

Preliminary Report, Highlights: Woodrow Wilson Middle, Hillsborough County

A HISTORY OF TRADITION: Woodrow Wilson Middle School embraces a *Tradition of Excellence* as the District's oldest school. There have been numerous structural additions throughout its existence, however, the charm of the school significantly contributes to the warm, friendly, appeal, and welcoming attitude of the school. Each morning starts with the "blowing of the bugle" – a tradition that dates back to the school's earliest days when a local bugler would play "Revile" and summon the students from the neighborhood to rally around the flagpole for its raising and the beginning of school. At the end of the day "Taps" is played as the students leave. History of these traditions is shared with students and has helped to retain close ties with the community and alumni generating a family heritage of excellence in education.

Results: Strong community ties; 70% of students' parents involved in school activities, planning, and decision-making.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Embracing school tradition creating an ongoing link between school and community
- Providing meaningful opportunities for parent and community involvement
- Sharing school history and tradition with current students creating a tie to the larger school community and history of excellence in education

"REAL WORLD" CURRICULUM: Academic instruction is clearly the focus. The standards at the school level are set above the state standards while accountability permeates all levels. Further, staff at Woodrow Wilson Middle are able to embed academic curriculum and higher order skills in an interesting and creative curriculum. Wilson's instructional practices take on many local issues affecting Floridians, drawn from current events and local headlines. Another example is the outdoor iguana lab, which is home to many local species. Nesting habits are documented and offspring tracked as part of the science project rooted in Florida's own environment. *Tackle Math*, a program sponsored by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers professional football team, builds skills in another area of interest to students and faculty.

Results: FCAT reading and math scores exceed district and state levels with math in grades 6 through 8 across the board. School grades: 2002, A; 2003, A.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- Academic accountability at all levels
- Setting individual and grade level standards high
- Maintaining student interest and motivation by embedding important skills in a meaningful and interesting context

PROFESSIONALISM: Teachers are treated as professionals and receive respect from students, parents, and community. They respond with energy for their charges with very low teacher turnover. As new faculty are interviewed high expectations are communicated. Once on staff a mentoring program is in place. New staff are teamed within their grade level as a primary touchstone resource with vertical teaming exposing them to expectations for student outcomes at other grade levels. This brings teachers into the framework of school wide excellence. Overseeing this process from behind a continuously open door, is the readily accessible principal.

Results: Teacher turnover is historically <2%; High teacher morale; Teachers with advanced degrees tops 42%.

Practices that Promote High Performance:

- High standards and high expectations modeled by veteran teachers
- Mentoring and in-service programs to make sure new teachers have necessary skills and support
- Communication and vertical teaming between levels with principal oversight