



November 5, 2015

## Principals Share Effective Inclusive Practices

Assistant principals from across the state received practical strategies to establish inclusive school cultures and practice from a panel of three principals nominated by family members for leading inclusive school cultures. The Louisiana Association of Principals organized this session at the Assistant Principals' Conference on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Three common themes shared by the panel of educational leaders for effective inclusion in schools were 1) hire and support good teachers; 2) develop strong relationships and communicate with parents; and, 3) plan around students with disabilities first.

**Jared Martin**, principal of Lockport Middle School in Lafourche Parish, shared how students who need the most support need to be served by the best teachers. To accomplish this Lockport Middle begins planning each year by considering the needs of students with disabilities first. With a skeleton schedule based on the needs of students with disabilities, other students' coursework and extracurricular activities fall into place easily.

What a parent said when nominating Mr. Martin as an exemplary leader of inclusion:

*"...always looking for ways to meet the needs of all students and has been very creative and resourceful to make that happen."*

**Ken Oertling**, principal of Hahnville High School in St. Charles Parish, offered ten major strategies used to promote inclusion for his students. Among some of the big areas Mr. Oertling stressed was annual professional development for the entire staff by the high school special education department. This seems to open up lines of communication and builds collaboration around students' unique needs. Students with disabilities lead discussions of roundtables with teachers to provide insights into their disabilities. [Click Here](#) for more recommendations from Mr. Oertling.

What a parent said about Mr. Oertling:

*"Under Mr. Oertling's leadership students with disabilities are in classes and activities alongside their typically developing peers. I believe that Mr. Oertling, in addition to including students with disabilities, promotes education and awareness to the general population about students with disabilities, their diagnoses and needs."*

**Mary Jane Smith**, principal of Honey Island Elementary in St. Tammany Parish, brought a bit more flair to the presentation but made it clear she was serious about inclusion. Honey Island provides access to opportunities for students with disabilities by starting with a smile and pulling everyone at school on board to help every child succeed every day.



This is how a parent ended a two-page description nominating Ms. Smith and commending the Honey Island Elementary team:

*“...as I write, I am crying reflecting on THE TEAM OF DEDICATED EDUCATORS, and Community Leaders THAT HAVE PARTNERED WITH US TO HOLISTICALLY Discover and Shape my son INTO A HAPPY, ENGAGED, CARING STUDENT/CHILD.”*

The Council appreciates the work these education leaders and their staff do every day to include students with disabilities and for sharing these successful strategies with their peers from across the state. The Louisiana Association of Principals also deserves our collective gratitude for recognizing school is for everyone and providing a forum for educational leaders to gain fresh ideas on how to build and sustain inclusive schools.

Have you told your teacher and principal how much you appreciate all the things they do to include your child? Let's work together to build inclusive communities.



Pictured: Jared Martin, principal of Lockport Middle School, and Ken Oertling, principal Hahnville High school.