

MEET THE NEW LEADERS

Council for Educational Change Strengthens Educational Leadership

LEADER: Ms. Edna Owen, Gilchrist Elementary Principal, Leon County

There is nothing better than being a principal and there is nothing more important than supporting and nurturing principal leadership,” Edna Owens believes. “Empowered leadership directly impacts student achievement.”

Edna Owens is Principal of Gilchrist Elementary and an advocate for initiatives and resources that develop principal leadership skills and student achievement strategies. Interviewed at the Council’s Summer Leadership Academy, Owens had high praise for the Academy’s concept and goals:

“It is very important for Principals to have opportunities to sharpen existing skills and to learn new ones. It is also essential for us to have a chance to network with each other for support and to share ideas. The Academy was topnotch--presenters, the interactive format, the onsite technology lab, and the extra assistance from veteran mentors.”



**Gilchrist Elementary Principal
Edna Owens**

A highlight of the Academy Week for Ms. Owens was the Council’s data assessment tools, SPSnapshot™ and the Florida School Report©, shared with the participants. *“They offered tremendous insight and information about student performance--layered, detailed, yet very user friendly. You cannot plan and implement student achievement without the data,”* Owens offered.

Principal Owens’ philosophy and practice are a winning combination. Gilchrist’s school grades for the last three years: 2000: A; 2001: A; 2002: A; and 2003, A. Gilchrist is also one of the 20 High Performing Elementary Schools identified by the Council for Educational Change’s Florida School Report. A research team, headed by the Council and Florida Atlantic University spent time at the school discovering what makes Gilchrist so successful. Among their findings were:

Strong alignment of purpose to practice: All supporting elements--District mission, School Improvement Plan goals, Advisory Council’s mission, budget resources and the teachers’ Individual Professional Development Plans--are in sync. Hands-on leadership: 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.

Monitoring: Progress is tracked through a variety of benchmarks including grade books, report cards and portfolios. Creating a culture of success: Success is expected and accountability is the norm. 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 that significantly contributed to the school’s mission development.

Going above and beyond: The school created after-school and summer programs to give students an achievement edge. They sought and received funding to implement the programs.