



Kerri Ann Walukiewicz
2005 FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BURDINES-MACY'S
TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Kerri Ann Walukiewicz began her teaching career eight years ago in St. Lucie County. She earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Florida Atlantic University and is currently pursuing a master's degree in reading. Kerri is a National Board Certified Teacher in early adolescence/English language arts. She teaches reading to 7th grade students at Forest Grove Middle School.

Kerri's students are Level 1 readers that have been deemed among the lowest achieving 25% in the school. To overcome these hurdles, Kerri has implemented several innovative strategies to enhance their reading skills. She introduced a "Book Buddies" program that paired her students with 1st grade students from a neighboring school. Kerri's students selected picture books and practiced reading comprehension and vocabulary exercises prior to reading the books with their buddies, thereby reinforcing skills acquired in the classroom. Kerri also developed the curriculum for the CHAMPS (Creating Aspirations through Motivational Programs and Sports) program. The CHAMPS curriculum combines CRISS strategies with non-fiction texts addressing basketball for 21st century community learning centers. In addition to emphasis on vocabulary, comprehension and phonics instruction, the students met a professional basketball player and participated in basketball sessions following their class. As a result of Kerri's efforts, 90% of her at risk students experienced discernible learning gains on the state assessment test (FCAT) administered last year. Her students have also demonstrated improved Scholastic Reading Inventory scores.

In addition to her regular teaching activities, Kerri mentors and coaches teachers seeking National Board Certification and she provides professional development workshops throughout the district. She was recently invited to participate as a presenter at Scholastic's Literacy Leaders Conference. Kerri has also drafted and received several grants to improve reading instruction and she actively serves on the Literacy Council and Guiding Coalition. Kerri's leadership contributed to her school's selection as the 2003 Exemplary Reading School by the International Reading Association.

Kerri recognizes that student achievement hinges on the collaboration of educators and families. She offers reading workshops for students' families throughout the year. Kerri also organizes Family Literacy Nights that include informational sessions regarding the FCAT and she instituted a Net Schools Laptop Program to facilitate communication between parents and the school.