

## **Martin Luther King Middle School—Santa Rosa County**

### **KEY THEMES:**

- Commitment to caring
- Treating every student as the most important student
- Use of student achievement data to guide instruction
- School-wide team planning
- Integrated use of technology in teaching and learning
- School-wide team scheduling to allow for common planning
- Specialized instruction for underachieving students
- Staff leadership and input with administration
- Parent investment in school, with many parents who were once students

### **BEST PRACTICES:**

- Common team planning times are provided to meet and discuss the total needs of the students with team members, special teachers and administrators.
- School-wide emphasis on writing and responding to writing prompts on a regular basis provide good evaluation of writing progress.
- Classroom teachers from each grade level meet with other grade level teachers to discuss strategies that will improve the vertical flow of instruction.
- Involvement of parents and the community in the education of all the students through good communication is emphasized and practiced.

### **LEADING CHANGE: CREATING SCHOOL CULTURE**

#### **Leadership**

The principal has been at King Middle for the past thirty-one years and served as the principal for the past six years. The principal knows the school, the community, the students and their parents having personally taught many of the parents in the community when they were students at King Middle.

The principal believes that “Children don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care. And if you care about them, they are going to work for you.” This philosophy is shared by the staff and is a close knit involved community. Good communication and mutual support is very evident.

The administration is highly supportive of the staff and encourages them to take leadership roles throughout the school. The staff is involved in many leadership roles and helps to chart the successful course of King Middle. They help make critical decisions on curriculum issues, program changes, and other issues that effect the direction of the school.

#### **Personnel**

The principal is ultimately responsible for the hiring of new teachers, yet involves existing teachers in the selection process. The close working relationship with staff helps to choose teachers that will be successful team members at King Middle.

Personnel at King Middle care about their students are very aware of their needs. Additionally, teachers know the needs of the community and, have even taken bus tours of the community to better understand the students they are serving.

Turnover is minimal and is attributed to a family atmosphere where teachers feel that they make a difference.

#### **Setting**

King Middle School is located in Milton Florida. The school opened in the fall of 1959. The outside of the school is well kept and the plant’s design offers a good learning environment with good security.

## **Climate and Culture**

The school climate is one of respect. Respect for the student, for each other, for administration, and for the community. The overriding philosophy of caring is evident throughout the school starting with the principal and permeating throughout the school and the community.

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

### **Resources**

The budget for King Middle is supplemented through various means. The administration and teachers are constantly looking for grants to help provide additional funding for the school. A partnership program provides mostly non-money resources from local businesses that are utilized to rewards for students. Parents and teachers participate in fundraising activities to enhance the school program.

The district offers good inservice programs for teachers and is very responsive to the needs of teachers. The Santa Rosa County district support personnel were mentioned over and over by faculty and administration alike. The stability of district staff and the on-target inservice that is offered by the district is considered a valuable resource by the staff at King Middle.

### **Information Management**

Monitoring of data gives the school a good picture of what is happening in the classroom and how goals are being met. Teachers are provided with print outs of test results to analyze individual and group students. Item analysis is used to drive the curriculum, making necessary changes to meet the needs of students at King Middle.

Parents can access goals, program information, calendar events and data about the school online at the King Middle school website.

## **COMMUNICATING CHANGE: PROFESSIONAL TEAMWORK**

### **Instruction**

The district and school goals are aligned with the Sunshine States Standards. Teachers, with the help and guidance of administration, choose programs that best meet the needs of their students

The school offers additional challenges for bright students that are not qualified as gifted. Additional staff has been hired to work with remedial students that need extra help.

FCAT strategies are the basis the curriculum. Teacher made and commercial materials are used to insure that students are prepared for all the standards they have to meet.

### **Communication**

Teachers regularly meet to discuss curriculum and programs. This is made possible because of common team planning periods. Teachers also meet with ESE and resource staff. Administration and support personnel meet on a regular basis with teams to discuss children's needs and curriculum. Input from staff is encouraged by the administration.

Parents are kept informed of their child's progress though conferences, planners, report cards, newsletters, and phone calls. Many parents are involved directly with the school as volunteers and as members of school organizations such as the Advisory Council and the PTA.

### **Decision Making**

The administration works closely with staff in making sure the lines of communication remain open oftentimes meeting with team members on an individual basis during their common planning periods. This involves attending up to six mini faculty meetings in one day and exhibits a real interest in the ideas and concerns of teacher teams. Teachers have a great deal of input on a very personal basis, they feel that this input makes them an important part of a strong leadership team. Administrators willingness to involve them in the decision making process is a key component in the team approach at King Middle.

## **Parent and Community Involvement**

Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their children's education. Parents are only a phone call away and are very supportive of the program at King Middle. Many of these parents are former students of the school and have known the staff as both a student and a parent. Parental involvement and support at King Middle is an important ingredient that contributes to the success of the school.

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

### **Accountability**

The staff at King Middle believes in the principal's philosophy of caring for the students. When asked about their success as a school one teacher summed it up in three words. "We work hard." There is curriculum mapping, discussion of test scores and team meetings, but the overriding reason for success is caring for the students. The teachers show a genuine concern for the welfare of all students. They know the students and the parents, and don't hesitate to call if there is a sign of failure or lack of cooperation.

Cultural sensitivity is demonstrated by incorporating lessons on other cultures into the curriculum. Students are exposed to different cultures primarily through literature and class discussions.

Parents and students are invited in before school starts and are given their schedules. They are invited to take an orientation tour. Most parents are familiar and comfortable with the culture and operation of the school. New parents and students to the community are given additional time and help during the orientation process.

New teachers are welcomed and adopted by the entire staff. A mentor teacher is assigned to help them through the beginning teacher process and make them feel part of the school family.

A diverse group of parents serve on the school improvement team. The team is demographically represented. Parents and teachers are actively involved in the decision making process at King Middle. The administration has an open door policy and is readily available to students, parents and staff.

Student placement and progress is determined using teacher made pre and post tests. The teachers have developed these tests by subject area for use throughout the school. Writing prompts are administered on a regular basis to all students.

Higher order thinking skills are emphasized through a concerted effort by teachers to ask questions that require reasoning instead of factual answers alone. Teachers encourage students to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and draw conclusions, which they in turn can share with each other and their teacher.

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

Teachers make good use of planners/agendas to monitor students and report their progress to the parents on a regular basis. Parent conferences, progress reports, and phone calls insure that everyone is on the same page.

Teacher accountability is insured by administration through frequent classroom visits, test result analysis, and conferences with individual teachers and teams. The administration plays a very important role in supporting the teachers through direct interaction and follow up with students that need help.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

### **School Demographics**

King Middle is located in the Santa Rosa County School District in a rural/residential neighborhood. The school serves students from a large boundary with some students that ride a bus for more than a half an hour to get to the school. The school employs 46 instructional staff and two administrators. King Middle has 695 students. (12.9% African American, 1.4% Asian, 1.0% American Indian, 2.4% Hispanic, .6% multi-racial and 81.6% Caucasian) 58% of King Middle students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The average class size in grades 6 through 8 is 22. Approximately 2.2% of the students are gifted. There are no LEP students at King Middle. King Middle has been designated as an "A" school by the Florida Department of Education for the past two years.

### Ethnic/Racial %

Caucasian	81.7
African American	12.9
Hispanic	2.4
Asian	1.4
Native American	1.0
Multi-racial	0.6

#### Goals

##### Goal 3:

**Student Performance:** In grade eight, 180 students were tested on the FCAT Writing assessment, with 94% scoring 3.5 or higher on a scale from 1.0 (lowest) to 6.0 (highest). 8<sup>th</sup> grade FCAT Reading scores showed 62% of 177 students taking the test scoring level 3 or better on a scale from level 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). 8<sup>th</sup> grade FCAT Mathematics scores showed 74% of 176 students taking the test scoring level 3 or better on a scale from level 1 (lowest) to level 5 (highest). FCAT norm referenced test results for 6<sup>th</sup>—8<sup>th</sup> grades were reported by median national percentile and were higher than the State in every category, but sometimes lower than the district.

##### Goal 4:

**Learning Environment:** Reporting that 10.9% new instructional staff was hired for the 2001-02 school year as compared to the district average of 11.2%. The absentee rate was 4.1 days higher than the district average for students absent 11-20 days and 6.7 days higher than the district average for students absent 21 days or more. Leave days for teachers were 1.6 days lower than the district average (8.7 King Middle and 10.3 district). Administrator absences were 3.5 days higher the districts average for the year.

##### Goal 5:

**School Safety Environment:** Reported a total of thirty eight incidents for the 2001-02 school year, with the majority of incidents reported falling under the category of “fighting”.

##### Goal 6:

**Teachers and Staff:** King Middle reported 34.9% of the instructional staff as holding a Masters Degree.