

Preliminary Report, Highlights: Flamingo, Miami-Dade County

High Free and Reduced Lunch 81% and Limited English Proficiency 47%

Trusting and empowering the school leaders: teachers and staff formed a dynamic team to motivate achievement.

PACE YOURSELF: The school uses a Pacing system—a sequenced learning plan—tied to the school improvement goals. All teachers on a given grade level cover the same Sunshine State standards during a nine-week grading period. Teachers design the yearly pacing schedule. It is supported with the right data (i.e., every available student record), widely disseminated and used by all teachers. This timely benchmarking is pervasive. It drives the school’s instructional focus including programs and teacher assignments. The system interconnects the faculty. For example, a Title I reading leader coordinates the reading program, and works with the curriculum coordinator who oversees instruction and provides reading comprehension assistance to critically low students.

Results: Meeting high standards: 72%, reading; 71%, math; 88%, writing. Learning gains: 88%, writing; 77%, reading; 76%, math. 86% of the lowest 25% made learning gains in reading.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Before, after, and Saturday tutoring; in-school “Intensive Care Unit” for critically low students
- Reading Leader and Curriculum Coordinator participate in additional before and after-hours instruction
- Using proven strategies, such as the CRISS (Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies)
- Successful grant-seeking to increase technology and companion teacher training in technology

SHARE and SPREAD: The Principal has been at the school for 22 years. More than 97% of the students are Hispanic, and 81% qualify for free and reduced lunch. Over the years, the principal’s leadership style has changed. As it evolved, she shared leadership responsibilities, and now empowers her staff to participate in decision making. Everyone is a leader at some point, in some activity. Grade level chairs rotate annually to provide opportunities. All teachers are expected to serve and lead both short and long term committees. Budget decisions rely on teacher input to prioritize which programs best serve the most critical needs. Teachers also manage faculty meetings and serve as interviewers of prospective teachers.

Results: School grade 2000: A; 2001: A; 2002: A (410 needed for an A, school achieved 470)

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Outside leadership as a “Professional Development School” provided through a partnership with the University of Miami that supplies a professor in residence and support to preservice and veteran faculty
- Mentoring for newly hired personnel; sharing of training; modeling lessons and strategies
- Pervasive staff belief in “nothing less than excellence,” and confidence in their ability, nurtured by principal

EXPEND WISELY: The principal is an acknowledged budget whiz. Using federal funding from Title I, grant monies, district resources and other funding, she keeps her focus on the instructional goals. Teachers tell her what they need, what their students need, and those are the bottom-line priorities. Professional development linked to academic goals is a major focus. The school is open to innovation and constantly seeking monies for promising programs. They invest most heavily in proven instructional strategies and programs that work for the school. Reading improvement and hands-on science instruction are two current concentrations. Hiring needed personnel, including support staff, is always a budget consideration, as are parent materials.

Results: Low teacher turnover, best student attendance in the district, qualified resource pool to assist teachers

Practices that Promote High Performance

- Paraprofessionals trained to do higher level remedial assistance, rather than clerical support
- Six computers per classroom, an open access computer lab, distance learning
- Comprehensive reading plan with emphasis on guided reading component