

Bayview Elementary School – Broward County

KEY THEMES:

- High expectations for students
- Parent involvement
- Focus on higher order thinking skills

BEST PRACTICES:

- Demand Reading, Writing, and Math on early release days
- Curriculum mapping
- Use of data maps
- Literacy block
- FCAT Camp
- Super Math

LEADING CHANGE: CREATING SCHOOL CULTURE

Leadership

The teachers describe their Principal as "totally focused," committed to children, hands-on and an excellent communicator. The teachers feel they play a major role in the schools curricular decision-making, and that the Principal trusts and empowers them. Teachers are provided many opportunities to demonstrate leadership by chairing committees or training their peers. The principal has been an educator for 29 years, with ten years as a principal. The last two years have been at Bayview.

Personnel

There is very little turnover at Bayview. One teacher shared that she had been applying at Bayview for seven years before she was hired. Selection of personnel is largely based on input from staff to the administration and matched to the needs of the school. The district with policy and contractual restraints controls much of the selection process. To be successful at Bayview, a teacher has to be a team player, hard working, cooperative and love children.

The county through the NESS program does mentoring formally. At the school site mentoring is more closely aligned to the grade level team. Many teachers at Bayview have between 20-30 years of experience and are more than willing to work with new teachers. They are not critical or not understanding of what it was like starting out. The school's administration encourages teachers to take leadership roles within the school. It is very common with the administrators here to encourage teachers to get more involved in pursuing school administration as a goal for future careers.

Setting

Bayview Elementary School was totally rebuilt and rededicated for the 2002-03 school year. It is located approximately one-half mile from Ft. Lauderdale Beach in an affluent residential community. Adjacent to the school is a City of Ft. Lauderdale Park. Over 200 students attend Bayview on reassignment based on parent requests. The school and grounds are well maintained. The remnants of a portable school are currently being dismantled and removed from the campus.

Bayview is very much a community school as most parents either live or work in the neighborhood. Galleria Mall is located less than a quarter of a mile from the school and downtown Ft. Lauderdale is within three miles of the campus.

Climate and Culture

Bayview is a school where parent and students feel welcomed. The parents, teachers, and administrators have very high expectations for every student. Communication is open and innovation is encouraged. Emphasis is place on training, data analysis and research. Teachers keep benchmarks in their plan books. FCAT strategies are immersed throughout the curriculum. One teacher shared, "we are teaching our students how to be effective readers and writers, and wonderful mathematicians." They are constantly encouraged to go on to what is expected. Teachers don't want to leave Bayview.

The parents, teachers and administration spoke of the school with genuine warmth and affection that helps you understand why they succeed.

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE: DATA DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING

Resources

The school shares a general sense that the budget is essentially set by the district with little latitude at the site for implementation. Dollars are allocated based on student and program enrollments and salaries utilize approximately 93% of the budget. Of the monies that would be considered discretionary, teachers believed they had a great deal of input with the administration in determining how to most effectively spend those dollars. Community partners and the PTA are also very generous with the school. The school is also the recipient of multiple grants. The staff advised they are constantly on the look out for grants for their school. The teachers stated that they had been provided with all kinds of training in math, reading and writing. When a teacher goes to training, they have to come back and provide the training for other staff members. Training that is attended is "need based." Test scores are analyzed, students' strengths and weaknesses are analyzed and training is selected based on that information.

The school system provides time to fulfill professional responsibilities through "early release" and teacher "work days." Also, release time is provided when teachers have student support meetings. This is done through the use of a "permanent" substitute teacher at Bayview.

Information Management

All teachers have access to the district database warehouse. Additionally, the administration took all of the test scores from the previous year and broke them down according to grade levels, according to benchmarks, showing the number of students that scored correctly on that portion of the test. The administration went through the data to determine what their needs were and used that as a starting point to initiate results for improvement.

The school's improvement plan is posted in the office, the teacher handbook, the parent newsletter and is posted on the school's website. Teachers advised that student assessment drives their instruction. Curriculum mapping is used from the data that is collected. The teachers use data to evaluate goal attainment by seeing the students' scores vary from year to year. Bayview scores do gain from year to year, but the gains are consecutive, which demonstrates to us that the strategies and materials that the school is using are effective.

COMMUNICATING CHANGE: PROFESSIONAL TEAMWORK

Instruction

Bayview participates in leveling. Students are grouped according to learning needs based upon 3-5 measurements of data. Grades K-5 have a "literacy block" the first 1.5 hours of each day. The teacher divides their reading class into two or three subgroups. These leveled groups are also ability grouped based on additional on-going classroom assessments. Teachers continuously evaluate individual student progress and meet their needs accordingly. The high needs group at each grade level consists of a smaller number of students, is staffed with additional support personnel and is provided with additional resource materials.

First through fifth grades group for math using a similar process. Third and fourth grade groups are also leveled for writing. The teachers and administration believe this practice allows them to meet the individual needs of each Bayview student. To assist in elevating math scores, Bayview has a math camp, Math Superstars, Mad Math Minutes, Super Math and a Math Club. Additionally, teachers are using commercial products such as Riverdeep Edvantage and the CCC Management System.

Teachers said, "We are constantly in training, retraining and reinforcing training, enhancing what works and eliminating what doesn't bringing us closer to our goals." For the past two years teachers have been participating in a staff development activity, which focuses on critical thinking skills, Sunshine State Standards, benchmarks, and FCAT writing strategies. Student needs in reading and writing are determined through data analysis and authentic student work to determine the focus of each training session. Through training, teachers learned specific strategies using the interest articles from current periodicals to improve reading and writing skills. Additionally, they learned how to develop high-order questions based on the reading benchmarks. After participating in the training, kindergarten through fifth grade teachers learned how to use an expository and narrative step-by-step reading model.

It became evident to the staff a couple of years ago that writing scores needed to improve. The school partnered with a sister school to hire a consultant to develop a writing program to bring writing scores up. Scores have risen dramatically in writing since the adoption of this program. This program was a result of the staff seeing a need and the administration working with the faculty to satisfy that need. This program has proven to be one of the most successful in having an overall skill impact from kindergarten through fifth grade.

Bayview also established an eight member Reading Cadre with a neighboring school for the purpose of building capacity within both schools and continued staff development. This cadre meets regularly to prepare materials, model lessons in the classrooms and provide assistance to other teachers. The Principal and teachers identified this training as significant in their attainment and maintenance of their "A" rating.

All the teachers are trained on how to write FCAT type questions. Bayview teachers participate in curriculum mapping by grade level to assure that "we are all on the same page." The teachers advised that all third and fourth grade students know how to write prompts.

Bayview also participates in a reading competition sponsored by the Sun Sentinel newspaper and the Miami Dolphins. Bayview won first place in Broward County. Parents and community volunteers are very active with this program, which promotes reading and comprehension skills. The volunteer who facilitates this program received the "Volunteer of the Year" award for the State for Region 2.

Parents spoke almost as reverently about the Bayview teaching staff. They describe the school staff and administration as running like a "well oiled machine."

The parents said that at Bayview no child gets left behind, that the teachers take care of the high and low level achievers so that every child experiences success. They also said the staff is continuously challenging students to do better and advising parents what they need to do at home to support their children's learning.

Communication

Agendas are given to every child and described by parents as a "wonderful" way to communicate with parents and keep them informed on a daily basis. Other traditional means are also used to communicate with parents such as through PTA, the SAC team, etc. Teachers are kept informed through grade level representatives, weekly faculty meetings, and are also represented on the SAC team.

Decision-Making

"We are very fortunate to have a great SAC team. We also have our PTA, they are very involved in helping us make decisions." These are two avenues that parents can use to become involved in decision making at Bayview. Teachers are provided the team leader process as a way to get involved in decision-making at the school. Teams meet one full day a month; substitute teachers are hired to make this possible. The team leaders bring issues to the table and they go back to their team and get input, which is used to make decisions. Additionally, weekly Tuesday meetings are held and provide all faculty with an avenue to get involved in a lot of curriculum decisions.

Parent and Community Involvement

The administration, teachers and parents all proudly shared that, Bayview has a lot of activities for parents, and has the highest volunteer rates in the county. "We had over 7,000 volunteer hours last year." Parents are welcome into classrooms, provide and receive training, host fundraisers, and participate in a variety of ways at Bayview.

The community is also involved, for example in partnerships with Borders and Outback. Anybody that wants to come in the community is welcomed. "We all work together. We share. We are a team. All of the people in the community know what we're doing." There are numerous ways that make parents, students, teachers and the community "feel like we're all part of one family."

EVALUATING CHANGE: REFLECTION AND CELEBRATION

Accountability

Expectations for student success are very high at Bayview Elementary. The administration, faculty and parents set the tone for student success and high goals. The school's location lends itself to some rewarding partnerships with local businesses. With a city-run park and recreation center adjacent to the campus, Bayview has become a focal point in the community. The administrators, teachers and parents are always on the lookout to recruit volunteers and partners for the school. Bayview logged 7,000 volunteer hours during the 2001-02 school year and expects to exceed that during the 2002-03 school year. There is an expectation at Bayview by the staff and the parents that they (the parents) will be involved at the school. Parents told us that they feel very welcome at Bayview and people move to this community just so their children can attend this school.

Parents advised that the school provides tours around the campus and classrooms for new parents to acclimate them to the goals and high expectations held at Bayview. During the first week of school there is a volunteer breakfast where the school staff explains all the facets of what is going on at Bayview.

The school also hosts a "Fall Social" every September as a "meet and greet" for parents and teachers. The school's goals are identified and the parents' roles in achieving them are identified. The parents also shared that the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) and SAC (Student Advisory Council) work hand-in-hand at this school to assure that they are on the same page at the same time.

The staff holds the same high expectations for themselves as the parents do for their children. There is a real sense of "everyone can be successful here." The parents and teachers are instilled with the belief that theirs is a school of excellence that is continually striving to "raise the bar." The parents, administration, teachers and students view Bayview as an extension of their families.

Students are required to maintain "agendas" or "reminder binders" depending on grade level. These documents are brought home daily for parental signature. They identify the students' goals, achievements, progress, and homework and identify what the parent can do to assist their child at school. The document identifies what the student did that day, how well they did it and what the home can do to continue enrichment. Parents and teachers agreed, that in addition to teaching the students responsibility and time management, the "reminder binders" keep parents up to date on a regular basis, so there is never a "surprise" when report cards are issued.

Parents and students are continually informed of the school's goals, objectives, mission and progress toward achieving them through weekly newsletters, the school website, the monthly PTA newspaper and the student "agendas" and "reminder binders."

Through weekly, monthly and quarterly testing the administration is continually giving teachers feedback on what's working well, not so well, and the tools to correct and improve what's not going well.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

School Demographic Information

Bayview Elementary is located in the Broward County School District in a residential neighborhood in northeast Ft. Lauderdale. The school employs 26 instructional staff and two administrators. Approximately 600 students attend Bayview. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the students at Bayview is as follows: 2.8% African American, 1.6% Asian, 9.9% Hispanic, 1.9% multi-racial and 83.8% White. 7.3% of Bayview students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The average class size is 26.6 students. 11.4% of Bayview students are classified as having disabilities, 6.5% are gifted and 7.5% are LEP. Bayview is designated as an "A" school by the Florida Department of Education. This school has a very low personnel turnover rate with just two new teachers being hired this year.

Goals**Goal 1:**

Readiness to Start School: Evaluated 86 students with 81 meeting the State's expectation for readiness.

Goal 3:

Student Performance: In grade four, tested 80 students on the FCAT writing assessment, with a school average score of 4.3. (District average was 3.5 and the State average was 3.4) FCAT Reading scores were higher than the State or district average. FCAT norm referenced test results were reported by median national percentile (NPR) and were higher than the district and State in every category. On the FCAT accountability report 96% of the third grade students tested scored at level 3 or above and 95% of the fourth graders tested on the writing instrument scored 3.0 or higher and 3.5 or higher.

Goal 4:

Learning Environment: Reported that 7.7% new instructional staff were hired for the 2001-02 school year as compared to the district average of 17.5%. The student absentee rate was 2% higher than the district average for students absent 11-20 days and 1.6% lower than the district average for students absent 21 days or more. Leave days for teachers were 4 days lower than the district average (5.6 days for Bayview and 9.6 days for the district). Administrator absences were 11.0 days, which is slightly lower than the district's average.

Goal 5:

School Safety Environment: Reported a total of six incidents for the 2001-02 school year.

Goal 6:

Teachers and Staff: Reported 30.4% of the instructional staff as holding a Masters Degree or higher. Collectively, Bayview's teachers have an average of 18.4 years of experience.