

Preliminary Report, Highlights: Central Park, Broward County

Overall High Performance

Creative solutions and partnerships with other schools are just a few examples of Central Park's can-do approach.

DREAM IT, DO IT: Central Park Elementary needed and wanted a better science program. It would mean a new teacher and curriculum. The school doesn't have a wish list. They have a "to do" list. Involving the staff, parents, partners and PTA, they strategized how to secure needed funding. They succeeded and the students were the winners. Some 25% of the students at Central Park are minorities, speaking 33 different languages. The teachers are committed to raising the bar for students, to meet goals, but they also want to stimulate their imagination and creativity. Reading and writing are priorities. The "Writing Book," created by teachers on the writing committee, is a program spanning all grade levels that boosts performance and inspires young minds.

Results: Grade 4 FCAT Writing, 205 students tested: 3.7; district, 3.5; state, 3.4. FCAT Reading higher than district and state

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Basing selection of programs on research, student needs, standards alignment and innovation potential
- Involving all stakeholders in thorough and professional analysis of student data and improvement planning
- Resisting window dressing: using enhancement resources for a sharply focused instructional game plan

BE CREATIVE: Homegrown programs such as the "Pickle Pals" that buddy new students with two elementary "veteran" students, respond to the individual needs of the school. The principal and staff have their pulse on their student and parent populations and are constantly looking for creative solutions that make sense. They help choose new teachers to strengthen the skills of the team and fill needs. They lead the selection of materials and programs that are key to the school's success. They are encouraged by the principal to bring new ideas and programs to the table. Do your research. Make your case. Then, the team kicks-in to support the plan. Professional development aligned to student achievement anchors the creativity and channels its energy.

Results: School grade 2000: A; 2001: A; 2002: A

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Pre-assessment testing including publisher's tests, IRI and computer-assisted models
- Portfolio assessments shared with students, as well as parents, other teachers and administrators
- Emphasis on students providing written responses—short and extended—in all subjects, including math

HIRE THE BEST: When the ongoing data analysis everyone in the school participates in showed an opportunity gap, it was addressed. Despite their best efforts, the fourth grade teachers felt that student writing scores were not as good as they could be. After exhausting internal avenues and advice, they identified a consultant who was successful at increasing writing scores at other schools. After the training, they came away "born again" writing teachers with new skills and a passion that helped the students' basic and authorship skills improve. In another instance, teachers identified a need to strengthen 5th grade math scores. Using in-house expertise, the art teacher was tapped to infuse geometry lessons in art classes. Student performance improved.

Results: Leave days for teachers lower than district average; FCAT Accountability: 88% of 4th graders, level 3 or above; 93% 4th graders, Writing, 3 or above.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Train all teachers in data analysis; update training as needed; seek out new assessment vehicles
- Undertake professional development that positions the teacher as a leader and empowers the position
- Quickly catch individual student improvement that is slowed or stalled, through timely data analysis and remediate immediately