

## Preliminary Report, Highlights: West Shore Jr. / Sr. High School, Brevard County

**CRITICAL THINKING AND REFLECTION:** West Shore Jr./Sr. High School is Brevard County's first public school of choice. Students are committed to learning and the curriculum is designed for academic acceleration through dual enrollment, Advanced Placement courses and Florida High School on-line. In addition to standardized and teacher made tests, students develop extensive portfolios representing what they can do with what they know. The culminating Senior Project is rigorous, comprehensive and required for graduation. Students are encouraged to build critical-thinking skills and "think beyond the data given". Social studies students are asked to fashion their own country, reflecting on trade, taxes, laws and customs. All subjects incorporate opportunities for self-reflection, introspection and higher-order thinking.

**Results:** School Grade: 2002 A

**Practices that Promote High Performance:**

- Incorporating self reflection into the challenging curriculum to keep learning meaningful
- Portfolio assessment to supplement more traditional teacher and standardized tests
- Providing opportunities for students to apply what they have learned and "think beyond the data"

**COMMITMENT TO STUDENT SUCCESS:** A positive school environment is fostered by support from teachers, administration and parents. The climate of the school is businesslike, yet friendly. Everyone knows they have a job to do and is confident they can do it well. Teachers are offered support through professional development, especially in areas of FCAT and AP instruction, and are encouraged to attend national conferences. Faculty is dedicated and demonstrates a genuine interest in students, often staying extra hours to avail themselves to students for tutoring. Students continue in the same homeroom throughout their time at school fostering mentoring relationships with teachers. The principal is shown a high degree of respect for her comprehensive knowledge and interest in the faculty's opinion's and ideas. Additionally, she is given considerable autonomy by the district to lead her school. Parents understand that higher-order academic skills and positive behavior will be the focus throughout the six-year course of study.

**Results:** Students remain committed: West Shore's graduation rate is 5% higher than the district and 18% higher than the state for students who graduated within four years of entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Practices that Promote High Performance:**

- Teachers, parents, and administrators with a common focus
- Teachers going the "extra mile" in providing supplemental opportunities for students
- Faculty mentor the same group of students for four years

**CELEBRATE SUCCESS/SHARED VISION:** West Shore Jr./Sr. High has a clear mission and ensures that students and teachers have what they need to fulfill that mission. Staff spent valuable time developing the mission and strategic plan and then clearly communicated that message to all stakeholders, taking time to ensure understanding. Multiple grants have supported programs that might not have otherwise been possible; they have also been instrumental in providing dictionaries for all students and resources for faculty to attend conferences. West Shore takes pride in the efforts and accomplishments of its students. The school makes sure to take time to celebrate successes along the way, recognizing outstanding performance of students and teachers at school programs and elsewhere. Social activities, including a pep rally and barbeque direct students to focus on the importance of putting forth their best efforts. Community support promotes activities such as career day and the PTA provides resources for students to attend state and national level conferences and academic competitions, helping students graduate prepared to enter the workforce and post secondary education.

**Results:** High performance: Average SAT score 1134.

**Practices that Promote High Performance:**

- All staff involved in the development of a clear mission and plan
- Seeking funding sources beyond what is allocated to support student and faculty needs
- Informally and formally celebrating efforts and successes of students and faculty