

# Tropic Isles Elementary School

Tropic Isles Elementary, a Title I School in Lee County, Florida, has a staff dedicated to providing a quality education for its 925 students. As with all Title I schools, Tropic Isles serves an economically disadvantaged population. Currently, over 75% of Tropic Isles' students qualify for free or reduced lunch, an increase of 13% over the past five years. Research indicates that as free and reduced lunch rates increase at a school, achievement decreases. The dedication and hard work of the Tropic Isles staff has paid off by defying this research: academic achievement, as measured through State School Grade Points, has increased for the past seven years.

This success is a result of a long, continuous improvement journey. For the past ten years, Tropic Isles has worked to provide a quality environment for students and staff. Believing that "every school is perfectly designed to get the results it gets", administrators and staff work to create a school designed to increase academic achievement, improve student behavior, and provide an enjoyable place to work and learn.

Two quality models have been instrumental to the school's accomplishments: the Glasser Quality Schools Model and the Sterling Criteria for Performance Excellence. Dr. Glasser's model emphasizes internal motivation and helping students to self-evaluate in order to take responsibility for their learning. This collegial, relationship-based culture encourages innovation, risk-taking, and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned. The school's dedication to improvement is reflected in its unofficial motto, "Our kids are worth whatever it takes."

## OUR VISION

Investing in a Quality Future.

## OUR MISSION

Tropic Isles will provide a quality learning environment to meet the varied needs of all students through high expectations, parental involvement, and real-world experiences.

## OUR VALUES

Listening, Supporting, Encouraging, Respecting, Trusting, Accepting, Lifelong Learning, Managing by Fact, Continual Improvement

## LEADERSHIP

The vision, mission, and values are set annually and are personally communicated by senior leaders and confirmed through role modeling, classroom visits, staff meetings, e-mails, and newsletters. Senior leaders create a sustainable school through the school's Site-Based Decision Making Model, the Leadership Team, Goal Teams, the use of the Glasser Quality Model, and the implementation of the Sterling Management System.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

Tropic Isles has a long history of conducting a systematic strategic planning process that results in the adoption of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). All instructional staff participate in one of six Goal Teams, charged with the responsibility of reviewing data, creating SIP objectives, and implementing a PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) process for their goal. Tasks include the identification of instructional strategies and formative and cumulative evaluation measures, as well as providing the entire staff with monthly updates of progress toward the goal.

## CUSTOMER AND MARKET FOCUS

Tropic Isles identifies its customers as the school's students and their parents. Student groups are further segmented by Economically Disadvantaged, Exceptional Student Education (ESE), English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL), and grade level. A variety of methods are used to gather Voice of the Customer data in order to determine customer requirements and satisfaction levels.

Customer expectation sheets are completed by parents and students at the beginning of each school year. Parents also have the opportunity to complete semi-annual satisfaction surveys; evening opportunities to share and receive information through Parent Teacher Organization and School Advisory Council meetings; and monthly Coffee with the Principal breakfasts. Tropic Isles also hosts Student-Led Conferences twice a year, providing students the ability to



share their progress with their parents and set new learning goals. Throughout the school year, students are encouraged to submit concerns and requests to Issue Bins in individual classrooms. These concerns are often the subject of class meetings, where students discuss issues and develop solutions to problems. Classroom Issue Bin items are forwarded to the Principal on a regular basis in order to identify any school-wide issues.

### **MEASUREMENT, ANALYSIS, AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

The school selects, collects, aligns, and integrates data and information for tracking daily operations and for tracking overall organizational performance. Progress is monitored relative to strategic objectives, and action plans use a management by fact approach that utilizes Goal Teams, Grade Level Teams, and the Leadership Team to analyze a variety of formative and summative data. Teachers regularly meet with senior leaders to review student achievement data during Show Me the Learning meetings.

### **WORKFORCE FOCUS**

Tropic Isles' senior leaders work to create a team-based culture conducive to high performance. Surveys are conducted to determine what is important to the workforce, and results are used to make improvements. This focus is key to accomplishing collegial collaboration, effective communication, and skill

sharing within and across work units. Senior leaders support workforce engagement by encouraging the use of new and innovative ideas that support the specific needs of the students and staff. Individuals and teams are publicly recognized for their attainment of goals.

### **PROCESS MANAGEMENT**

The school systematically designs and innovates its overall work systems around the explicit purpose of educating every child in accordance with the Florida Department of Education Sunshine State Standards and the federal requirements for No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The school has identified its key work processes as its Instructional Delivery System; Staff Development; Strategic Planning; and the Glasser Quality Schools Model.

### **RESULTS**

Tropic Isles has sustained improvement in many areas of importance, including ranking in the top 1%-3% of similar schools statewide in the areas of reading, math, writing, and science. Examples of other role model results include:

- Adequate Yearly Progress, as defined by NCLB legislation, maintained for 4 years
  - o *Economically Disadvantage Reading* subgroup, 2007-08: 74% of students meeting or exceeding the standard (District avg. 51%; State avg. 48%)

- o *Economically Disadvantage Math* subgroup, 2007-08: 79% of students meeting or exceeding the standard (District avg. 54%; State avg. 54%)
- Highest percentage of National Board Certified teachers of all Lee County schools (16%)
- State of Florida School Grade accomplishments:
  - o A+ school for five consecutive years
  - o Increased school accountability grade point total 7 consecutive years
  - o Highest performing Title I school in Lee County
  - o "Top 5" county school (out of 112) for School Grade Point Total, 2007-2008
  - o "Top 10" county school (out of 112) for School Grade Point Total, 3 of past 4 years
  - o Exceeded school grade point totals of previous GSA recipients for 2007-2008 year

### ***For More Information Contact:***

Donald Bryant, Principal  
Tropic Isles Elementary School  
Phone: 239-995-4704  
DonaldLB@LeeSchools.net