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SHES Dr. Traci Jackson Receives Terrel H. Bell Award



HOUSTON COUNTY, GA – Shirley Hills Elementary School Principal Dr. Traci Jackson will receive the Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership at the 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools Awards Ceremony. Named for the former U.S. Secretary of Education, this award recognizes outstanding school leaders and the vital role they play in overcoming challenging circumstances.

Principals nominated for the Terrell Bell Award are school leaders committed to fostering successful teaching and learning at their schools. They do whatever it takes to help their students meet high standards and have demonstrated that they understand that failure is not an option.

Dr. Jackson commented, “I am humbled by this recognition. I know that working with teachers and children is truly my calling. I am committed to fostering a learning environment that supports all children and a work environment that supports educators. We must all work together if we are going to be effective and inspire children. I will never take my responsibilities for granted, and I will continue to keep students at the forefront of decisions that directly impact their learning and success. These children are our future, and they hold the key to making this world a better place for everyone.”

Dr. Jackson’s school was also named a 2011 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. She will receive both awards on Nov. 15, 2011, during the awards ceremony held in Washington, D.C.

Less than 10 principals across the U.S. are typically honored with this award. A summary from the selection panel’s recommendation will appear in the program as follows:

“Principal Traci Jackson led her school’s transition to a school-wide Title I school and shift from the Georgia Quality Core Curriculum to the Georgia Performance Standards: both challenges required her to communicate a sense of urgency while attending diligently to the needs of both students and

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teachers. With student eligibility for subsidized meals doubling from 33 percent to 66 percent, she secured resources to add more instructional staff and teaching technologies. She led the move to a standards-based curriculum through professional development, collaborative planning, and professional learning communities and continues to ensure that teachers receive advanced professional learning and training in using assessment data.

Beginning the school year with a 'meet and greet,' she fills student book bags with school supplies and books, distributes books liberally throughout the year as part of her commitment to students' literacy, and welcomes students to read to her during drop-in visits and readers' workshops. Parents are invited to a range of activities, from instructional help nights to "self-help" seminars on topics such as finances, time management, and computer skills and are considered part of the learning team.

To meet the needs of struggling students, Principal Jackson developed a morning tutorial program now in its fifth year. Converting the school cafeteria into a classroom, she serves as lead teacher alongside others in providing students an extra 45 to 60 minutes of math and reading review. Shirley Hills has been a Title I Distinguished School for eight years.

Dr. Traci Jackson is indeed an outstanding school leader who inspires, guides and sustains others; she is a leader willing to do whatever it takes to meet students' needs. She demonstrates that with effective leadership and teaching and a conviction that all students can learn, schools can become powerful, joyful places that generate energy in their communities."

The late Secretary Terrel H. Bell held education as his highest priority, trusting that all students would find it their personal key to success. Principals chosen as Bell award recipients have transformed their schools. They have set high standards and expectations for all, including themselves. They have shattered stereotypes that students in poverty or with limited English proficiency cannot achieve at high levels. Their vision and collaborative leadership styles have produced outstanding results for all their students regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. They have shown that with effective leadership and teaching and a conviction that all students can learn and that schools are powerful, joyful places that generate energy in their communities.

Shirley Hills Elementary is located at 300 Mary Lane in Warner Robins. Dr. Jackson may be reached at 478-929-7824 or Traci.Jackson@hcbe.net.

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