

Preliminary Report, Highlights: Paxon High School, Duval County

ACADEMICS, ARTS AND DREAMERS: Paxon School for Advanced Studies is an academic studies magnet with a culturally diverse student body. School goals go beyond concern for academic standards and include creating life-long learners who are caring, committed to excellence and driven by integrity and confidence. Staff at Paxon strive to foster in their students an appreciation for the arts in addition to proficiency with technology. They encourage students to become pragmatic dreamers. All stakeholders support the rigors of the curriculum and high academic standards. Instructional methods are fairly traditional. A careful review of each student takes place prior to attending to make sure his or her educational needs can be best met at Paxon.

Results: Paxon was identified by *Newsweek* as one of the top performing high schools in the nation.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Balancing life skills and academic goals; fostering life-long learning in students
- A shared sense of purpose by all stakeholders with regard to high academic standards
- Attention given to matching student needs to opportunities at Paxon

VITAL ROLE OF PARENTS: Parents play a vital role in the success of students - beginning with admission. Staff stresses to parents throughout the application process their need to be conscientious in supporting the school, as well as their own student's intellectual pursuits. Parents are encouraged to stay involved in learning utilizing school and tutoring resources as needed. An Open House and monthly newsletter outline expectations and keep parents informed throughout the year. Parents welcome feedback about their student's academic performance as an opportunity to make sure they are on track and make adjustments as needed. An active Parent Teacher Organization and School Improvement Team allow additional opportunities for communication and input from parents who feel fortunate to be part of the academic environment.

Results: School Grade: 2002 A; 2003 A.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Expectations for parent involvement shared from day one
- Lines of communication open between teachers and parents to include frequent feedback regarding student progress
- Parents afforded opportunities to stay informed and involved in decision making

HIGH STANDARDS AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY: With academic standards high, staff at Paxon have taken the time to make sure additional supports are in place. Staff are proactive in screening for any skill areas that might make it more difficult for students to be successful, with the school going to great lengths to remediate students and move them forward. Particular attention is given to students in grade nine, so they will move ahead with a solid set of skills as they face the rigorous curriculum including AP and IB coursework. Remedial programs are available on Saturdays. Students are also given an opportunity to take two language arts classes in their first year, if needed, with reading, comprehension, and vocabulary being emphasized. CRISS strategies are incorporated into the curriculum and note taking skills are taught as necessary. Students help decide how they would like to be recognized for their school achievement and recently chose a school carnival. Students are also recognized through awards programs at the end of the school year.

Results: Students who are prepared and motivated to achieve at the highest levels.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Building in support for students facing high academic standards
- Strengthening skills, such as reading, that support student success in rigorous courses
- Students involved in decisions involving recognition of their achievements