

Felicity Franklin Middle School

Felicity Franklin School District (Clermont)



School Profile 2003-2004	
<i>2003-2004 School of Promise in Mathematics</i>	
School Rating	Effective
Enrollment	365
Grade Levels	5-8
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	40.9%*
Percent Racial/Ethnic Minority	NC<10
*The percentage as reported in the CCIP system.	
District Profile 2003-2004	
District Rating	Effective
District Enrollment	1,136

Lesson 1: Providing Rigorous Instruction Aligned to Standards

Alignment to Standards: The teachers are focusing on alignment of the curriculum to state standards and achieving proficiency goals: “We already aligned our curriculum with the state model, with proficiency, so now all we had to do was go in and change it to the state standards and match them up.... And now we’re in the process of taking out the proficiency standards ... and just leaving the standards in there so we’re ready to go.”

Instruction Aligned to Standards: The standards require students to make meaning of their learning, not just learn facts and rules. Because the state tests require students to produce short answers, elaboration, to make inferences, and to draw conclusions, teachers at Felicity Franklin Middle School ask students to give interpretations: to elaborate views and draw conclusions.

Cross-subject Thematic Units: At each grade level, teachers in science, math, social studies, and language arts are collectively selecting a thematic unit that all teachers will use. This effort requires collaboration, and a shared understanding of each subjects, and each grade level’s standards.

Lesson 2: Providing Leadership That Results in Continuous Improvement

Relationship Development: The new principal sets a tone of caring for the whole school, and makes the effort to interact with teachers and students. As one teacher notes, “He waves to them; he talks to them; he pats them on the back. He’ll take the time. It doesn’t matter if it’s a welfare child or a child on the outskirts. He treats them all the same.” The principals approach to teachers is one of sharing ideas, exploring ideas, trying out new things, and deciding collectively whether or not to further pursue the idea.

Lesson 3: Designing Instruction to Ensure Every Student’s Success

Collaborative Design: Teachers at the middle school are accustomed to collaborating with one another, confessing difficulties and seeking help, and being observed in one another’s classrooms. Besides working together on cross-subject thematic units, teachers in the fifth and sixth grades team teach.

Varied Student Grouping: Teachers are open to and experiment with various student arrangement to help student achieve at higher levels. Recently, students have been grouped into three tiers based on their overall performance – highest, medium to high, and medium to low. Teachers “swap” which groups of students they are teaching on a weekly basis. During this process, teachers also change the group assignments of some students. Teachers view this arrangement as a way to improve

student learning. One teacher described the impact of swapping groups of students, as a way to equalize teacher expectations for all students.

Children with Disabilities: In the fifth and sixth grades, where team teaching occurs, special needs students are included in the regular classroom. However, in the seventh and eighth grades, where classes are departmentalized, special needs students are pulled out of the classroom for core instruction (e.g., in mathematics and language arts).

Lesson 4: Engaging Parents and Community to Support Student Success

Parent Support: Because the history of parental involvement was very slim, Felicity Franklin modified their practices to be less intimidating for parents who were hesitant to get involved: "We went to a brand new system of conferencing this year, called "arena scheduling," where the parents just show up, and we set up in the gym, and we have our own table, and [parents] come talk to us if they need to.... I think that is a little more inviting."

Lesson 5: Creating a Culture Where Each Individual Feels Valued

High Expectations: Teachers are passionate that a student's economic disadvantage is "no excuse" for failure. As one teacher described it, "...you need to educate them on what the middle class standards are, because that's the standard that they're going to be living in if they want to have a functional job."

School Structure: The educators at Felicity Franklin believe that part of the reason they are able to provide a good education is the small size of the school. The smallness promotes familiarity and fosters an environment for improvement: "I think that one of the reasons why Felicity might be so successful is because it's a smaller school. And the classrooms are not as large so the teacher can get to know the child a little better."