

Changing a School's Culture One Individual at a Time





A journey of a thousand
miles begins with one step.

--Lao-tzu

Central High School

- Located in Santa Rosa County
- A combination school made up of about 300 students in grades 7-12
- Percentage of minority students 4.4%
- Percentage of students on free and reduced lunch 41%
- A rural school formed in 1983 when three K-12 schools were consolidated

2006-07 School Grade C

- Lowest scores in the area of reading
- Percentage of students meeting high standards in reading 45%
- Percentage of students making learning gains in reading 48%
- Percentage of lowest 25th percentile making learning gains in reading 54%

FCAT School Grade History

- 2006-07 "C"
- 2005-06 "C"
- 2004-05 "C"
- 2003-04 "C"

WHY CHANGE NOW?

- A "C" is never an acceptable grade in Santa Rosa County
- A time of new growth in the county moving into the school's attendance zone
- A new assistant principal
- An unusually high rate of faculty turnover in a normally stable faculty of 24

Now is the time....

- 10% of faculty retires
- 15% receive transfers to schools closer to home
- 10% receive new positions
- District allows two new positions to help increase student performance

Recognizing the Challenges to Changing the Culture

- Low performance on standardized tests
- Low school spirit
- Resistance to change among some stakeholders
- Lack of continuity in instruction
- Lack of a framework to guide and direct change
- Lack of a school-wide plan for change

Packing for the Journey

- Articulating a vision
- Building a spirit of community
- Communicating to and with stakeholders
- Developing shared beliefs
- Empowering members to change
- Forging new trails

Setting out on the journey...

- Culture of High Expectations—from faculty, staff, and students
- High Quality Curriculum—a challenge in a small school
- Professional Learning and Collaboration
- Personalized Learning Experiences
- Building Relationships

What are we doing as a faculty?

- Eliciting and listening to suggestions
 - New teachers—Recommending Harry Wong's book *The First Days of School*
 - All teachers—Learning Communities
What Great Teachers Do Differently
 - A TEAM approach to stakeholder “Buy in”
 - Utilizing teacher strengths
 - Reading Leadership Team
 - FCAT Leadership Team
 - Positions of leadership

Reading

- Standardized reading test scores are lowest of all areas
- Increased achievement in reading will raise math, science, and writing scores
- Strong reading department with a vision for success for all students

Definite Need to Increase Reading Achievement

- Reading Leadership Team worked over the summer with FLARE
- Prepared a list of goals and activities for the academic year
- “Coalition of the Willing”

School Wide Literacy Activities

- Root of the Week (ITV, word walls, bell ringers)
- Scheduled D.E.E.R time (Drop Everything—Enjoy Reading)
- Classroom Libraries
- Literacy Strategies of the Week
- School Wide Read Aloud of the book *Skipping Christmas*
- School Wide optional seasonal activities

Root of the Week

- Teachers provided with a list of Greek and Latin Roots with examples quarterly
- ITV Crew incorporates the Root of the Week in announcements with a Word of the Day daily
- Teachers display roots and words from roots on word walls
- Root word activities may be used as bell ringers

D.E.E.R. Time

- Drop Everything—Enjoy Reading
(Why D.E.E.R? We used the local interest in hunting to target reading)
- Last fifteen minutes of every class period on Wednesdays
- Announcement by administration on Wednesdays

Classroom Libraries

- \$2,000 grant written for expanding classroom libraries
- Various teachers wrote \$500 to \$1,000 local grants to increase classroom libraries or build classroom novel sets

Literacy Strategies of the Week

- Teachers provided with a different literacy strategy every two weeks
- Rationale of strategy along with directions, blank forms, and content area examples provided
- Modeling provided for classes by reading coach at teacher request
- School-based professional development points awarded for utilizing each strategy

School-wide Read Aloud of John Grisham's *Skipping Christmas*

- Christmas –themed faculty/staff meeting with music, food and gifts for teachers
- Copy of novel provided to each teacher
- Schedule of daily times and pages to be read for the days between Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays provided
- Prize patrol “caught” classes reading
- County level guest readers
- Teacher and Student Contests

Optional Seasonal Literacy Activities

- October – Urban Legends (and rural) reading activities provided, charts and graphs of candy sold in US in Oct.
- November – Thanksgiving history, timelines, charts, and reading activities provided
- January – Readings about Martin Luther King, copies of speeches provided
- February – History of Valentine's Day, Charts and graphs of Valentine activities provided

Building Relationships as We Navigate the Roadblocks

- Student Apathy
- Low School Pride
- Low School Loyalty
- Turning the corner to a brighter day

The Key is Relationships

- Teachers reaching students through conversation
- Building relationships through discussion and collaboration
- Student input encouraged
- Encouraging student leadership in building school pride
- Together, Working Together to Build Memorable and Meaningful Moments

School Spirit Begins When Relationships Are Built

- Scheduling of SGA class
- Fall Festival
- Homecoming Bonfire/Pep Rally
- Homecoming Parade
- School-wide read aloud
- Pep Rallies
- Spirit Days

DESTINATION: SUCCESS

A Culture in Which Everyone Takes Responsibility

- Using the best people to build community
- Faculty involvement in planning and selection of activities and materials
- Grade Level Competitions in middle school and high school
- School Pride at risk
- "There is no CAT that can beat the JAGS"

Every Day of the Year

- Sunshine State Standard based lessons in all content areas
- Opportunities for real world application
- Use data to guide instruction
- Focused instruction
- Instructional coaches

Involving Everyone in the Final Destination

- Family FCAT Night
 - Supper
 - A Team Approach—Teacher, Students, and Parents Working Together for Success
 - Test Taking Tips, FCAT Practice
- Students Taking Pride in Doing Their Personal Best
- School-wide writing, reading, math, and science enrichment leading up to FCAT testing

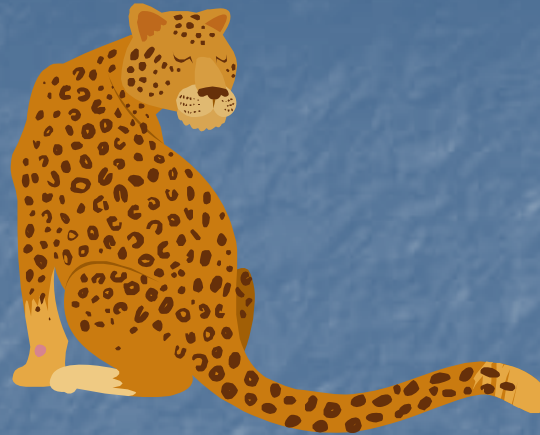
And the results were...

- Relationships
- School Spirit
- Faculty Involvement
- Standardized Test Scores
- School Score

But the Journey Isn't Over Yet...

Next Year's Plans...

- More opportunities for higher level courses
- Increased participation in Learning Communities
- Action Research
- Increased Differentiated Instruction
- A Willing Coalition



We advance on our journey only
when we face our goal,
when we are confident and
believe we are going to win out.

--Orison Swett Marden