Executive Summary

Fairview Elementary 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?

Fairview Elementary School is located in the northwest area of Newton County near Interstate 20. The area is suburban, comprised of many neighborhoods and apartment complexes. The facility was used to house the Newton County Theme School prior to the 2011-2012 school year. At that time, Newton County re-zoned their school boundaries and re-established Fairview Elementary as a regular kindergarten through fifth grade school. This is the third year that Fairview, with its current population, has been in existence.

Fairview has a diverse student population. Fairview’s 477 students are made up of the following racial/ethnic groups: African American (50.5%), white (22.6%), and Hispanic (20.3%). The other 6.6% of students are from various racial, ethnic, and national origin groups including Multi-racial, Asian, and African. Current enrollment data show the population to be 49% male and 51% female. The school has many transient students, so the enrollment fluctuates throughout the school year. The mobility rate for the 2012-2013 school year was 34%, and as of January 17, 2014, it is already at 31.4% for the current school year. Additionally, 82% of Fairview’s students participate in the federal free and reduced lunch programs. Fairview's students that have been identified as students with disabilities (SWD) and receive academic support through the Special Education program make up 13.2% of the population. Students that are identified as English Learners (EL) comprise 14.5% of all students.

Fairview Elementary employs 37.5 certified teachers, and all are considered “highly qualified” under requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2002). All 14 paraprofessionals meet the highly qualified requirements as well. Currently, Fairview Elementary School employs 2 supplemental teachers to work with underachieving students. In addition to classroom teachers and paraprofessionals, the staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, one full time counselor, a media specialist, an instructional/technology coach, one full-time school nurse, one student records clerk, one bookkeeper, cafeteria personnel, and custodial personnel who all work together to empower children to learn in a safe and nurturing environment. The current pupil-teacher ratio (total number of teachers divided into enrollment) is 13:1. All teachers and staff are evaluated for effectiveness on an annual basis. Individuals not demonstrating competence are placed on professional development plans and observed for targeted improvements. A new evaluation system, Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), is rolling out in the 2013-2014 school year.

The school system was not immune to the effects of the recession. While elementary schools were not as dramatically impacted as the secondary schools, maintenance and custodial positions were reduced in the 2011-2012 budget, and the board contributions to teacher retirement accounts were cut in half from an already meager 1% contribution. However, with the help of a county referendum, Fairview was able to make improvements to its infrastructure through the special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST). The school received a new roof, an upgraded HVAC system, and is slated to have the parking lot repaved in the summer of 2014. Additionally, technology updates are continuing to be implemented, including an improved wireless network and a keyless entry system for the exterior doors.

Fairview is not without its share of challenges. One in particular is behavior issues. Fairview has many programs in which to encourage appropriate and positive behaviors for its students. The SOAR program is a behavior-based program that acknowledges students whose behavior is conducive to a positive and safe environment. SOAR stands for Safe, Organized, Accountable, and Respectful. ClassDojo is another means of improving student behavior in a positive manner. ClassDojo is a web-based program used on a daily basis to monitor and encourage good behavior. Students receive points for exhibiting positive behavior as well as being prepared for learning. They also lose points as a consequence when behaviors are not positive. This behavior system is used school wide to not only keep students informed of their behavior but their parents, as well. Students respond to this program in beneficial ways.

All grades also participate in our Student of the Month ceremony and celebration. Once a month, a child from each classroom is chosen to be Student of the Month. This student models good and appropriate behavior. The Student of the Month is also tied directly to our citizen...
traits or character education. These character traits range from honesty and politeness to kindness and cooperation. Once a month parents are invited to school for a special ceremony honoring their child. Paragraphs are read about each student of the month to highlight each student’s positive aspects. This ceremony is followed by special refreshments.

In order to make students aware of appropriate behavior regarding voice levels, Fairview Elementary has implemented a school wide “Voice Level” system. There are five levels. Students are taught the levels from 0 (No talking) to level 4 (outside voice). All students are aware of the levels and encouraged to use appropriate voice levels for different situations both in and around the school and grounds. With all of the above-mentioned programs and systems in place, Fairview is working toward improving student behavior issues and has already seen some positive results.
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.

Fairview Elementary’s faculty and staff are unified with the common purpose of providing educational excellence to all students. In the spirit of working toward this purpose, a number of shared beliefs, though not all-inclusive, were identified and outlined by the faculty:

1. All children are capable and can learn in different ways and at different rates.
2. Children learn best in a safe, nurturing environment that promotes positive self-esteem and higher motivation.
3. Children have an innate desire to learn, explore, and grow.
4. Education is a shared responsibility between the home and school.
5. Children learn best when learning experiences are meaningful to the learner and when they have ownership in their learning.
6. Higher expectations produce higher results.

These beliefs ground Fairview in its purpose and are integral in working toward its vision.

Fairview Elementary’s vision statement was revised in the 2012-2013 school year. The school wanted the statement to be directly aligned with the Newton County School District’s vision statement. The vision statement reads, “Fairview Elementary School envisions students who through a rigorous and relevant education will be able to think critically in order to produce, perform, create, and communicate their knowledge competitively to a hyper-connected, global audience.” While working toward its vision, Fairview Elementary follows the non-negotiable norms established by the Newton County School District that direct classroom instruction: more effective teaching, technology integration in classrooms, and the use of highly effective learning communities. Through continued integration of these practices, Fairview is moving toward its goal of increased student achievement.

Fairview’s staff works hard to increase their teaching effectiveness. Two methods that have been identified to meet this requirement are the use of research-based instructional strategies and the building of students’ background knowledge during the school day. Fairview’s students are evaluated using multiple evaluation systems such as Thinkgate and Renaissance Learning products. Afterward, teachers use the data collected to develop methods through which students can achieve the standards. Vocabulary is connected to things in their environments to build background knowledge. Interactive notebooks are utilized to enable students to learn and understand content areas across each subject. These are supplemented with classroom activities, such as pictorial representations, role play, and collaborative activities. Additionally, Fairview’s teachers integrate the high-yield instructional strategies found in Robert J. Marzano’s book Classroom Instruction that Works. Teachers have implemented these into their classroom instruction, and each week, one of the nine strategies is highlighted. Teachers are asked to ensure that they use that particular strategy during the week and post an activity outside of their classroom that uses that strategy.

Technology plays an integral role in student achievement. Students are provided access to a variety of technological devices and website-based subscription programs. The devices allow students to have an engaging experience during the learning process. The digital subscriptions are used to facilitate critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. Teachers are encouraged to “embed” technology into their lessons as opposed to just “integrating” technology. Fairview’s Instructional/Technology Coach is a key resource in assisting teachers in this endeavor.

Fairview’s teachers also participate in highly effective professional learning communities. One area that specifically needed improvement is students’ writing. Vertical teams were developed in order to address goals and objectives for each grade level so that all teachers would have a better idea of what was needed for each grade level. Grade level teams also meet four times weekly in order to share best practices and plan collaboratively.
Fairview Elementary School's faculty and staff take seriously its obligation to involve parents and the community in educating students. Numerous activities are scheduled throughout the school year to educate parents, encourage their involvement in their child's education, and promote the development of a relationship between parents and children. Parents are provided many opportunities to participate in training, to attend informational sessions to enhance student performance, and to participate in school governance such as the Local School Council, decision-making, and problem solving.

The school offers a variety of academic programs including special education, ESOL, gifted education, supplemental services, Music, Art, P.E., media services, computer lab, and science labs, as integral parts of the overall instructional design. Fairview's faculty offers extra-curricular activities such as Chorus, Art Club, Running Club, Flag Corps, Kids' View, Reading Bowl, Lady Eagles and Boys to Men mentoring programs, and Beta Club.
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.

In the two years since Fairview Elementary School was reestablished, the school has collected qualitative and quantitative data on numerous aspects of the school. Fairview maintains and uses an assessment system that facilitates the production of these data. The school follows all testing events and protocol mandated by the school system including screening through STAR, benchmarks through Thinkgate, and summative assessments through the CRCT, GAA, and the state writing exams. Both the certified and classified staff collect data, analyze them, and apply what they have learned from the findings to all areas of the schoolhouse from instruction to organization. The school houses a data room in an unused classroom that is managed by the school's instructional/technology coach. Teachers meet there weekly to analyze the data, plan collaboratively, and implement improvement plans. While the school only has two years of data from CRCT scores, the data reveal a steady pattern of growth across most content areas. The most recent CRCT data show gains in student achievement overall amongst students and in most subgroups. Scores in science and social studies in particular showed the largest gains.

Although all content areas on the CRCT have shown improvement in a two year period, the school is not wholly satisfied with the scores. All content areas still need improvement. In particular, student performance in math has been identified as an area in need of improvement. Additionally, scores on the state's student writing test have been targeted as an area in need of improvement. Addressing student achievement is a high priority, and a plan to increase academic performance has been implemented with a focus on improving the quality of instruction. This plan includes professional development through a book study of Robert Marzano's Classroom Instruction that Works, high-yield, instructional strategies that are highlighted each week, grade-level collaborative planning days, and vertical team planning with a focus on improving student writing. Furthermore, opportunities are made available for students who need additional support. Funding has been procured for Saturday School and a Parent University where parents can come to learn how they can better help their children with schoolwork. The school is working hard to reach out to parents by other avenues including Title1 nights, increasing the frequency and depth of student achievement presentations with PTO groups, and the recent addition of a parent/community resource room that has been stocked with workbooks and materials that parents can use with their children.
Additional Information

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

In the 2012-2013 school year, Fairview implemented a Saturday School program that allows students to receive additional instruction outside of the normal school hours. The offerings include sessions for students who need additional help and support as well as sessions for students who need to be challenged beyond the regular grade level work. This program is run by teachers and volunteers from a nearby college who offer their time to serve students needing academic support. Additionally, Parent University has been funded for the 2013-2014 school year to educate parents in instructional strategies so that they, too, can better support their children.

Fairview is proud to have received grants that have dramatically helped over the last three years. The school's media center received two grants (Lowe's Toolbox for Education and Reimagine Newton) to improve the selection of materials in the media center. These funds have helped purchase high-interest books for reluctant readers. In the summer of 2013, Fairview won a Big Lots video contest allowing for the creation of a sensory room. The sensory room is a special area in the school where students who struggle with sensory development can go for brain strengthening therapy.

Fairview is always looking for ways to communicate with stakeholders. The school utilizes numerous modes of communication including the school website, phone messenger, and principal newsletters. Additionally, the school and many teachers are reaching out through the realm of social media, using tools such as My Big Campus, Facebook, Twitter, Remind101, and Class Dojo. The school believes that a partnership and open communication with the community is vital to its success.