Executive Summary

Indian Creek 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?

Indian Creek Middle School is located in the eastern portion of Newton County and is approximately 40 miles east of Atlanta. It is a traditional middle school serving grades 6 through 8 and receives a majority of its students from four elementary schools: Mansfield, Heard-Mixon, East Newton, and Rocky Plains. It is established in the community, having served local families for seventeen years.

Indian Creek has seen significant growth since opening in 1997. Indian Creek opened with an enrollment of approximately 700. Enrollment quickly and continually increased, reaching over 1300 in the 2007-2008 school year. After rezoning and the addition of a fifth middle school, enrollment decreased to 990 students for the 2010-2011 school year. However, enrollment continues to increase, and enrollment is currently 1041 for the 2013-2014 school year, making Indian Creek the largest middle school in Newton County. Student population includes 636 White students, 324 Black students, 44 Hispanic students, 33 Multi-racial students, and 4 Asian students. Indian Creek offers a variety of programs to meet the needs of its diverse population. Approximately 16% of the total student population is served in the Special Education department while the Gifted Program serves 20%. 3% of students are in the ELL program, and 20% are in Title I classes.

Indian Creek has a highly qualified and certificated staff to meet the needs of its students. 67 teachers, 1 media specialist, 2 counselors, and 3 administrators possess 25 Bachelor's degrees, 35 Master's degrees, 8 Specialist's degrees, and 5 Doctorate degrees. Faculty and staff continually work to improve their knowledge and practice through both degreed programs and professional learning.

Indian Creek’s students are scheduled onto a team of teachers who cover the core academic subjects of Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Math. Students may cross-team or go off-team to meet specific academic needs like Gifted and Co-teach classes, but many teams are able to offer these classes within. Course schedules include two Connections classes a day with a rotation between Art, Business, Family and Consumer Science, Technology, and Spanish; PE is a yearlong course, and students who choose Chorus or Band have those yearlong opportunities as well. In addition, Indian Creek offers a daily Enrichment class; students who exceed on the CRCT may go off-team for true enrichment (such as Guitar), and those who need extra assistance remain on-team for need-specific lessons or remediation.

Within the past three years, Indian Creek Middle School has experienced a dramatic change in economic prosperity. Newton County School System, like many others in the nation, has seen a sharp decrease in revenue and available funds, resulting in lower budgets and less staff at Indian Creek. Staff numbers have been cut, and while class ratios have maintained at approximately 16:1 because of decreasing student numbers, many academic classes have actually increased to approximately 31:1. Changes in Indian Creek's student population also exemplify the county's decline in economic prosperity. At the start of the 2011-2012 school year, 51% of the school population currently enrolled participated in the free and reduced lunch federal programs. The rate then rose to 54%, and by September 2012, the rate was 61%, a ten percent increase in one calendar year. The rate rose again at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year to 63%, equating to 672 students who receive free or reduced lunch, the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students ever served at Indian Creek within one academic year. Indian Creek's student mobility rate is low for Newton County at 22%, but the rate itself is high, creating another obstacle to learning and success.
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.

Vision

Indian Creek Middle School will continue to create a supportive environment that inspires and encourages students to become self-motivated, life-long learners and critical thinkers who recognize their personal responsibility to society.

Mission

The mission of Indian Creek Middle School is to work together to provide a safe, motivating environment that meets the needs of all learners by being respectful, responsible role models.

Indian Creek's faculty and staff maintain high expectations, striving every day to uphold the tenets of the vision and mission by offering a variety of academic and extracurricular activities. Student achievement and success is paramount at Indian Creek. Faculty meet regularly, whether as whole group or smaller PLCs, to learn strategies or to analyze data so as to craft and hone instruction to the most current, pertinent needs of students. Indian Creek uses stakeholder surveys, PTO, and a School Council to ensure that it is hearing the needs of its entire community.

To facilitate academic success, Indian Creek provides rigorous classes for all learners, whether they be gifted, those with disabilities, regular education, or in need of supplemental services. Indian Creek encourages teachers to get gifted certified; as a result, thirteen additional teachers now work with the gifted department to add fourteen extra sections of gifted classes in all subject areas for all three grades. In addition, mixed gifted/honors classes offer regular education students the opportunity to take these level classes. Regular education students who need extra assistance with academics can receive that assistance through the Title I program or in Enrichment classes. For both, CRCT test scores and other data, such as STAR and Benchmark tests, are analyzed to determine which students need which assistance. Data is gathered and evaluated throughout to monitor student progress utilizing the RTI process. Learners with disabilities are taught in a primarily collaborative setting and offered additional remediation through pullout assistance and the ALEKS program; Indian Creek also provides for children with more severe disabilities by offering the MI/MO CBI and the SID/PID CBI classes. In 2011, recognizing the need to provide even more options, teachers applied for and received the Twenty-First Century After-School Program federal grant to operate a before/after school program. This program gives extra academic support while enriching with motivational life experiences these students would not necessarily have otherwise.

All academic classes are supplemented with a variety of resources. The Building Leadership Team, the Technology Support Team, the Title I Department, and administration regularly evaluate and identify areas of need for supplemental materials and resources; the Title I Plan, the School Improvement Plan, and the Technology Plan then prioritize and organize those needs and resources. Recognizing the vast importance and complexity of technology use in the workplace and society, Indian Creek has identified technology as a top priority. In the past three years, much technology has been purchased for the school, including numerous ActivBoard systems and most recently camera and sound systems for most classrooms. In the fall of 2012, Indian Creek became a wireless access school. Indian Creek has also implemented a BYOT program, allowing students to supplement school devices with their own devices. A Professional Learning Plan was created to provide the structure and support teachers need to develop technical skills and revised lessons. Teachers now strive to integrate technology throughout lessons, giving students an opportunity to develop knowledge of technology and the lesson at hand.
A wide variety of connections classes and extracurricular clubs, sports, and activities allow students to explore interests outside of the core academic arena. Indian Creek currently offers 18 clubs that allow teachers to celebrate their life interests and passions and pass them along to the students. Clubs like Model Railroading, Crochet, Reading Bowl, and Kaleidoscope Literary Magazine encourage lifelong interests. Other clubs, like Elite Ladies, Y-Pals, and GEM, encourage teens to be role models in their community while providing opportunities for service. Indian Creek also offers football, basketball, softball, track, wrestling, and cheerleading for its population.

Stakeholder surveys have identified student behavior, particularly with bullying, as a focus area. To combat the issue and foster a positive environment for students, Indian Creek has implemented the PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports) program. Supplemented with classroom instruction from the counseling department, Indian Creek's PBIS initiatives are focused on creating students who are responsible role models. In addition to PBIS, students created the Panthers Against Bullying Club to raise awareness of bullying and bullying prevention.
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.

Achievements
Indian Creek celebrates the many achievements of its students and staff. Indian Creek went on the AYP Needs Improvement list in 2009 and made it off the list in one cycle, achieving full AYP status in 2011. The same year, Indian Creek was selected as a GASSP Distinguished Breakout School. Teachers and staff have won numerous grants to fund experiences for students. Most recently, the media specialist won a grant to create a digital library, and the gifted department chair won a grant to increase science lab opportunities.

Students participate in a variety of academic and extracurricular activities, often winning awards and honors. Science Fair participants often go to and place in the state competition. The academic team wins many competitions. The wrestling and football teams have both been NewRock League Champions, the cheerleaders recently placed first at the Georgia Blast Cheerleading Competition.

Indian Creek gives back to its community. The school's Relay for Life Team holds fundraisers throughout the year, raising thousands of dollars for cancer research and earning recognition as a top-donating school. Students participate yearly in the St. Jude's Math-a-Thon to raise donations for the program, and the Crochet Club recently donated 40 hats to children at St. Jude's Hospital. The school contributes to United Way and consistently exceeds its donation goal; this year, the school was a top 3 school in donations. Indian Creek also has a dramatic and dynamic Black History Month Program each year, allowing students and faculty to share their talents with stakeholders. The school holds other community drives throughout the year for the Food Bank or Toys for Tots and volunteers for the Special Olympics. Students even raised over $1000 for a classmate whose house burned down.

Areas of Improvement
Indian Creek is increasing parent and community involvement. The Title I Department, PTO, and various clubs and organizations work together to create events and meetings that are appealing and enticing for parents to attend. Communication options like School Messenger and Remind101 as well as more traditional communication techniques are also being implemented. The school uses its website and social media as well. Participation has increased over the past few years, and Indian Creek continues to seek opportunities to further improve.

Recognizing the need for professional learning communities, Indian Creek restructured daily planning periods. Teachers now have professional learning once a week to learn more about school initiatives like technology or writing and literacy. Grade level content areas plan together during two planning periods a week to create lesson plans and review student data. Faculty analyze data, such as CCRPI and the Title I data dig, to ensure data driven instruction. Focus on professional learning communities safeguards time for collaborative learning and planning. While the learning communities are still being revised to best meet the needs of all, the benefits of the structure are obvious.

The increase in available technology, from infrastructure to hardware and software, has been dramatic. In the past three years, Indian Creek updated its wiring infrastructure, provided a wireless network, added ActivBoard systems, and installed a camera and sound system for most classrooms. Database and software resources, such as BrainPop, Flocabulary, and EasyBib, have been purchased to enhance student learning. Continued professional learning will be needed to guarantee this new technology is consistently and correctly used.

Areas for Improvement
Indian Creek continues to work to improve student success. Faculty is provided with regular, specific information about student
understanding and progress. While teachers are taught how to access and apply this data, Indian Creek still needs to improve its data analysis and utilization. Teachers can be overwhelmed with the amount of data, the number of places the data is located, and the best way to implement change based on data results. Additional training with a clearer structure and implementation process is needed. In addition, teachers would like the data to be streamlined for greater accessibility. Indian Creek is working to meet these needs and requests.

Indian Creek also wants to continue its integration and use of technology as funding allows. As available technology continues to increase, faculty and staff need even more training and support than is currently being provided. Teachers need modeling of best practices for technology use in lessons as many struggle to transform their lessons to incorporate technology use by all. By fostering teacher comfort with technology and thus increasing its use in classrooms, Indian Creek can better prepare students with technology. Enhancing student comfort and knowledge of technology will improve students' college and career readiness and performance on the 8th grade Twenty-First Century Skills Assessment.
Additional Information

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

Indian Creek recognizes stakeholder need for accountability and academic success. Faculty and staff analyze CCRPI data, looking at the focus areas of Achievement, Achievement Gaps, and Progress for specific areas to target for greater academic success. Data gathered from CCRPI reports during a data dig has driven Indian Creek to revamp its school improvement plan. Indian Creek knows what subgroups and what areas need more attention to ensure academic success for all. In addition, Indian Creek is piloting the TKES/LKES evaluation process. This process focuses on instruction and student progress, encouraging academic growth as well as accountability for the teacher and administrator.

Indian Creek is a school of lifelong learners. In a time of budget cuts and burnout, many teachers might be tempted to get by with the minimum, but not Indian Creek teachers. Many have opted to acquire gifted certification, not necessarily to teach gift courses but to learn new strategies to use in all classes. Earning higher degrees, applications for Master Teacher Certification, and renewal of National Board Certification are also common. Math and science teachers are part of the MSP Grant offered through Georgia Institute of Technology where they learn new ways for teaching math and science. Both faculty and staff attend a variety of trainings and conferences; already this year, people have attended trainings for CTAE, PE, Students with Disabilities, Economics, Literacy, Leadership, Science, and Technology. Faculty and staff, from principal to paraprofessional, are willing to try the new ideas and strategies they learn. Lessons and teaching styles are adapted and modified to incorporate new concepts. During professional learning time, information redelivery, successes and "lessons learned" are shared so that all can benefit from the classes, trainings, and conferences.

Indian Creek knows the importance of personalization for all of its stakeholders. Many opportunities to meet the needs of the whole person are provided. An induction program for new teachers gives mentoring advice and support. A Sunshine Committee helps the faculty and staff celebrate and mourn both school and personal events. Student success is showcased, whether it be in athletics, the Student of the Month program, number of words read in Accelerated Reader, and much more. Counselors provide students with opportunities for peer mediation, transition to middle school programs, and college/career readiness lessons. The school also wants to establish a Teachers as Advisors Program for even more individualized care. Cultural and community based field trips, Title I programs, and guest speakers are provided throughout the year for students, and parents are encouraged to participate as well. Student clubs provide community service, raising food for the Food Pantry or volunteering at the Special Olympics. Stakeholders know that Indian Creek cares.