standard 3: Management**

The principal, though only in her position for one year, has created an open atmosphere of administration on the campus. She makes every attempt to involve everyone in the management of the school. Shared decision-making is certainly her style. Parents feel comfortable in the school and believe that their input is necessary and actively sought through both formal and informal means. She leads by example and would never ask staff to do anything she would not do herself.

The administrative staff is composed of the principal and three assistant principals. Duties are delegated to assistant principals, as the principal deems necessary. A hierarchy of school operation is in effect. If a classroom problem should occur, the teacher is expected to make the first attempt to solve the problem. If it cannot be solved at the teacher level, it is referred to the Dean or assistant principal for the next attempt. If the problem is still not solved the principal becomes involved. There are also two guidance counselors who can be of service on student curricular questions or personal issues.

Teachers are very involved in the daily management of the school through their departments and as members of the Leadership Team. This team is composed of Department Heads, Guidance, Assistant Principals, Chair of I.B. Program, and Deans. Issues of concern can always become a part of the Faculty Meeting agenda and thus be discussed at these frequent meetings.

This is an old school, which has had several additions over the years. It is beginning to show its age but is clean and well kept. The custodial staff maintains an attractive facility that creates a positive learning environment. The students seem to take pride in the care of their campus.

**Standard 4: Collaboration with Families and Communities**

Collaborative skills for staff are enhanced through the University of South Florida team building and global education program. This program has been made available to the entire staff and has proven a successful tool in improving relationships between teachers, parents, students and the community. There are numerous opportunities available for parents and community leaders to become involved in the school such as the monthly School Advisory Meetings, P.T.A., Career Days, Job Fairs, school volunteers, booster clubs, and the multi-cultural events.

There is also a strong bond between the school and its many business partners. This is a relationship that not only benefits the school but also the businesses that are actively involved. Teachers have taken advantage of this relationship by using business partners as guest speakers, on-site career experiences, and as an opportunity for the shadowing by students of business professionals.

Collaborative skills for staff are also enhanced through departmental, team, subject, grade level, and faculty meetings. Faculty is also encouraged to attend professional seminars, conferences, and conventions, both at the local and national levels, to provide them with experiential knowledge of collaborative learning.

**Standard 5: Acting with Integrity, Fairness, and in an Ethical Manner**

An atmosphere of professionalism is apparent on the L.P.A. campus. Students and parents of the school are constantly evaluating the values of the administrative staff, guidance staff, and faculty as they perform their daily duties. A more formal evaluation is carried out by district procedures. The principal receives a yearly evaluation based on performance standards. The administrators evaluate the faculty twice a year with suggestions for improvement listed and discussed. The faculty and administrators adhere to a Code of Student conduct. This is a yearly updated document provided to the schools by the School Board and Superintendent that addresses the rules of conduct that students must follow. Procedures to handle infractions are defined in this document so that discipline is handled fairly and equally to all students.

The school is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and must meet all the standards required by this association. This means that all teachers must be certified in their particular academic area. Administration and guidance staff must also have advanced degrees in their respective fields of education.

**Standard 6: The Political, Social, Economic, Legal, and Cultural Context**

Communication occurs among the school community members concerning trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which the school operates through School Advisory meetings, P.T.A. meetings, Booster Club meetings, Open Houses, Principal Newsletters, School Newspaper and other publications as well as the open door policy of the principal. The professionalism of the staff and the collegial atmosphere of the school speak for itself when one realizes this is a High Performing School as recognized by the Florida School Report. The school has received national ranking from Newsweek magazine and its students score highest on all state and national tests. Another positive fact is that 97% of the graduates of this school continue on to a higher learning institution and over four million dollars in scholarships were offered this past year. There is an ongoing dialogue with community groups and outside decision makers by all regarding the previously mentioned communication efforts.

**DATA, DECISION MAKING & DESIGN**

Student progress is constantly assessed by various means, including: Classroom grades, Homework grades, Writing assignments, Course grades, Semester grades, Standardized Tests, Advanced Placement Exams, I. B. Exams, S.A.T., A.C.T., and FCAT test scores. Letter grades are earned for each semester of work in all courses. Students in every grade are expected to make regular progress toward graduation over a four-year period of time:

9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade . . . . . 5 credits  
10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade. . . . .11 credits  
11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. . . . .18 credits

Twenty-four credits are required for graduation plus a 2.0 grade point average and a demonstration of mastery on the FCAT.

Teachers, department heads, guidance counselors, and administrators review student performance data periodically. Interim progress reports, report cards, and standardized tests results are reviewed by the counselors on a regular basis. Student scores are related to district and national norms thus following their progress as it relates to standards and benchmarks.

Teachers receive training on the use of assessment data so they may better understand the ability of students with whom they are working. This training occurs in school district workshops, faculty meetings, professional days, and in sessions presented by the guidance staff or peer teachers. The student data is readily available to all faculty online or through records kept in the guidance office. Oftentimes this data is distributed to individual teachers in departmental meetings.

The staff reviews this data constantly to determine if the school goals are being met. It is the determining factor in recommending changes to the curriculum. These reviews can also be the catalyst for the purchase of new textbooks, technology, or new equipment. Data is also used to show reasons for realigning a student's schedule to lead to a more successful school experience.

**FAMILY/COMMUNITY**

The vision and mission of the school is communicated to its stakeholders through monthly newsletters, Open Houses, marketing materials, posted throughout the school, and presented at P.T.A. and School Advisory meetings. The school's program, policies, and procedures are sent to the home as printed materials in student and parent handbooks and also discussed at open house, PTSA and School Advisory meetings. This information is also included in the monthly newsletter to the home.

The student's progress is assessed through various means previously listed. The information on these assessments is distributed to the parents through: Report cards, Interim reports, E-Mail, telephone calls, notes to parents, parent conferences, standardized test results, and weekly progress reports (when requested). Grades and attendance are monitored through the classroom teacher as well as counselors and administrators. Any student injured or becoming ill during the school day is taken to the school clinic where the parent is immediately contacted.

Parents and community members have many opportunities to express ideas and be involved in decision-making in regard to their student's education. This can be accomplished through School Advisory meetings, PTSA meetings, Open Houses, or individual conferences. The Administration goes out of its way to provide ample access for parents to be heard.

The School Improvement Plan is a function of the School Advisory Council working with the administration. It is mandated by the state that the SAC approve this document. Stakeholders develop the vision of the school and all, have the opportunity to provide input.

When a new class enters L.P.A., students are welcomed and introduced to the school through orientation programs which are held at various times before the school year starts (being a magnet school is advantageous in this perspective since no new students enter during the school year). These orientation programs not only present the vision of the school but also introduce curriculum, extra curricular activities, and some of the school personnel to the new families and students. Printed materials are also distributed at these sessions. In addition, the school maintains an open door policy for parents who wish to visit at other times.

Teachers maintain two-way communication with parents by memorandums, newsletters, e-mail, telephone, postcards, flyers, website, progress reports, report cards, open houses, PTA and School Advisory meetings. There are often announcements and information in the local newspaper as well. The school's open door policy makes it convenient for parents and community partners to have access to the school and extends a welcome to all. Tours of the school, classroom visits, teacher conferences, and student performances all lend themselves to making stakeholders welcome to the school. There are also opportunities for those interested to become school volunteers and serve the school in many capacities.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Lincoln Park Academy is located on Florida's Treasure Coast in the City of Fort Pierce and the St. Lucie County School district. The county is traditionally an agricultural and service oriented community and is one of the fastest growing areas in the state of Florida with an approximate population of 196,000.

Major research centers such as Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, the Smithsonian Institute, USDA, and the University of Florida are located in St. Lucie County. Post-secondary opportunities are mainly available through Indian River Community College. In addition, several colleges and universities including Florida Atlantic University, Barry University, University of Florida, Bethune-Cookman College, and Nova Southeastern University have satellite campuses, which offer limited coursework.

Lincoln Park Academy is a magnet school of choice that was originally designed to aid as a solution to integration concerns in the school district. The Academy serves students in grades six through twelve. The high school program provides instruction in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies in each of their four years. In addition, students are enrolled in two years of a foreign language and all other courses required by the state for graduation. Other special programs offered are as follows:

- International Baccalaureate – a rigorous pre-university course of study leading to examinations for the prestigious IB Diploma. This program meets the needs of highly motivated and academically talented secondary students.
- LPA Harborside – a partnership between the school and the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute. Harbor Branch offers LPA science students the opportunity to use some of the most technologically advanced research vessels and labs. In addition, students and teachers work with world-renowned scientists through this unique educational opportunity.
- Advanced Placement – an opportunity for students to take challenging college preparatory courses in English, social studies, Spanish, calculus, and science.
- Dual Enrollment – courses are offered to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, who meet eligibility requirements, in conjunction with Indian River Community College both on and off Lincoln Park campus.
- Performing Arts – include orchestra, band, chorus, debate, drama, art, and speech.
- Tech Prep Academies – offered in Pre-Engineering and Teaching Assisting.

**School Demographics**

The population of the school is approximately 1900 students including 800 middle school students and 1100 high school students, classified as 27% African American, 2% Asian, 3% Hispanic, and 68% White. The average class size is 24.7 students. 2.8% of the students are classified with disabilities, 37.6% are gifted and 27.4% are on free/reduced lunch. There are no students classified as LEP. Lincoln Park has a 97.65 stability rate for students and teachers have an average of 15.3 years of experience, with 48.9% of the faculty holding advanced degrees. Suspension rates are .1% for in-school and 12.8% for out-of-school.

**Goals****Goal 3 - *Student Performance***

The FCAT scores for this school have not been received at this writing, but the school has been awarded a High Performing School status in the Florida School Report.

**Goal 4 - *Learning Environment***

The current maximum enrollment of gifted students has held at 125 per grade level and the current absentee rate is below the 12.5% currently standing at 12.0%.

**Goal 5 - *School Safety and Environment***

Repairs in the science labs have been scheduled and should be completed before the school year concludes. A parenting seminar on drugs was held and was well attended.

**Goal 8 - *Parental Involvement***

Communication with parents has been accomplished by the means listed as well as parent conferences and open houses. Most teachers exceeded the 35% goal and continue to strive for more parental involvement. The website has been established and is being well utilized.