



Principals In Action

**Vicki Stangle, Lake Shipp Elementary School
Polk County, FL**

Background

Lake Shipp Elementary School in Winter Haven, FL is a PK-5 school with 558 students. 76% of those students come from economically disadvantaged homes. The student body is 55% White, 26% African-American and 15% Hispanic. Lake Shipp was declining on every level and was known county-wide as a failing school, one with demoralized teachers, and waning test scores.

Vicki Stangle took the helm at Lake Shipp Elementary as a first time principal in August of 2005. At the beginning of the school year, 19 out of 30 staff positions were vacant. There were 17 vacancies the prior year. The school had gone through four assistant principals in six years. They were plagued with low test scores and inexperienced staff and high faculty turnover. Vicki's Superintendent suggested School Turnaround.

In Vicki's Own Words

In 26 years I have never had any training like this. Never. We have been trained to look at data; these are your kids, these are your kids that are low. We've been trained to look at instructional strategy; this is your reading material and this is how you use it. Every once in a while we'll get some strategies thrown at us. But this is something different.

The beauty of School Turnaround, what really makes it, is that I can do all the training I want but School Turnaround specialists actually came on site. They sat in my office, in my classrooms, walked the campus. We looked at materials, we were able to sit nose to nose to discuss some of these issues in an effort to come up with solutions. They even trained my teachers. I think that helped make a difference. They know my school, they know my teachers. They knew my teacher's names by the end of the first day. They knew who I was talking about, and what was going on in that classroom.

ST comes and helps implement the strategies. Honestly I went kicking and screaming saying, 'I don't want to do that. It's too hard.' The year that I've had I could have been very highly distracted with many, many things other than what they were asking me to focus on.

It's like winning the lottery. It was hard to believe we went up 32 points. When my Superintendent called with the news my 3rd grade teachers cried. It gets to the heart of the school.