Executive Summary

Cousins Middle School
Newton County School System

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Introduction

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that a school implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the school community will have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.
Description of the School

Describe the school’s size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?

Cousins Middle School (CMS) is a sixth through eighth grade school located in Covington, Georgia, in the eastern region of Newton County. The school is one of five traditional middle schools in the county and serves anywhere from 860 to 875 students, which is the current enrollment. The school's population comes from the northeastern section of the county, and enrollment over the last five years has remained somewhat steady following many years of increased and decreased enrollment due to the provisions of No Child Left behind (NCLB).

The demographic make-up of the students at Cousins Middle School is 46% Caucasian. The remaining 54% of students are classified as “excluding white and not of Hispanic origin. Percentages are reflective of attendance zones established by the school district and are similar to feeder elementary schools zoned similarly to that of CMS.

The subgroups of CMS and percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch are consistent with that of the district and of the state. By comparison, the school percentage is 62.47%, while the Newton County School System percentage and State of Georgia percentages are 66.9% and 58% respectively. Students identified with disabilities are 15% and English Language Learners (ELL) comprises 2%. All of these areas are consistent with numbers at the county level. Free and reduced numbers have remained somewhat consistent over the last five years, increasing only slightly during that time period.

CMS has 57 total academic instructors; 12 connections or Exploratory instructors including Title I staff; a part-time ELL teacher shared with another middle school; 2 counselors; 1 media specialist; 10 special education instructors; 1 ISS instructor; 1 school nurse; 4 clerical staff; 3 administrators; 1 part-time technology support person shared with another middle school; 5 custodians; and an allotment of 9 cafeteria staff members. The majority of the staff have a master's degree or higher. Many of the teachers are gifted endorsed.

The academic teachers are structured in teams in all three grade levels with each team teaching English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Teams at 6th and 7th grade consist of five team members with one team having an extra Math teacher and the other having an additional Social Studies teacher. At 8th grade, two teams of four teachers exist with one additional two person team. Gifted learners are served in two different ways - through a pull-out and inclusion model. Three teachers teach pull-out kids in Science, Math, and Language Arts while some teams have gifted teachers teaching on team in an inclusion model consisting of gifted students and students exceeding on the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). Some cross teaming exists in the schedule although that is the exception, not the norm.

Most students served through the Special Needs department are taught in a co-teaching or collaborative setting. Some Resource classes exist in the department as well. Typically, every grade level has two special education teachers working exclusively with that grade level and primarily in Math and Language Arts. Special Needs educators and Regular Education teachers collaborate and have common planning time to plan for instruction. Special Needs para-professionals also exist to provide support where mandated by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

ELL students are served by a certified instructor shared with Veterans Memorial Middle School. That instructor currently alternates days between each school working two days at one school and two at the other with alternating Friday instruction. The instructor currently provides both pull-out instruction for those needing it and co-teaching or "push-in" support for others. CMS also has two self-contained Special Needs
classrooms serving 5 Severe/Profound students and 9 Mildly/Moderately Instructionally Delayed (MID/MOID). Each teacher has two para-
professionals. Both programs are community based programs (CBI) and frequently take students out into the community.

COMS offers multiple Exploratory classes which include art, band, family and consumer sciences, music, chorus, business computer
science, technology, Spanish, physical education/health, a Focus period, which every certified staff member is involved in following
homeroom. Students rotate every nine weeks, with the exception of band and chorus, which are full year courses.
The current administrative staff has been in place collectively for the past three years, with the principal having been here 9 years, with one
assistant principal having been here 5 years and the other having been here 3 years. While there has been some consistency in the
administrative staff at the school level, the county level staff has changed consistently over the last three years with the most recent change
being the new superintendent, deputy superintendent, director of secondary curriculum, and director of elementary curriculum. The director of
testing also is new this year.

With this change in leadership has also come some changes in curriculum initiatives and expectations. The CMS staff has actively engaged
in the district level non-negotiable goals of increased student achievement and more effective teaching. The school has also effectively
implemented Research Based Instructional Strategies, Technology Integration, and effective use of Professional Learning Communities
(PLCs).

CMS also involves the teachers heavily in decision making and has a leadership team comprised of rotating members of the regular staff.
Department chairs also exist to support the administrative staff in specific goals associated with each department. Faculty meetings and
leadership meetings are held monthly while grade level meetings, content-specific meetings, Response to Intervention (RtI) meetings and
team meetings are held weekly. Parents are encouraged to participate in the school's academic environment and frequent uses of various
media are used to communicate academic, extra-curricular, and general school information.
School's Purpose

Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.

The mission of Cousins Middle School is to exhibit a school culture where scholarship, friendliness, respect, and trust are the norm while promoting a school atmosphere so that all students are empowered to "Believe, Achieve, and Succeed" at their highest potential.

In this statement, the school strives on a daily basis to provide an educational setting where students can primarily focus on the academic components of their schedule but also allows some flexibility in "exploring" other areas of interest. This is accomplished through various course offerings on a nine week basis and which include: Technology, Art, Music, Band, Foreign Language, Physical Education, Computer/Business Science, and Family & Consumer Science. Additionally, our "Focus" period is designed to offering both acceleration of material in the regular classroom as well as remediation where appropriate. Teachers work to specifically address the different learning styles of individual students as they teach them during this period each morning.

Finally, extra-curricular programs and athletics are offered as an ancillary component to the regular school day. Athletics such as football, softball, basketball, wrestling, track, and soccer are offered in some capacity to allow students to feel empowered in areas other than academics. Mentor programs such as "Men about Change" (MAC) and "Ladies of CMS" exist to encourage students to "Be the Best" in their day to day interaction with teachers and other students. An After School Program also exists to assist students who are struggling with their instructional classes but also offers additional classes as supplemental offerings to pique the interest of students (for example, cooking and dance).
Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement

Describe the school’s notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.

Over the last three years, Cousins Middle School has received many accolades and awards, both academically and in extracurricular activities, as a result of the work of our staff and students. Most recently, our school was recognized at the state level for “stellar” implementation of the Positive Behavior, Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program and continues to use the program to decrease discipline referrals. Additionally, this year our school has won multiple grants to use both for academics and for programs such as athletics. These have included two $1,000 grants from the Arthur Blank Foundation in support of athletes. CMS received $2,500 from General Mills for the Enhancing Biology Instruction and Building Character through a School Garden program.

As for academics, this year our school had multiple winners at the local level in the Science Fair and ultimately sent six winners to the district level. The school was also recognized at the county level for leading all middle schools in Newton County in the 8th Grade Writing Assessment after years of being near or at the bottom in our county. Finally, all indications at this point would seem to show that our school will experience a significant increase in CCRPI scores and move from being last of the five middle schools in Newton County to possibly first or second in terms of overall CCRPI scores at the state level. Teachers continue to work hard to educate the students in our school and many of them continue to further their education adding degrees or endorsements to enhance the learning experiences of our students.

Over the last three years, our student and teachers have been recognized for various and sundry things such as having 20% of the District IV Honor Band being comprised of Cousins Middle School students, which include some five other surrounding counties. Our band and chorus program continue to earn Superior ratings, with the Band program earning this distinction for the last seven years. Students in our band program have also earned a place in the Georgia All State Band with 2 students being named alternates at that level. Band and Chorus students have also been invited and performed at such places as the Governor’s Mansion and at the Hawks game.

In 2011, our school was the recipient of the Bright Ideas grant and our school also reached 100% Highly Qualified status for all teaching staff that same year. The school has maintained that status since that first time in 2011. In October, 2012 our school was the recipient of a Snapping Shoals EMC grant and has used funds to create and maintain multiple gardens, a pond, and a weather station. Additionally, our school has had multiple Literacy Days winners at the county level and district level and this year had one person who placed second at the District level in writing.

Overall, our school continues to look for avenues for “greatness” and continues to strive to achieve at local and state levels. The goal will continue to be for our teachers to help our students to “Believe, Achieve, and Succeed” at their highest potential to not only enrich the experience they have at our school but also to assist them in being successful at the high school level and beyond.
Additional Information

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

While the school continues to work to improve student achievement and provide more effective teaching, our efforts in securing more involved community Partners In Education continues to be a priority. The district has a very effective program overall; however, our school has not been so successful in securing businesses that are willing to "go the distance." We continue to work to create programs and an interest level that will help us in this area of our school.