

MEET THE NEW LEADERS

LEADER: Mr. Chris Renouf, Ashton Elementary Principal, Sarasota County Council for Educational Change **Strengthens Educational Leadership**

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The stakeholders at Ashton Elementary have a powerful mutual admiration society that motivates achievement. Principal Chris Renouf inspires and leads the society.

His respect--words and action--for the unlimited potential of the teachers to continuously improve, and for the 1300 plus students to achieve, kicks this school into high gear every morning. The teachers--55% have advanced degrees--hold the same high respect for the principal and his leadership. *"I trust and support their professionalism. In return, I expect the highest goals and the best strategies to support our aims,"* said Chris Renouf.

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 use. Every team member is responsible for maximum use of total resources, including time management and support services that are totally focused on instruction.

The teamwork pays off. School grades climbed and remain high: 2000: B; 2001: A; 2002: A; and 2003, A. In March 2003, Ashton was identified as one of 20 high performing elementary schools in the state by the Council's Florida School Report.

Chris Renouf had a successful business career before entering education. *"I saw so many new employees entering the workforce who weren't well-prepared. I decided I could make a real difference and that's when I committed to education."*

He went back to school to study education, started as a teacher, and quickly rose to the principalship. He has not forgotten the lessons learned in the corporate world and applies them at his school. He has enlisted 250 business partners who are actively involved at Ashton. *"I believe that partnerships and corporate involvement add immeasurably to education at Ashton,"* Principal Renouf observed. *"I also tap the expertise and experience of corporate leaders to help me run the school efficiently with bottom-line goals tied to student achievement."*

Some practices that the school uses to promote high performance:

- Constant monitoring of student progress through a data warehouse and a test-tracker
- Formation and support of teacher leadership teams to plan, set and achieve goals
- Professional development tied into student needs as determined by data tracked by teachers
- 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
- Beginning teacher program with mentoring from veteran teachers
- 3 networked technology labs; 350 computers; multimedia stations in each room; and distance learning



Florida's Commissioner of Education, Jim Horne and Ashton Elementary Principal Chris Renouf at the launch of the Council's Florida School Report Best Practices of High Performing Schools in March. Principal Renouf was one of the Principals honored during the event in Tallahassee.

