

## Ludlam Elementary—Miami-Dade County

### KEY THEMES:

- Dynamic principal with excellent interpersonal skills
- Student achievement data used to guide instruction
- School-wide grade level planning
- Integrated use of technology in teaching and learning
- Specialized small group instruction for underachieving students delivered by a certified teacher
- Faculty input in curriculum decisions
- Involved PTA and commitment to parent involvement
- Faculty team building activities to support networking and morale
- Continuous staff development
- Full-time gifted center
- Multicultural Student Exchange Program implemented with three other schools
- Character Education Program involving *Core Values Curriculum* and *Do the Right Thing*

### BEST PRACTICES:

- School-wide block scheduling to maximize learning, reduce fragmented instructional time and decrease class size during basic subjects
- School-wide emphasis on writing and responding to writing prompts on a monthly basis
- *Accelerated Reader/STAR* reading management programs
- *Riverdeep Destination Reading & Mathematics* software used to reinforce basic skills
- *America Reads* – one-on-one reading tutorial program for at-risk students
- After-school care tutoring for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- Full-time FCAT tutor to service low performing students in grades 3 – 5
- Grade level teachers meet to review student progress and exchange instructional ideas
- Emphasis on students working with other students (peer editing, buddy reading)
- Involving parents and community in education of students (parents reading to students at lunch time)
- Facilitating instruction by minimizing and/or streamlining paperwork required of teachers
- School-wide electronic grade book to facilitate records management
- *Word of the Week* over morning announcements to promote vocabulary development

### 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

The vision and mission are developed collaboratively with faculty and the Educational Excellence School Advisory Council (EESAC). The EESAC has the responsibility of monitoring, evaluating and revising the vision, mission and implementation plans of the school as needed. Progress toward implementation of the vision and mission is communicated at PTA and faculty meetings as well as inclusion in monthly newsletters. Members obtain feedback from their constituents and express them at monthly meetings. The school developed a parent involvement survey as a result of expressed concerns. Within the EESAC are members of the PTA and Dade Partners who work collaboratively to support the school.

The vision is at the forefront of all decision making. The vision and mission are posted in the main office and on the school website and published in the parent/student handbook and in a brochure for visitors. Their vision states, “*We, the Ludlam Elementary family, will focus on preparing ourselves for the new millennium. Through high expectations for personal and civic responsibilities, we will enhance our students’ academic achievement and prepare them for the challenges of our multicultural, ever changing society.*” The vision, along with the mission and the school’s motto: MANY FACES – ONE GOAL, are the driving forces behind all endeavors.

As demographics change, student and community needs change also. These needs are addressed in the strategies developed to meet the school’s goals. Disaggregated test scores are analyzed and considered in programmatic and operational processes. Ludlam has a tri-ethnic population, requiring information to be sent home in English, Spanish and Creole as necessary. Barriers are avoided by conducting monthly meetings with representative groups of the faculty. The principal meets

with the department chairpersons and the assistant principal meets with the grade level chairs to discuss concerns. Open communication is a focus of the school.

Available resources are allocated based on identified needs and performance data. Third grade students in danger of retention receive tutoring during and after school. The PTA provides a daily agenda for each student to increase communication between parents and teachers. A "landscape workday" was held on three Saturdays to beautify the school, with parents and community members providing the labor. An open door policy throughout the school contributes to consensus that enhances ownership and encourages participation in all facets of the school.

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

Professional development promotes enrichment of instructional strategies and impacts student learning. Activities/workshops are scheduled monthly and focus on the school's goals. Students and staff are valued in a myriad of ways. Students are recognized through various recognition programs and morning announcements. Staff members are recognized through the weekly Staff Bulletin, Staff Memo Board, Employee of the Year Programs and "Leave Early Passes" for perfect attendance. Staff, students, and Dade Partners are recognized in the monthly "*Ludlam Lines*", a newsletter for parents.

Barriers to student learning are identified and addressed through analysis of data, parent conferences, Academic Improvement Plans and Student Service Team Meetings. An annual District administered climate survey results provide information on the school culture and climate. Daily observations and team building activities are planned and monitored as needed. Diversity is celebrated through multicultural programs. Ludlam participates with three other schools in a multicultural school exchange program that takes place throughout the school year. Each of the four schools hosts fifty students from the other three schools for an exchange day. The students have an opportunity to experience other students and their activities for a day; they then return to their home school to share what they've learned.

Staff members are encouraged to pursue life long learning through professional development opportunities and keeping abreast of current educational theory and practices. Currently four teachers are pursuing National Board Certification. Community volunteers are encouraged to share their experiences with the students through volunteer reading activities and career week. Teachers incorporate innovative practices in the classrooms and are involved in ongoing staff development. By setting an example of high expectations for oneself, sharing best practices at faculty meetings, and recognizing ongoing accomplishments, the principal promotes high expectations for a positive school culture.

Technology is used throughout the school – in the classrooms, media center and computer lab. One of the objectives in the School Performance Excellence Plan (SPEP) focuses on the integration of technology throughout the curriculum. A schedule for workshops in the use of technology is in place. Both the principal and assistant principal are very adept in the use of technology and set an excellent example for the staff. Each classroom has an average of six computers; students use Accelerated Reader, Riverdeep Reading and Mathematics, FCAT Explorer, and many software programs. An electronic grade book and email are used within the school. An informational webpage is online for parents and community.

Curricular programs are designed based on test data, articulation, needs assessment and surveys. Monitoring and evaluation follow the same pattern. Ongoing assessments include classroom observations, informal and formal class assessments, and standardized test results. Based on test data and interest surveys, programs have been developed to meet current needs and interest. The After School Care Program includes a strings program and tutoring program (free for all at risk third graders).

## **Standard 3: Management**

Knowledge of teaching, learning and student development theory is used to make informed decisions regarding the staff development calendar and parent communication. Stakeholders are involved in school decision making through the EESAC and PTA and participating in surveys. Potential problems and opportunities are identified through the surveys and parent conferences. Opportunities for improvement are identified and addressed in mid year assessment and ongoing staff communication.

Continuous improvement is the focus of the school. Funds are budgeted to impact student achievement in the most highly efficient manner. An example is the use of FCAT Enhancement funds to provide *America Reads* tutors for small groups of children.

Input is sought through various committees and their representative stakeholders, (i.e. PTA, EESAC, Grade Level and Department Chairpersons). This input is used to monitor and then modify school operations. All stakeholders groups are represented on the school EESAC which is actively involved in matters relating to the SPEP and budgetary decisions.

A safe, clean and aesthetically pleasing school environment is created and maintained by close communication with the custodial department. Job performance is monitored with weekly inspections. Additionally, a school beautification committee held two landscaping days with a third planned before the end of the year; PTA volunteers do the majority of the work.

Confidentiality and privacy of school records are maintained through strict guidelines. Student cumulative folders are kept in a secured filing system. Compliance and confidentiality with all ESE records and any sensitive matter is maintained. Professional standards are always a priority.

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

Relationships with community leaders are identified and nurtured through the Dade Partners program, Chamber South, the local Chamber of Commerce. Key partnerships include McDonald's, Chick Fil-A, Home Depot, Starbucks, and the University of Miami. The businesses provide awards and incentives for student achievement; the rewards in turn promote the businesses in the community. The University of Miami provides tutors who work with at risk students. Community resources assist the school with traffic problems and a variety of additional resources assist the school during Career Week and Red Ribbon Week activities. The school utilizes the Dade Partners' program in seeking opportunities for students and support for school goals. A parent liaison is responsible for completing monthly press releases to inform the community newspaper of upcoming events, such as special awards and recognition programs.

Staff team building activities are encouraged formally and informally. The school's Sunshine Committee plans regular social activities to enhance collaboration. Grade level meetings, department meetings, staff meetings and membership on school committees and EESAC further the development of team building skills that enhance collaboration.

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

Personal and professional values of the principal are demonstrated in daily actions, job performance and work ethic. By recognizing individual accomplishments and sharing observed best practices, staff members develop an understanding of desired practices. Treating everyone with respect and fairness and setting an example of her personal work ethic promotes higher levels of performance.

The diversity of the school is acknowledged within the school's motto: *Many Faces – One Goal*. The motto is prominently displayed throughout the school, is found on the backdrop for morning announcements conducted over closed-circuit television, and is listed at the top of the monthly newsletter. Diversity is celebrated in annual multicultural celebrations. Home-school communication is provided in two languages and parent workshops are translated. The Spanish teacher translates and the parents wear headsets to understand the information presented at parent meetings. The prevailing values of the diverse school community are consistently considered when implementing school procedures.

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

Communication occurs through memos/flyers, newsletters, staff meetings, and parent workshops/meetings. With good communication and the involvement of stakeholders in discussions and decisions, understanding and support of school initiatives are promoted. The principal is a member of the local chamber, Chamber South, and Informed Families' South Miami Drug Free Coalition. These memberships keep her informed and involved with representatives of the community groups, keeping the lines of communication open. A positive and proactive approach to communication contributes to the support of outside decision makers.

### **DATA, DECISION MAKING & DESIGN**

Data is reviewed and used by teachers as an instructional tool to develop meaningful activities to help students reach their full potential. Student progress is assessed through both formal and informal methods - pre/post tests, benchmark tests, teacher-made tests, daily observations, student interviews, FCAT and state norm-referenced tests. This data is reviewed in grade level meetings, administrator/teacher conferences and individually with students/parents. Teacher-made assessments and informal assessments are reviewed daily and used to tailor instruction to students' needs. Miami-Dade County's Comprehensive Reading Plan provides benchmark testing quarterly with the Directed Reading Activity (DRA) given to students who are below grade level in reading. The DRA analyzes specific skills the student should have acquired. The FCAT pre and progress tests, along with a detailed item analysis, are used to determine needs of the students. Data drives the instructional program.

Data analysis identifies areas that need improvement as well as areas that have been mastered. Data assists in planning and organizing whole/small/individualized and differentiated instruction. Decisions are made as to whether re-teaching is needed or if additional practice or enrichment of targeted skills and objectives should be provided. Teachers are trained to use assessment data in workshops, staff meetings and with the assistance of peer mentoring. Teachers have access to assessment results for their students, including FCAT reports, chapter tests and ongoing software programs.

To determine if school goals are being achieved, the teachers and EESAC look at reading and math assessment data and the SPEP goals are reviewed. Collected data helps to determine what the strengths and weaknesses of the present instructional program are and which strategies are producing positive results and should remain in place or should be adjusted. Empirical data is used in addition to other information prior to the selection of programs and textbooks. Data is used to develop the SPEP, assist with textbook adoptions, and determine students who may need tutoring. Services for each student are coordinated in a “team-like” effort.

If data from a specific pre test indicates that students need help in one area more than another, then that area (s) is targeted using strategies that will facilitate the teaching and learning of that specific topic(s). More non-fiction was incorporated into daily lesson plans at Ludlam due to a specific need for better content area vocabulary in math/science/social studies. Once the need became apparent, appropriate strategies were incorporated into the SPEP, resulting in non-fiction reading and vocabulary development integrated across the curriculum.

A major intervention used at the school is the use of tutoring. An hourly teacher provides reading tutoring in grades three through five; the after-school care program provides tutoring two hours a week free of charge for third graders in danger of retention; and the University of Miami provides trained tutors in the *America Reads* program for students performing below grade level.

### **FAMILY/COMMUNITY**

The school’s philosophy and goals are distributed through the parent/student handbook at the beginning of each school year and displayed on the school website. Programs, policies, and procedures, as well as the system for grading and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are explained in detail in the handbook. Open house and parent meetings also inform parents about expectations and ways they can help their child and the school.

Families/community partners are given the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions by being active participants in the PTA or EESAC committee. Parents are encouraged to participate in parent workshops, meetings and conferences. During school improvement planning, committees review past progress as it applies to current goals and then adjust the goals where necessary. Modified goals must be in line with the school mission.

Every student is given a handbook and student agenda upon enrolling at Ludlam. The school counselor is always available to assist new students and their families with a smooth transition. Administrators and staff are readily accessible and responsive.

Teachers and parents are encouraged to communicate daily through the agenda provided by the PTA. Timely responses are given to voice mail requests, written notes and parent conferences. Each child is treated as an individual. Teachers individualize work and assignments and are always available to parents. Parents feel welcome at the school. They are greeted by courteous staff and have access to a monthly calendar listing the many activities scheduled for the month. Often parents receive invitations to events and are given many opportunities to participate at the school. A favored activity is volunteering for “Lunch Bunch” where parents read to a small group of children during lunchtime. Ludlam has an active group of volunteer readers.

Parents are well informed through memos/flyers, the monthly newsletter, student agenda, school website, and parent/student handbook. The marquee outside the school posts upcoming events and important information. Many communications are in both English and Spanish.

Parents and students work together through daily written communication in the agenda and through parent conferences as needed or requested. The counselor conducts regular programs for each age group and is available for one-on-one sessions to address specific needs.

Information regarding program and/or policy changes are communicated through newspaper articles and letters sent home from the school board or state agency. When it is time to ensure a smooth transition to the middle school, parents, teachers and middle school personnel maintain close communication to ensure adequate dissemination of information via meetings, articulation fairs, and tours of the middle school. Newsletters in English and Spanish feature contributions of community members.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **School Demographics**

Ludlam Elementary is located in the central part of the Miami-Dade County School District. The school employs 58 instructional staff and two administrators. Ludlam has approximately 600 students (14% African American, 54% Hispanic, 23% White, 5%

Asian, 5% Multiracial and <1% American Indian). 53% of the students are on free/reduced lunch. The average class size for K-5 classes is 22.3 students. 8% of the students are classified with disabilities, 34% are gifted, and 27% are LEP. Ludlam has a stability rate of 92%, and teachers have an average of 11 years experience. The school grade for the past three years has been an A.

## **Goals**

### *Goal 3 - Student Performance*

Grade 4, tested 100 students in FCAT Writing Assessment, with a school average of 88% of the students scoring 3 higher as compared to the district's average of 89% and the state's average of 90% scoring 3 or higher (with 1 as the lowest and 6 as the highest). FCAT reading and math scores were higher than the district and state scores for all grades with the exception of grade 4 math; it was higher than the district but lower than the state. FCAT norm-referenced test results were higher than the district and state. FCAT school accountability data in grade 3 reading tested 79 students and had 73% scoring at Level 3 or above, grade 4 reading tested 100 students and had 65% scoring at Level 3 or above and grade 5 reading had 92 students tested with 59% scoring at Level 3 or above. Grade 3 math tested 79 students with 62% scoring at Level 3 or above, grade 4 mathematics tested 100 students with 66% scoring at Level 3 or above and grade 5 math tested 92 students with 58% scoring at Level 3 or higher.

### *Goal 4 - Learning Environment*

2.7% of the students had absences of 21+ days (5.1% is district rate and 6.1% is the state rate).

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

26 incidents were reported at the school.

### *Goal 6 - Teachers and Staff*

64% of the staff hold a Bachelor's Degrees and 36% hold advanced degrees. One teacher has National Board Certification and four are pursuing the certification this school year.