

## Ludlam Elementary School—Miami-Dade

### KEY THEMES:

- Use of student achievement data to guide instruction
- School-wide grade level planning
- Integrated use of technology in teaching and learning
- School-wide block scheduling to maximize learning, reduce fragmented instructional time and decrease class size during basic subjects
- Specialized small group instruction for underachieving students delivered by a certified teacher
- Faculty input in curriculum decisions

### BEST PRACTICES:

- Block scheduling eliminates fragmented instructional time and reduces class size during language arts and mathematics
- School-wide emphasis on writing and responding to writing prompts on a monthly basis
- Teachers on adjacent grade levels meet on a monthly basis to review student progress and exchange instructional ideas
- Emphasis on students working with other students (i.e. peer editing of work, buddy reading)
- Involving parents and the community in the education of all the students—(i.e. recruiting them to read to students during lunchtime)
- Facilitating instruction by minimizing and/or streamlining the amount of paper work teachers are required to complete

### LEADING CHANGE: CREATING SCHOOL CULTURE

#### Leadership

The principal has been at Ludlam for the last two and a half years and is a veteran administrator with eight years experience as an assistant principal and twenty-two years in education.

The assistant principal is an effective assistant principal at Ludlum. The principal and assistant principal work closely together and make an effective team. They believe in making every effort to maximize instructional time for students and teachers. They use the schedule and budget to creatively reduce class size at critical times during the day. As professional educators, they work collaboratively to analyze student data and develop strategies or programs to improve teaching and learning. The administration tries to capitalize on the strengths of the staff members by providing ample time for teachers to share their expertise and knowledge with their colleagues.

The administration encourages the staff to assume leadership roles. Administration respects the work done by teachers and involves them in the leadership process. The staff is flexible and tuned in to the changing needs of a diverse group of students from a boundary that extends through several feeder patterns. Regularly scheduled meetings with administration as well as individual input assure that teachers play a key leadership role at Ludlam.

The “open door” policy of the administration establishes an atmosphere of collegiality and professionalism. The school serves a very diverse population of students with a wide range of abilities and backgrounds. The school uses programs, such as the Multicultural Exchange Program, to highlight the cultural diversity of our students with other schools in the county. The school’s motto, “Many Faces—One Goal” exemplifies their quest for educational excellence for all.

#### Personnel

The administration involves teachers in the selection process. Interview questions are discussed and agreed on that will help in the selection of a new staff member that will hopefully become a successful team member.

New personnel are encouraged to “buddy up” with veteran staff members to learn about the culture and teaching methods of Ludlam. This buddy program also encourages new staff members to feel at home as part of the Ludlam team. The staff is a proud team that works very hard to meet the needs of all students.

Faculty meetings are more staff development in nature by providing information, curriculum strategies, and ideas that will help teachers in the classroom.

### **Setting**

Ludlam Elementary School is located in Southern Miami Dade. The school opened in the fall of 1959. The school site is in an older residential neighborhood. The outside of the school is well kept and the office, media center and art room were renovated last year.

The school houses the Region 5 Gifted Program that services over 200 full-time gifted students from 31 area schools.

### **Climate and Culture**

The school climate is one of high expectation and is filled with many challenges. The gifted program offers its own unique set of challenges. When coupled with the needs of a diverse neighborhood community of students, Ludlam has a very difficult task. They have accepted the challenge and are meeting the needs of their diverse population.

Teacher attendance is high and staff turnover low. Although they have a lot of pressures, the school administration works hard at reducing stress by focusing on the positive accomplishments. There is a collective pride in the school and a collective good feeling about being there.

## **BUILDING KNOWLEDGE: DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING**

### **Resources**

All types of funding sources are explored to enhance the budget. The PTA is involved in fundraising and the administration and teachers are constantly looking for grants to help provide additional funding for the school. The PTA fully funds the multicultural programs at \$3,000 per year. The children and the field trip the children take is totally funded by the PTA. The PTA also gives an allowance to each teacher for classroom supplies. The PTA funds ribbons, awards and incentives, such as reading incentives for the kids. They also print the students' agendas, used to communicate with parents. In addition, the PTA has been instrumental in helping the school stay up to date with their technology program by purchasing computer equipment for the classrooms.

Email is used to communicate needs and potential sources of funding between teachers and administrators. Teachers are also actively involved through grade chair meetings and direct contact with the principal concerning budget decisions that affect their programs.

The Dade Partners Program provides resources from local businesses that are utilized in a variety of ways to offer opportunities for the students. Through an Annenberg Challenge grant, they were able attend a technology conference in New York.

The A+ FCAT money was used for bonuses for teachers and staff. Additionally, it was used to hire substitutes to work with small groups of children, assist with tutoring in the classrooms and run a Saturday school.

The school receives additional funds from the district through the Excellence Program. The school writes a proposal to receive these funds. This program is designed to provide enhancement services in language arts for children functioning high academically, but are not classified as gifted. The program is implemented during school hours with second and third grade children. It provides a double bonus, because while some children are being pulled out for additional enrichment activities, their teachers are left with smaller classes to work with the kids that need additional help.

### **Information Management**

Data is shared with parents on a school wide basis and for their children on an individual basis. Parents can access data about the school online at Ludlam's school website.

Electronic grade books are used by teachers and monitored by administration and guidance to insure successful student progress. Constant monitoring of data gives the school a good picture of what is happening in the classroom and how goals are being met. This approach helps to track what the students are learning and what specific things they need to work on.

Child study teams access data to help make decisions on educational goals and plans for students with special needs. A variety of data sources are used to work with outside agencies to set up interventions for students that require outside help.

## **COMMUNICATING CHANGE: PROFESSIONAL TEAMWORK**

### **Instruction**

The district and school goals are aligned with the Sunshine States Standards. Together they form the foundation for instructional strategies at Ludlam. Teachers are given much latitude in choosing programs that meet the needs of their students. Teachers meet by grade level on a regular basis in order to plan and align their instruction across classrooms.

Ludlam has a wealth of materials that are shared for instruction. All computers are linked to the Internet and technology is used as a tool for finding information. They also employ computer programs to motivate reading and math through technology. The school offers additional challenges for bright students that are not qualified as gifted. Additional staff has been hired to work with this group of students, especially kids that are having problems.

With writing, the school has monthly prompts for the children respond to. The principal then meets with the teachers to strategize and review responses the children have written. Even in math, teachers and the principal work together on periodic assessments.

FCAT strategies are woven throughout the curriculum. Teacher made and commercial materials are used to insure that students are prepared for the standards they have to meet. Teachers aim high to achieve their goals. Teachers want students to achieve a six in writing therefore aiming for an imaginary seven or eight.

### **Communication**

Teachers meet in grade level teams to discuss curriculum and programs. This is made easier because of block scheduling worked out by the assistant principal. The principal keeps a log, particularly of students making D's or F's in critical areas, and meets with grade-level teams regularly. Teachers also meet with ESE and ESOL staff. Support personnel meet at least on a monthly basis with grade level teachers to discuss children's needs.

An open door policy by administration supplements the monthly meetings for individual and groups of teachers. Additionally, teachers are surveyed regularly to determine needs.

Parents are kept informed of their child's progress through conferences, agendas, report cards, newsletters, and portfolios. Teachers send home weekly packets with samples of work that the children have completed. This also includes an "agenda" used to communicate with parents. Parents usually use it to jot notes to the teacher and back and forth. Many parents are involved directly with the school as volunteers and members of school organizations such as the Advisory Council and the PTA.

### **Decision Making**

The administration works closely with the staff in making sure the lines of communication remain open. Teachers are an important part of the decision making process and they appreciate the open door policy of administration.

The leadership team is composed of the administration, the principal and assistant principal, four lead grade chair person positions, including one for the primary grade, one for the intermediate grade, one for the gifted department, and one for ESE.

Teachers feel that they have the latitude to make decisions that affect their ability to teach in their classrooms. They feel they have a critical voice in the use of curriculum materials that fit their teaching style and the learning style of their students. They especially are proud of their involvement with selection of new teachers and programs that contribute to the success of the school.

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

A key ingredient in the success of Ludlam Elementary is the commitment by parents to help out and be actively involved in their children's education. Over a third of the students are bussed into Ludlam and the parents take a very active role in the school. They support the school through cooperation, volunteer work, and financial help.

Parent involvement at Ludlam is a very important ingredient that contributes to the success of the school. The PTA goes beyond fundraising but plans many activities to get the community together.

Parents volunteer to read to children during lunchtime. The program is called "Lunch Bunch."

## **EVALUATING CHANGE: REFLECTION AND CELEBRATION**

### **Accountability**

The staff at Ludlam believes that every child is important and that every child can learn. They teachers believe that they work for the students, parents, and the community and are personally responsible for the progress of the students. They focus on students who are having difficulties and work on bringing the best out of them.

Teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss test scores and to improve student tracking. Meetings are held with administration and with teachers of other grade levels to insure that students are held accountable in a consistent manor. Individual students are also discussed at these meetings to insure that they show growth in all areas.

Cultural sensitivity is demonstrated through Ludlam's multicultural program. The program involves four neighboring schools. Each school represents a different culture and shares programs with the other schools addressing the differences and similarities of the diverse cultures. Children from Ludlam are teamed with the kids from these schools.

Parents are invited in before school starts and are given an orientation tour. New parents to the community are paired up with other parents to help them become familiar and comfortable with the culture and operation of the school.

Students participate in a "Buddy" program. This program pairs a new student with a buddy who helps them feel welcome and teaches them the ins and outs of the school.

A diverse group is targeted and recruited for the school improvement team so that the team is demographically represented. Parents are actively involved in the decision making process at Ludlam. Parent groups have direct input in the budgeting process.

The teachers are involved through an open door policy with administration. Groups and individual teachers are welcomed to suggest and monitor how monies are being spent to improve the educational program at Ludlum.

Students are constantly monitored and assessed. The teachers do a school wide monthly writing prompt that is evaluated within the classroom and at grade level meetings and progress is charted from one month to the next. Teachers use computer assisted instruction assessments to determine what books are appropriate for the students to read. Students' reading is constantly monitored through the Accelerated Reading Program.

Questioning paradigms assure that students are challenged with higher order thinking skills. Teachers encourage students to analyze, synthesize, evaluate and draw conclusions to share with each other and their teacher.

Accommodations for ESE and ESOL students are made for the FCAT. These include smaller groups, one on one testing, translators, and extended time accommodations. These students are usually administered the test by their resource teacher.

Teachers make good use of electronic grade books and agendas to monitor students and report their progress to the parents on a regular basis.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

### **School Demographics**

Ludlam Elementary is located in the south end of the Miami Dade County School District in an older residential neighborhood. The school employs 36 instructional staff and two administrators. Ludlam has approximately 600 students (14.2% African American, 4.8% Asian, 53.5% Hispanic, 4.5% Multi-racial and 22.6% Caucasian). 50.4% of Ludlam students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The average class size in grades K -5 is 22.3. Approximately 34.5% of Ludlam students are classified as gifted, 29.7% are LEP, and 5.8% of the students are classified as having disabilities. Ludlam has a 91% stability rate, meaning that 91% of the students enrolled in October are also enrolled in February. Teachers at Ludlam have an average of 13.9 years of experience. Ludlam has been designated as an "A" school by the Florida Department of Education for the past two years.

### Ethnic/Racial %

Hispanic	53.5
Caucasian	22.6
African American	14.2
Asian	4.8
Multi-racial	4.5

#### Goals

##### Goal 1:

**Readiness to Start School:** Tested 96 Kindergarteners for their readiness to begin school. 85 students met the state's criteria, meaning that 88.3% of Ludlam's K students met the State's expectation for readiness.

##### Goal 3:

**Student Performance:** In grade four, 94 students were tested on the FCAT writing assessment, with a school average score of 3.4. (District average was 3.3 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 and were higher than the district and State in every category. On the FCAT accountability report 80% of the fourth graders tested on the writing instrument scored 3.0 or higher.

##### Goal 4:

**Learning Environment:** Reporting 16.7% new instructional staff was hired for the 2001-02 school year as compared to the district average of 12.5%. The absentee rate was 1% lower than the district average for students absent 11-20 days and 2.2% lower than the district average for students absent 21 days or more. Leave days for teachers were comparable to the district average. Administrator absences were 4.2 days lower than the district's average for the year.

##### Goal 5:

**School Safety Environment:** Reported a total of twenty-three incidents for the 2001-02 school year. The majority of the reported incidents were classified as "fighting."

##### Goal 6:

**Teachers and Staff:** Ludlam reported 35.3% of the instructional staff as holding a Masters Degree or higher.