

Preliminary Report, Highlights: Gilchrist, Leon County

Overall High Performance

The contagious vision and energy of Gilchrist's Principal lead and orchestrate the school's efforts to excel in education.

ALIGN PURPOSE AND PRACTICE: At Gilchrist, there is a strong alignment of purpose to practice. The connecting elements are the basic beliefs held by the school. All of the supporting elements—District mission, School Improvement Plan goals, Advisory Council's mission, and the teachers' Individual Professional Development Plans—are in sync. Another alignment is that budget resources support individual academic needs of students as well as instructional needs of teachers. Some of the programs available include: Reading Mastery, Accelerated Reading, Sunshine Math, and Open Court, a newly adopted countywide series to develop higher-order thinking skills. The principal works hands-on with the staff and the staff reports that she has a "phenomenal" handle on how each and every child is progressing.

RESULTS: 93% of Grade 3 students scored a Level 3 or above on the FCAT Reading Test

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Signing and annotating every student's Report Card is a principal accountability tool
- Tracking through a variety of benchmarks including grade books, portfolios, and 2nd-5th grade STAR tests
- Providing development (Florida Literacy, Reading Excellence, Spanish Immersion for teachers and parents)

INTENSIFY COMMUNICATIONS: Gilchrist is committed to communicating with all of its stakeholders. Sensitivity to culture is an important element in "how" information is communicated, and stakeholders are involved. With many ethnicities to celebrate, the school has a special book proudly displayed in the media center, which is created and illustrated by students, with descriptions of countries. Parents serve as guest speakers sharing information about their culture. The school newsletter is written in English, Spanish and Korean. Parents and students feel their cultural uniqueness is appreciated. This communication has paid off with numbers of parents and businesses volunteering and tutoring. An active PTA does paperwork and other support tasks so that teachers can be freed to maximize instructional time.

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

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Developing a glossary of educational terms to help parents better understand school communications
- Creating opportunities (presentations, literature, and events) that encourage students to think globally
- Using campus space to highlight cultures through displays, patchwork quilts, art and composition

CULTURE OF SUCCESS: Success is expected and accountability is the norm. Strategies make it happen. Creative scheduling and the school reports help staff to narrowly focus student efforts on the mastery of skills. Student goals are developed for school and for home—everyone has a responsibility and role at Gilchrist. The school received and used grant funding to stage a two-day strategic planning event when school was out, that significantly contributed to the school's mission development. Other grants, teacher-generated, improve educational delivery in student intervention, enrichment and remediation. Funding enhancements also support an extra Guidance Counselor and the Tutor Train program that gives extra and individual help to students with specific needs.

RESULTS: 89% of Grade 5 students scored a Level 3 or above on the FCAT Math Test

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Creating and funding after-school and summer programs that give students an achievement edge
- Pursuing brain research and accelerated learning strategies for input into teaching and learning styles
- Broadcasting daily messages for, about, and by students, including kindergarteners who learned to read