

Preliminary Report, Highlights: Ashton, Sarasota County

High Reading

Already a successful school, they choose to raise the bar and find new strategies to break through the high performing ceiling, not for the win, but for the gain.

AIM HIGH and LET GO: The stakeholders at Ashton have a powerful mutual admiration society that motivates achievement. The principal inspires and leads the society. The school runs very smoothly, has a highly stable population; low number of free and reduced lunch (14%); and historic high achievement. The principal's respect, words and action for the unlimited potential of the teachers and staff to continuously improve, and for students to achieve, kicks this school into high gear each and every morning. The teachers—55% have advanced degrees—hold the same high respect for the principal and his leadership style. The principal trusts and supports their professionalism and expects the highest goals and the best strategies to support aims. All prioritize Reading.

Results: Grade 4, 208 students tested in FCAT, Writing: school average 3.8 compared to district 3.6 and state 3.4. FCAT Reading and Math scores considerably above district and state.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Formation and support of teacher leadership teams to plan, set and achieve goals
- Constant monitoring of student progress through data warehouse and a “test-tracker” using Stanford 9 data
- Professional development tied into student needs as determined by data tracked by teachers

CREATE A TRIANGLE: The school actively seeks and appreciates its business partners. Partners support activities, but more, they support student achievement through tutoring, funds, guidance and mentoring. The principal has a business background and is at home with harnessing the expertise of his partners. He has also gained parent support. Partners, parents and teachers report a high level of satisfaction with the principal's leadership. Parents are included in significant decision-making such as school improvement plans and budgeting. The teachers indicate a high level of respect for the parents' school leadership, and gratitude for their support. The parents provide resources for meaningful activities, directly aligned to effective teaching and learning, such as staff development. It is an equal angled triangle, with principal, staff and community working for students.

Results: 250 business partners; \$80,000 donated by parent organization; low student absenteeism/suspension

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Providing parents with detailed needs assessment data prior to input on school improvement planning
- Making parents feel needed as well as wanted at the school and in making important decisions
- Deploying partners to provide targeted assistance and hands-on support in their areas of expertise

PICK THE RIGHT PROGRAMS: The programs at the school all work to achieve and increase agreed upon goals and success indicators. The teachers, led by the Principal, insist that their programs must go beyond competency. Programs must take students from knowledge into practical application. Every team member is responsible for maximum use of total resources, including time management and support services that are totally focused on instruction. Some of the school programs are: Successmaker, STAR, Balanced Literacy, and Accelerated Reader. The programs and plans are directly tied to the Sunshine State Standards.

Results: School grades: 2000: B; 2001: A; 2002: A.

Practices that Promote High Performance

- Departmentalization in grades 3-5
- Beginning teacher program with mentoring from veteran teachers
- Ability groups in reading and math and homogenous groups in other subjects
- 3 networked technology labs; 350 computers; multimedia stations in each room; and distance learning