

Lowery turns academic program around, receives national award

Lowery Intermediate School in Donaldsonville received the Teacher Advancement Program Ambassador Award, and a \$5,000 financial prize last month.

By Wade McIntyre
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Lowery Intermediate School in Donaldsonville received the Teacher Advancement Program Ambassador Award, and a \$5,000 financial prize last month. Lowery joined two other schools in the country as the only TAP Ambassador Award recipients receiving awards this year from the education reform program. The award was presented last month before 1,500 educators and policy leaders attending a special luncheon at the 11th National TAP Conference.

Accepting the award on behalf of the school was Lowery Intermediate School Principal Monica Hills. The surprise announcement honors a TAP school that has gone beyond its campus to represent the principles of the TAP system and assist others in the state and region.

Lowery serves a student population that is 93 percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and is now in its third year of TAP. Before TAP, the school was "academically unacceptable" in state ratings. Lowery embarked on planning for a year to learn the TAP system as part of a strategy to get teachers and students involved. Then a master and a mentor teacher were hired by Hills, and teachers began analyzing data and discuss program needs. By the end of the year, Lowery increased its state School Performance Score from 53.8 to 57.2, and joined TAP in the 2008-09 school year.

Lowery's School Performance Score increased by 74 over the next two years, and the school rating rose to "academic watch" and demonstrating "recognized academic growth" by state standards. The school also garnered a "value-added" student achievement score of "4," indicative of above average results when compared to similar Louisiana schools. As a result, the school has attracted and retained high-quality teachers and continues to experience the most growth in the district.

Ascension Parish Superintendent of Schools Patrice Pujol said administration and teacher commitment to a implementation of TAP led to a higher level of teacher effectiveness and growth in student achievement. "I am exceptionally proud of Lowery Intermediate School for receiving national recognition for their success with TAP," she said. Speaking before the conference in Los Angeles, Hills said that as a

principal she saw how valuable it was to be able to accurately measure teacher effectiveness. "Developing a team of master and mentor teachers to work with me to conduct evaluations and provide support for teachers to improve has enabled us to make significant improvements in student achievement," she said.