

# LEADERS' *Lagniappe*



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WE REALLY PRIDE OURSELVES ON PROVIDING EXCELLENT CARE, SO PARENTS CAN GO ABOUT THEIR DAY AND NOT WORRY ABOUT THEIR CHILD.



*Anita Haston*  
**DIRECTOR,  
PLEASANT BEGINNINGS  
DAYCARE**

The 2018-2019 performance profiles are rolling out shortly, and Anita Haston is looking forward to the news. The director of Pleasant Beginnings Daycare Center in Houma is eager to share her results with the community and the twenty-five families she serves every day. **Antita brought her center from two stars to four stars, and now has a High Proficient rating.** She voluntarily participated in the Department's rigorous Site Improvement Planning process to get her there.

Anita's father-in-law opened the center based at a church eleven years ago. She prides herself on having a center filled with loving and caring teachers, and a clean and safe learning environment.

"My teachers come to work ready to interact with children so they can learn what they need," shared Anita. "We really pride ourselves on providing excellent care so parents can go about their day and not worry about their child."

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**Upholding this standard takes a strong team and community supports. This year, those supports included Site Improvement Planning.** The process involves meeting with an LDOE field specialist and identifying areas for improvement, goals, and a plan to get there. Anita states that it was a challenge to make sure that she and her teachers stayed on track, but the field support consultant was there to help. Together, Anita and her teachers created a schedule that included training, watching exemplar CLASS™ videos, and observing peers teaching and providing each other with feedback on teacher-child interactions. A focus on CLASS™ has helped teachers better organize themselves and their time with children.

**The transformation is evident from one of her teacher's stories.** The teacher didn't have a clear career path. She started at Pleasant Beginning as an aide, then became a teacher, and now she is a lead teacher. She has completed all the trainings, and earned her CDA and her ancillary certificate. When Picard came to evaluate her, she scored among the highest.

"I was so proud of where she came from," Anita beams.

Anita is ready to celebrate the news of her four star center.

"It made me feel so good," said Anita. "The teachers were working so hard to improve the center with a lot of teamwork. The improvement process taught me that with hard work and dedication we can accomplish big things. It makes us want to strive a little harder."

Having gone through the improvement process, Anita says she looks at her job differently.

"I realize my teachers are responsible and really want to do their best. I am looking around to see what else we can do to improve my center. I monitor them to make sure they are staying on task, and keep on encouraging them," Anita said.

Anita is not satisfied with being a four star center. **Her next goal? She plans on making Pleasant Beginning a five star center, and growing to serve more children.**

"The best compliment a parent can give me is when they come back and tell me about their child's good grades and accomplishments, and they come back to tell us, 'Thank you.' It means the world to me. We want to do whatever it takes."



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