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Middleton High School again Flunks Statewide FCAT with a D; A continuous Community Shame and Disgrace



It's been several months since the results of the FCAT, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests, were published. Once again, multiple years in a row, Middleton High School has flunked with a D rating. Middleton's student body is about 70% Black. The Principal, Owen Young, is also Black. The problem is certainly not the students. I believe that the students there are just as smart, capable and intelligent as other students in the State of Florida. We must really dig deep into the causes and problems for the low scorings and immediately apply the appropriate solutions. Has the school system given up on Middleton High School?

There are many things about the Middleton's continuous low scoring that deeply concerns me. I have a lot of questions that require deep public thought, debates and answers.

The students of Middleton High School, their parents and taxpayers of Hillsborough County deserve a quality education. When students graduate from a flunking school, does it really matter what top 5%, 10% or 15% (percentile) they were in? How will colleges reviewing admissions applications look at the graduates of a flunking school?

How can it be that a school district with an annual budget of \$1.685 Billion * would allow any school to continuously fail and flunk the FCAT? How can this same district which received a \$100 million grant from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation not solve the problems at Middleton High School? I don't know all the particulars about this grant, but wasn't a big part of it was to teach teachers how to teach and to develop effective teaching techniques? (Please correct me on this). Based on the latest FCAT results from Middleton High School, maybe only \$.39 (thirty cents) of this money made its way to that school?

I feel that the vast majority of the blame from the FCAT results must land at the feet of the Principal, Owen Young and the rest of his inept administration. I think what we have here are overpaid administrators clueless as to how to improve the situation. How does Mr. Young in good conscience cash his \$85,696.19 annual pay check presiding over a flunking high school? How do the rest of Mr. Young's assistant principals in clear conscience cash their combine annual paychecks of \$353,253.28 ** (Derrick Gaines \$61,603.20, George Fekete \$72,418.72, Robert Quinn \$53,671.68, Travian Smith \$56,540.16, Dwayne Dennard \$56,540.72 and Heather Holloway \$52,479.36). If you include Mr. Owen's salary, the principals at the school make \$438, 949.44 annually. That is a lot of Taxpayers money for such dismal FCAT scores.

Why does not performance based compensation apply to the administrators or teachers at Middleton High School? If it did, those gravy train payroll checks would be reduced by 40%.

Where in private industry including for profit and non-profits organizations does the same management remain in place year after year with dismal and low levels productivity? Based on the results of the FCAT, at Middleton High School the administration and the teachers only need a degree, show up for work, write a few lesson plans and pick up a paycheck. I wonder how many are working on advance degrees just so the School System can pay them more money. There seems to be a dis-connect between the school's administration and teachers' gravy train salary and their ability to teach.

As I think about the problems at Middleton High School, I am amazed at the eerie void and absence of a public outcry of disgust. Why there isn't an "Occupy Middleton High School" until the school passes the FCAT?

Where are the five elected Black officials? What are they doing about this situation? Where are the community leaders? Where is the NAACP/Tampa **(The National Association for the Advancement of Certain People)**? I recall a few years ago when a hand full of White Folks raised a Confederate Flag in the county on private property. The NAACP/Tampa was very loud and vocal about it. I mean they raised so much hell that it was heard nationwide. They had press conferences, appeared on National Television (Fox News) and were in rage about that Confederate Flag. But yet when 1300 Black students for years are attending a failing school, the NAACP/Tampa does nothing and says nothing about it. Oh, I am so sorry; I forgot that they are only very public when there is a Confederate Flag issue or when they are spending 14 months out of the year planning and raising money for their annual fund raising gala and banquet. A flag issue appears to be more important than the quality education of roughly 1300 Black students attending a failing school.

It is one thing to attend a failing elementary or grammar school. There are future years to improve your school or personal plight. But in a high school, it's an entirely different scenario; time is not on your side.

The solution to Middleton High School must be Draconian and immediate. Here is what I would do if I was on the school board or the school board superintendent.

1. Massive transfer from Middleton High School of:
 - a. The principal, all assistant principals and counselors to a middle school level,
 - b. All teachers from Middleton High School that has been there for more than three years,
2. Transfer all students in the 11th and 12th grade to a school with at least a "B" FCAT score. This would allow them to graduate with dignity from a non-flunking school. This would also enhance changes of favorable college admissions.
3. Employ private tutors, especially from private industry, to work with the students,
4. Create an alliance with past successful graduates of the school and others for mentorships programs.
5. Institute frequent trial testing of the FCAT exam materials

The community must not continue to endure the disgrace and shame of a flunking high school of any racial makeup. I don't feel that Charter Schools are the only alternative to a failing school. It just could be the administrators and teachers are failing the students. I am making a plea to the Hillsborough County School Board to make immediate changes for the future of the students attending Middleton High School.

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*,** data from the Hillsborough County School System

Rank History for Middleton High School

| School Year | Avg Math Score | Avg Reading Score | Statewide Rank | Total # Ranked High Schools | FL State Percentile | SchoolDigger Rating |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2004 | 329.0 | 298.0 | 179th | 496 | 63.9% | |
| 2005 | 325.0 | 295.0 | 202nd | 502 | 59.8% | |
| 2006 | 319.0 | 286.0 | 298th | 495 | 39.8% | |
| 2007 | 305.0 | 281.0 | 410th | 526 | 22.1% | |
| 2008 | 312.0 | 280.0 | 416th | 536 | 22.4% | |
| 2009 | 314.0 | 286.0 | 406th | 556 | 27.0% | |
| 2010 | 322.0 | 282.5 | 435th | 580 | 25.0% | |
| 2011 | 307.0 | 277.5 | 499th | 597 | 16.4% | |

Source: test scores: Florida Department of Education, rankings: SchoolDigger.com