Executive Summary

Liberty 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?

Liberty Middle School (LMS) was established in 2009, as a 21st century school house that prides itself in providing highly qualified teachers, research based strategies and up-to-date technologies, in order to offer educational excellence for all students. We currently educate students in the 6th-8th grade.

For five years, Liberty has been one of five middle schools in Newton County. LMS serves families from a broad range of income levels, ranging from families that receive state assisted living funds to families that earn over six figures. The median household income for our families from 2007-2011 Census is $51,691. Our students live in average size subdivisions, older single-family homes, rental homes, condominiums, apartments and mobile home units. According to the 2011 Census there are approximately 101,505 people living in Newton County. The racial composition of Newton County is predominately white at 51.4%, with approximately 41.8 % African American, 4.8 % Hispanic and 2% Multiracial.

Liberty currently has 976 students enrolled with 492 males and 491 females. 66% of our students are African American, 22% White, 6% Hispanic, 1% Asian and 5% Multiracial. We offer a variety of services to meet the needs of this diverse population. As a Title I school, all of our students receive the benefits of the Title I program. 25% of our student population is in the Special Education Program, and 1% is served and monitored through the ELL program. 2% of our students are in the 504 Program and 15% of our students are in the Gifted Program. 5% of our students participate in the 21st Century After-School Program.

Our attendance rate at Liberty Middle School remains at 96.04%. LMS 6th Grade Students arrive in the fall of each school year from one of three of our county's feeder schools - South Salem, Livingston and West Newton Elementary School. The majority of LMS students will go on to attend Newton High School, upon completion of their middle school years.

The majority of our staff at Liberty Middle are considered highly qualified instructors, which in many cases includes certification in multiple fields. The staff consists of one principal, two assistance principals, 63 teachers, and an additional 25 support staff, which includes custodians and cafeteria staff. The teaching experience of the staff ranges from first year educators to educators with 29 years of experience.

With a strong sense of community and overall job satisfaction, we have a normal amount of teacher turnover. The majority of teacher turnover is a result of promotions, travelling situations, family growth and/or a desire for furthering ones education and career. The school has experienced four administration changes in the five years since we opened due to living relocation, promotions and retirement. As with any new facility, the physical structure of the school remains in very good condition. The custodial staff regularly gets 90-100% on their inspections. Over the next year, the building will be receiving upgrades to their wireless system and ActivBoard projectors, using SPLOST funding. LMS prides itself in staying ahead of the curve when it comes to building cleanliness, technology replacement and innovative ideas for remaining a 21st century school house.
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 statement for Liberty Middle School (LMS) is to provide “Educational Excellence for All Students.”

The vision for LMS is “Liberty Middle School is a 21st century facility that incorporates a positive learning environment with highly-qualified educators, research based and higher order thinking strategies, and the latest technologies to produce a critical thinker capable of creating, producing, performing and communicating their knowledge to a competitive global market.”

The motto for LMS is “360° of Excellence.”

LMS also believes and supports three belief statements that exemplify how Liberty Middle strives to provide the best quality education possible to its students.

Our faculty believes that:
1. Liberty Middle School believes that through quality classroom rigor, differentiation and technology integration our students will achieve academic success.
2. We believe that through leadership, collaboration, empathy and respect, our students will be motivated to become respectable and conscious young adults.
3. Liberty Middle School addresses the whole student through high behavioral and scholastic aptitude expectations.

In the fall of 2012, the Newton County School System (NCSS) and representatives from every school in the county began working on a NCSS Vision that would share the ideas, desires, beliefs and dreams of the school system as a whole.

In the spring of 2013, Liberty Middle began the process of reviewing and analyzing its school's vision, in order to make it more applicable to the work being done on the school level. During this time, the Liberty SACS standard 1 committee began revising the vision, so that it better reflected our overall goal of “Educational Excellence for All Students.” Once finalized and approved by administration, the committee went forward with presenting this vision to our stakeholders through PTO meetings, the school website and a Liberty Vision Survey.

LMS strives to foster a positive learning environment that is conducive of our overall desire to provide the best quality education possible to our students. We believe that our vision, motto and belief statements work hand-in-hand with our overall mission "to provide educational excellence for all students."

Communication with our stakeholders plays a vital role in our ability to effectively implement our vision. Over the past five years, our faculty has utilized several electronic classroom management systems, including Infinite Campus, MyBigCampus, eLearn, Remind101, School Messenger, School Website and Microsoft Outlook 360, in order to communicate with the students and parents about the needs of the classroom.

In addition to the electronic communication, the administration and front office staff creates and distributes newsletters with information about school activities and upcoming events to parents once a month. The teachers also send home letters and make phone calls to parents. LMS holds monthly Title I PTO meetings, in which topics range from the School Improvement Plan, Curriculum Nights, Professional Learning and Technology Training Sessions for parents. At each meeting, parents are given the opportunity to voice their ideas, opinions and concerns to the faculty and administration. LMS also hosts four school council meetings each year, in order to get feedback from parents and community personnel about the effectiveness of our programs.

Based on survey results from our stakeholders, LMS analyzes this data, in order to determine how effective we were in our implementation of our school's purpose as well as how we can better serve our stakeholders. Our leadership team examines our goals and assesses the overall success of the programs and the expectations of our administration, our faculty and our stakeholders. We utilize the knowledge obtained in our meetings, in order to determine how our funds should be spent with the following Fiscal Years' budget.

Many of our Title I purchases have come as a result of feedback that we received from stakeholders about the need for more mobile lapto
carts, programs like Study Island, classroom sets of classic novels, Accelerated Reader books for all subject areas & small group listening centers and math manipulative collections.

Every LMS classroom is equipped with a teacher desktop computer, at least two student computers, a Promethean ActivBoard, ActivSound and Classroom Monitoring Systems. The teachers also have access to ActivExpressions, ActivSlates, a broad collection of in-library and e-books and a number of online programs, like Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Math, Aleks, Study Island, MyBigCampus, eLearn and BrainPop.

LMS offers a wide range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities such as Academic Bowl, Band, Basketball, Beta Club, Cheerleading, Chorus, Cross Country, Softball, Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl, Science Fair, Spelling Bee, Spirit Squad, Step Team, Wrestling and Yearbook Club.

LMS also offers multiple support programs, for students that additional support in the classroom. The RTI process includes academic enrichment, Title I classes, during student connection periods, peer-to-peer support, tutoring, Section 504 and the 21st Century After School Program. All of our strategies, opportunities and programs are designed to offer our students the best means possible for reaching our goal of “Educational Excellence for All Students.”
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.

Within the last three years, Liberty Middle School has made significant gains in all facets. LMS has experienced academic achievements, athletic accomplishments, and school culture growth. Furthermore, LMS has received recognition within Newton County School System as having notable programs and ceremonies. These awards, programs, and ceremonies include:

- Title I School of Excellence
- 2011 Georgia Department of Education Bronze Award for Greatest Gain for Meeting and Exceeding Standards (CRCT Reading/ELA 2011-2012)
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework
- College Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI)

The achievements aforementioned were accomplished in the midst of change. In 2012, a new principal and assistant principal began at LMS. During this time of transformation, LMS began to develop multiple new initiatives while striving to exceed gains accomplished the previous year. The new administrative team formed sub-committees under the school leadership team to identify areas needing restructure and focus. As a result, new and existing schemes were formulated to address the areas of discipline, retesting, remediation, technology, writing and literacy, and advancement in academic rigor.

One of the primary focal points for the LMS School Improvement Plan is improving student achievement as evidenced by local, state, and national assessments. In meeting this goal, LMS is setting high expectations in ensuring that we provide educational excellence for all students. LMS plans to carry-out this endeavor through a 21st century facility that incorporates a positive learning environment with highly-qualified educators, research based and higher order thinking strategies, and the latest technologies to produce a critical thinker capable of creating, producing, performing and communicating their knowledge to a competitive global market. This has been corroborated by LMS making AYP in school year 2011-2012.

On the 2011-2012 CRCT for Reading and English Language Arts, 94.3% of all students in grades 6-8 met or exceeded the AMO of 86.7% for Reading and 92.7% for English Language Arts. For subgroups, 92.3% of the Black students passed the Reading/ELA test, 93% of the White students passed and 98.3% of the Hispanic students passed. The pass rate for Students with Disabilities was 75% for ELA and 82.7% for Reading. All subgroups met or exceeded the AMO goal for Reading/ELA. While in math, 83.3% of all students in grades 6-8 met or exceeded the target goal of 83.8%. For the five subgroups, 81.3% of the Black students passed, 56.7% of the Students with Disabilities passed, 87.3% of White sub-group passed and 88.7% of the Hispanic sub-group passed. The only sub-group that did not meet or exceed the AMO goal of 83.8% was the Students with Disabilities. This group had a 5.7% shortfall on the 2011-2012 CRCT. In addition, since Liberty Middle Schools’ establishment in 2009, LMS has always been recognized for accomplishments in our Title I programs.

To further align our facility with local and state requirements, the faculty of Liberty Middle School developed a Response to Intervention (RtI), Pyramid of Intervention for student behavior. Initially, the teachers use a four step plan and once a student moves to Tier 2, a school wide effort is implemented for the student. For the SY 2012-2013, there were 980 disciplinary events involving 369 students out of the total population of 997 students. Through the collaboration with board of education stakeholders and Georgia Department of Education policymakers, Liberty Middle School was one of several schools within Newton County to begin implementation for the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework. The focus is on student and teacher expectations, and providing recognition for those who meet the stated expectations.

PBIS allows the schools to delve themselves into the data. In using the behavioral data gathered in previous years, the School Improvement Plan (SIP), as well as the amount of time spent on working with students to create small groups, Tier 2 and Tier 3 (RtI) behavior
interventions, LMS developed a school wide action plan and training matrix. The training matrix is comprised of four to five key areas within
the school building that tend to be a target area for misbehavior in which the designated PBIS committee will develop rules and expectations
for appropriate positive behavior support. Liberty Middle School created PRIME: Prepared, Respectful, Integrity, Motivated, and Empathetic.
We want our students to “Be a PRIME Student at Liberty Middle School.” Consequently, this allows our students to begin and end on the
positive as well as having decreased the number of referrals in SY 2011-2012 to SY 2012-2013.
During the first year of the College and Career Readiness Index (CCRPI), Liberty Middle School earned a score of 82.2 which was the
highest score at the middle school level in the Newton County School System. In the area of content mastery, there were strengths noted in
Reading, English Language Arts, and Math with each earning 8.6 points or more out of 10. Areas in which weaknesses were documented
were Science and Social Studies. Other areas of strengths noted on the CCRPI were the percent of students in 8th grade achieving a Lexile
score of 1050 earning 8.3 points out of 10, and Student Attendance Rate earning 9.6 points out of 10. An area of weakness that was noted
included the percent of students with disability served in the general education environment greater than 80% of the school day earning 6.8
points out of 10.
By analyzing all data and resources made available to LMS faculty, policymakers, and community stakeholders, the current SIP was
fashioned by beginning with the end in mind. The noted strengths on the 2012-2013 CRCT are as follows: in Reading, overall, were
Literary Comprehension and Information/Media Literacy, with the weakness being Reading Skills and Vocabulary Acquisition. For
English-Language Arts, overall, LMS demonstrated strengths in Grammar and Sentence Construction and the Writing Process. Numbers and
Operations, Algebra, and Data Analysis and Probability were areas of strength in Math. Science (Geology, Matter, and Evolution) and Social
Studies (Geography) had noted domains of strengths as well. Additionally, the SIP identified areas of improvement that will become the main
objectives over the course of the next three years. They are noted as increasing academic success for students with disabilities in the
content areas of math, science, and social studies. Despite the gains LMS has made in this sub-group and across the content areas, LMS
continues to fall short of the AMOs. Liberty Middle School would also like to increase our parental involvement in school activities and their
opinions on the day-to-day operations of the school.
In conclusion, Liberty Middle School continues to lead and strive for educational excellence by way of high expectations. The faculty of LMS
genuinely believes: through quality classroom rigor, differentiation and technology integration our student will achieve academic success;
through leadership, collaboration, empathy and respect, our students will be motivated to become respectable and conscious young adults;
and LMS addresses the whole student through high behavioral and scholastic aptitude expectations. In the face of administrative and
teacher turnover, these beliefs have fostered a solid foundation and the NEED to "Be the BEST!" Liberty Middle School will continue to
implement and transform research and evidenced-based programs to meet the needs of their students, parents, and community.
Additional Information

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

There is no additional information at this time.