

**Florida Council of Instructional Technology Leaders
Instructional Technology Leadership Award:
Innovative Principal of the Year
Nomination Form**

District Name: Escambia County School District

NOMINATING FCITL MEMBER CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Nominating FCITL Member: Donald Manderson
(must be voting member)

FCITL Member's E-mail Address: dmanderson@escambia.k12.fl.us

Phone #: (850) 469-5391

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Superintendent's Name: Jim Paul

PRINCIPAL NOMINEE CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Principal Nominee: Susan Berry

Principal's E-mail Address: sberry@escambia.k12.fl.us

School Name: Escambia Westgate School

School Address: 10050 Ashton Brosnaham Dr., Pensacola, FL 32534

School Phone #: (850) 494-5700

School Fax #: (850) 494-5702

NOMINATION INFORMATION

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Principals Background Information: (number of years in current position, number of years in education, educational experience, etc.)

Mrs. Susan Berry, principal of Escambia Westgate School since 1996, has been in Special Education for 31 years, receiving her BS in Education from Troy State University and her Master's in Educational Leadership from the University of West Florida. In her first twenty-three years as a teacher of trainable mentally handicapped students, and the last eight years as Westgate's principal, Mrs. Berry's primary focus has always been the students. In every decision she has made for the school, Mrs. Berry has always taken into consideration how those decisions would affect the growth of students' intellect and self-confidence, as well as the development of their independent living skills.

Nomination Form (continued)

School Background/Demographics:

All of Escambia Westgate School's facilities are designed to meet the needs of physically and mentally handicapped students. The school serves the needs of 195 Pre-K, Elementary, Middle, and High School students with varying exceptionalities. Of these students, 74% receive free and reduced lunch. Escambia Westgate met 100 percent of federal adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act for the 2003-04 school year. The school has a faculty consisting of 33 highly qualified teachers with a 6:1 student to teacher ratio.

Escambia Westgate School's mission is to provide individualized programs of educational excellence in a safe learning environment while exposing students to various modern technologies and effective instructional techniques. Staff members promote continuous parent and community involvement in school functions and decisions. Escambia Westgate School is committed to encouraging the development of practical living skills and positive interpersonal relations to prepare students for the challenges of the future.

School and Principal's Instructional Technology Accomplishments: (focusing on how nominee has provided leadership to make a positive impact on student achievement using instructional technology)

Without Mrs. Berry's dedication to technology, many of Escambia Westgate's students would not be successful in their educational environment. Technology is an integral part of daily instruction. All students have ready access to computers, adaptive equipment, and the internet. Mrs. Berry has committed to providing a full-time school-based instructional technology specialist capable of both troubleshooting basic network and hardware repair including assistive technologies and providing expertise in infusing technology into the curriculum.

Because these students do not take FCAT, Mrs. Berry researched software program that provided an equitable alternate assessment. She identified, purchased and implemented Stages: Software Solutions for Special Needs. Stages is a development framework that allows educators and parent to identify learning needs, assess skills and select appropriate software for learners with special needs. In addition to purchasing this program for school-wide use, Mrs. Berry secured training for all teachers and their Educational Support Personnel (ESPs) so that the program was implemented appropriately. Proper faculty and staff training is an integral part of the school's success.

Mrs. Berry provides access to technology to all of her students. Access is addressed not only by Escambia Westgate staff, but also by a group of specifically trained district personnel including, but not limited to: ECATT (Escambia County Assistive Technology Team), and Technology LATS technicians, a regional lab housed by the district, and ATEN (Assistive Technology Educational Network). Switches, voice output devices, software programs, and alternative computer hardware are used by students for access. This equipment includes, but is not limited to Alpha Smarts, Touch Windows, Intellikeys, PowerLink Control Units, TV and VCR Remote switches, Step-by-Step Communicators, BIG MACs, GoTalk4s, CheapTalk's, rocker switches, Hip Talkers, BoardMaker software; a variety of other equipment from, but not limited to, Ablenet, Attainment Company, Don Johnston, EdMark, and Mayer-Johnston; and the devices addressed in the District's Assistive Technology/Equipment list for writing District Individual Educational Plans (IEPs).

Mrs. Berry has spent seven years developing the Snoezelen Project. She has raised money from private organizations and individuals for a million dollar Snoezelen facility. The Snoezelen Complex will meet the needs of all mentally and physically handicapped individuals. Snoezelen is a concept that allows students to interact with their environment. Instead of things being done for students, they are able to do things for themselves as much as possible. With Snoezelen, staff members determine a student's independence level, and then build on it. The students are able to use various switches to interact with their environment. Whether it is using a switch to turn on a calming light or interact with the computer, the Snoezelen approach makes this possible by using state-of-the-art technology to provide wonderful, intriguing spaces with lights, sounds, aroma, tactile surfaces, moving images, and other sensory experiences. With Mrs. Berry's dedication and hard work, the Snoezelen facility is set to open in early 2005. This facility will be the first of its kind in the United States.

Mrs. Berry is a principal who is that is dedicated to implementing technology to benefit the special needs of her students. It is very important to her that students are as independent as possible. Being technologically innovative has allowed Mrs. Berry to give Escambia Westgate students back their independence.