

Preliminary Report, Highlights: Avalon Middle School, Santa Rosa County

CURRICULUM MAPPING: Avalon Middle School is located in a rapidly growing rural community that takes pride in the continuity of traditional values and leadership. Instruction at the school is delivered in a professional caring environment with an average class size of 23 students. A curriculum mapping strategy was adopted a few years ago by the district office and is at the center of the Avalon's instructional approach. The vertical alignment of curriculum is also seen as important, with the math department mapping skills across grade levels and the English department dividing writing into six essential elements, with each grade working in depth on two of the elements. These methods insure a consistent progression of skills and concepts across grades and academic subjects. A progression chart reflecting where students are and where they need to be gives teachers direction in bridging the achievement gap. Teachers individualize instruction based on assessment of student need in reading and math as related to the Sunshine State Standards. They are encouraged to teach at levels requiring their students to utilize higher-order thinking skills.

Results: School Grade: 2002 A; 2003 A.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Instruction delivered in a professional caring environment school wide
- Teachers taught to analyze student data and plan for improvement through curriculum mapping
- Teachers encouraged to develop and require higher order thinking skills across all content areas
- Vertical teaming to insure a consistent progression of skills and curriculum

FLEXIBILITY AND READING EMPHASIS: Traditional values and leadership are supported by flexibility and creativity in finding ways to make programs work for students. Administration and faculty report "flexibility" as one characteristic essential to successful teaching at Avalon Middle incorporating the motto, "Blessed are those who are flexible, for they shall not get bent out of shape." This became essential when the schedule was reworked to implement a two-hour block and the Read 180 program. "Teachers teach, teach, teach, and students learn, learn, learn" is another common saying at Avalon Middle, reflecting the focus of faculty and students. In addition to faculty using school, district, and state data assessment to guide their instruction, students are taught to monitor their own progress through classroom assessments and goal setting. Students monitor their progress in individual student planners, which are made available for parent review. Lastly, a special reading center has been established to assist students needing extra guidance or reading remediation.

Results: FCAT Writing Assessment: 97% of 8th grade students scored at Level 3.0 or higher; FCAT Math: 82%; FCAT Reading: 73%.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Flexibility in implementing new programs while maintaining traditional values
- Shared focus on teaching and learning
- Students involved in monitoring own progress and setting goals for improvement

STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS: Students contribute to the successful implementation of programs and atmosphere of learning at Avalon Middle School. Students are encouraged to be part of the School Advisory Council (SAC) and provide their perspective, with student leaders rotating on and off of the SAC. Students' creative talents are utilized as they meet, greet and provide tours for new students and families. They are often called upon to buddy with new students for an informal social and academic orientation. "Respect for every student" is encouraged among students as well as by faculty and administration.

Results: : Students feel connected as evidence in the low rate of discipline incidents and student suspension.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Student membership on the School Advisory Council
- Student involvement in informal social and academic orientations of students and parents
- Encouraging respect for every student as a standard for behavior by students and staff