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H. O. N. E. S. T. Teaching

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HONEST Teaching

HONEST teaching is a methodology that looks at each child, not only as a student, but as a complete person, to meet their individual needs. The frank approach takes the excuses out of the classroom and places the focus back on learning. Cooperative teaching and quality resources combine to empower teachers and students to move barriers and make sure that learning and growth is available for each child.

H—Have a Conversation

Prior to the start of the school year, parents are invited to meet their child's teacher. Families are given a pre-conference form that asks 5 important questions:

1. **What do you expect from your child's teacher?**
2. **What can we expect from you as a parent?**
3. **What do you expect from your child as a student this year?**
4. **What does your child like to do in their free time (interests/hobbies)?**
5. **What are your child's academic strengths and weaknesses?**

Monthly cross-grade level meetings allow students to share their action plan for reaching their personal, academic and behavioral goals.

These surveys provide critical information for teachers to identify each family's priorities and also serve as a tool to use at parent-teacher conferences to refer back to when identifying goals and progress. Students lead the parent-teacher conferences by using data binders and grades. Additionally, quarterly student-led conferences provide an opportunity to develop student leadership skills. Our school hosts spaghetti dinners or other incentives like, chorus performances, to increase student and family participation.

O—Offer Support

Community outreach programs and partnerships provide relationships, supplies, and financial support to our school. Each grade level hosts a charity organization and is responsible for being ambassadors inside and outside of our school. We partner with local, state, and national charities like the Cape Food Pantry, ARC Animal Rescue, Make-A-Wish Foundation, and the United Way. Students also develop, build, and maintain school yard habitats to promote eco-conscious thinking and real life skills.

These organizations benefit from school fundraising and our school benefits by building relationships that we can use when our students are in need of support services. Students learn empathy skills and the value of thinking win-win when participating in these events. Our work with the local food bank, bike safety groups, and police departments have offered support to students that we would other wise be unable to provide. Ensuring that the basic needs of our students is met is a key part of helping students

N—Never Falter

Consistency is KEY to minimizing behavioral issues which can take away from academic time. Our staff collaborates each year to develop a Mission Statement and list of Values for our school. Once the school year begins, each classroom works with students to create a Class Mission statement and Rules to follow. When students need reminders about behavior, all students refer back to the Mission Statement. It becomes the job of the peers to re-educate and support the classmate rather than the teacher. Because this is a 'Code of Conduct' developed and maintained by students, they feel an obligation to uphold the values they set for their classroom. *For information about creating classroom mission statements visit: www.leaderinme.org*

E—Everybody Together

In our experience, Co-teaching, WIN Time, and Team Planning are probably the MOST influential factors in student performance gains.

- Co-Teaching—Each grade level has classrooms that offer a dual teacher classroom comprised of an ESE teacher and a general education teacher. Inclusion means that ALL students are integrated into unleveled classrooms. Instruction is given to students using the strengths of co-planning and cooperative teaching. Our ESE student population is given support while they work on grade level content.

- WIN (What I Need) Time—Is a unique approach to teaching Reading and Math academic standards. Grade level teams review student test performance data and group students based on common errors and learning needs for a 30 min. "down and dirty" daily lesson catered to the needs of that group of children. Support staff including Art, Music, Technology, and PE teachers help run small groups to keep numbers low for re-teaching. Weekly assessments are given to students to analyze student performance and identity student mastery. Each grade level has a goal of 100% of students achieving an 80% or higher on each standard. All parties are invested in the well being of the students and this increases stake holders in each student's education.

- Team Planning—Each grade level works in a PLC (Professional Learning Community) to review all standards and divide up teacher ownership of each standard. No teacher can master the content required of all subjects and do an effective job! Teachers divide up standards based on their previous class performance or passion and are then in charge of creating lessons and assessments for all learning levels to share with the grade level team. Data from student performance is then analyzed for future instructional planning. Each teacher is responsible for a few standards instead of being expected to master all curriculum.
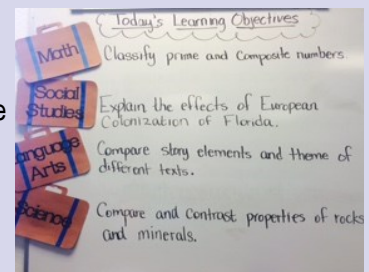 **For additional information Email: Jamie VanCleve at JamieV@leeschools.net.**

S—Set High Standards

Academic and behavioral expectations are developed and maintained by students and teachers. There is a culture that is built around learning objectives which is depicted in every classroom. At the beginning of each lesson, students refer to their posted learning objectives to maintain focus and give meaning to lessons. We begin lessons with a pre-assessment to determine prior knowledge and then move forward. Data drives instruction and is the platform for all academic decisions made in the classroom.

Classroom Learning Objectives guide instruction and help students maintain focus.

Assessments are an opportunity to show off...as opposed to a dreaded test. Before testing, students do stretching exercises and practice breathing techniques to focus their minds. Students are often excited to show their skills off to their teacher. We often say, "Practice is where you earn your trophy...Game day is where you pick it up." Students know that daily class assignments are ways that they prepare for tests and that the pressure only comes from an internal drive for getting the chance to show off their hard work!

T—Teach to Their Needs

The beginning of the school year is a great time to find out about student learning styles. Students take learning style inventories to find out how they learn best. This helps teachers and students partner in making decisions about learning outcomes. Additionally, students have opportunities to give input on their learning and testing preferences. Moving seats, lighting, and sometimes even the time of day is taken into consideration for our students. When students are given the respect to test with their needs in mind, they often perform better. **For samples of learning style inventories visit: www.brandeis.edu.**

Students who have learning disabilities are integrated into mainstream classrooms so curriculum exposure and peer support offer opportunities that may not be available in more restrictive environments. Lessons and assessments are scaffolded and accommodations are met within the classroom to ensure that each child has dignity and control over their ideal learning environment. In addition to curriculum, students NEED to know they are cared for and safe. Classroom environments set the tone for unlocking learning.