Executive Summary

Middle Ridge 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?

Middle Ridge Elementary is located in the southwest corner of Newton County, Georgia. The population of Newton County has recently risen to just over 100,000 residents. Newton County is a suburban area of Metropolitan Atlanta. Middle Ridge Elementary is located just southwest of the city of Covington, GA, encompassing neighborhoods bordering the city and the town of Porterdale, GA. The school has a population of 690 students, and it is continuing to grow in number. At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year the ethnic population of Middle Ridge was comprised of 64% Black, 24.4% White, 6% Hispanic, 4% Multi-Racial, and 1.6% Asian or other. Current languages spoken at Middle Ridge are English and Spanish. The 2012-2013 school year ended with 87.43% of our students participating in the free and reduced lunch program, with more than 50% receiving free breakfast and lunch.

Middle Ridge has 52.2 certified staff members: two administrators, one counselor, an assigned school psychologist, a music teacher, an art teacher, an additional art teacher one day per week, a physical education teacher, a media specialist, an ELL teacher for 3 segments, two part-time speech and language pathologists, seven interrelated resource teachers, one self-contained special education teacher, two Pre-K teachers, a gifted teacher, two special needs Pre-K teachers, two instructional coaches, and 32 regular classroom teachers. All of the teachers at Middle Ridge meet highly qualified status according to NCLB regulations. The current student to teacher ratio for our regular education classroom teacher is 21.3/1.

Current challenges at our school with regards to parent involvement include: lack of parent transportation; socioeconomic familial issues; parent detachment and mistrust of the educational system. We have made great gains in addressing parent involvement at our school by consistently encouraging and soliciting parent involvement through an active parent volunteer program, monthly PTO programs, a signed parent-teacher compact, parent library, parent workshops with our Title I coordinator, daily communications through student agendas, weekly newsletters, other teacher correspondence, school marquis, school website, weekly folders, school council, parent conferences, and parent posting calls.

Recently introduced programs and curriculum to our school designed to enhance learning include: My Big Campus as an Extension of the Classroom; Interactive Notebooks; Instructional Focus Data Notebooks for Conferencing; Literacy Management System (Daily 5, CAFÉ); Positive Behavior Intervention System, daily Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program, PLC’s, and School-Wide Mentoring.

Our Partner’s in Education have been generous in their support of our school. Numerous partners start the school year by donating book bags and school supplies that we can share with our students throughout the year as they are needed. Others have donated bicycles to use as our end of the year incentive for our school-wide reading program. We have many restaurant partners who have “Middle Ridge Nights” and return some of their profits to our school. Several partners have reached out to the school donating school uniforms and supplies for our many PTO meetings and for our yearly Fall Festival. Middle Ridge’s Partners in Education: Wal-Mart, Stevi B’s Pizza, Newton Citizen, Kroger #214, El Charro Mexican Restaurant, Dairy Queen, Newton Federal Bank, Burger King, Baxter, and Chick Fil A are always available to lend a hand.

CCRPI Data from the 2012-2013 school year indicate a score of 76.5. In the area of Achievement, Middle Ridge scored 40.1 out of a possible score of 50. For Post Elementary School Readiness the score was 37.3 out of a possible 50 points. And, in regard to Predictor for High School Readiness our final score was 12.6 out of 20. In the area of Progress, we had 485 students who showed typical/high growth in content area assessments. Achievement Gap points were 13 out of 20. Challenge points included points for Exceeding the Bar and...
ED/EL/SWD Performance; we received 1 point and 3.2 points in that order for a final 4.2 points for this area.

Despite numerous budget cuts at the state and at the county level, Middle Ridge has continued to thrive and educate its students at a high standard. However, this school has not been immune to these cuts. We have lost precious, educational manpower to these budgetary confinements, as well as limitations to supplies and programs that support our students.
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 the faculty and staff of Middle Ridge Elementary School is to provide a strong foundation of challenging educational opportunities using a variety of educational techniques for all children. Believing that it is vital to the total learning experience of the child, we will provide opportunities for parental involvement and community support and guidance. We are dedicated to providing meaningful learning experiences in a disciplined, safe and organized environment. WE seek to create life-long learners who demonstrate a feeling of self-worth and respect for authority and others.

Middle Ridge Elementary Mustangs are students of strength, intelligence, and determination. We believe that students can take ownership of their learning; that all students can learn, but that they learn in different ways; effective planning provides the key to effective lessons; assessments should be varied, frequent, and should provide feedback that drives instruction; poverty should not prevent a student's ability to learn; teachers and staff are advocates for all students; we all have strengths that benefit the whole group; and, students choose to give us their attention and effort.

With our mission, vision, and our beliefs in mind, Middle Ridge currently has numerous programs in place to maximize student learning. Professional Learning Communities are meeting daily throughout our school to evaluate data of common, formative, and summative assessments, and utilize this information to improve instructional effectiveness. PLCs also work together to collaborate and to create grade level lesson plans. PBIS is the core to our behavior management at Middle Ridge. Students are recognized for making good choices, showing respect for all, and being responsible. They receive "mustang bucks" both individually and as a class, to be used for incentives in the form of a "Mustang Market", and a quarterly "Mustang Marvelous Party". The Student Achievement Committee performs root-cause analysis to determine our behavior improvement goals for the month. The Student Achievement Committee oversees the mentoring program at our school. Our mentoring program is comprised of four houses in which all of our students and teachers are equally divided. Within those houses are families of students assigned to individual teachers who serve as mentors. Mentoring teachers provide support to their "family" students through encouragement and assistance. The school houses participate in friendly competition at our monthly outside fundraisers. Literacy and academic goals are enhanced through the use of a Daily 5 management system. This system is guided by consistent assessment through STAR Reading, DRA, teacher based assessments, and running records. Reading is further invigorated through the Accelerated Reading program. Students are challenged to continue to read and develop their independent reading level while earning "tickets" in a raffle to win a bicycle at the end of the school year. Writing is focused through the use of Writer's Workshop. The CRA method focuses our Math instruction on problem solving and utilizing hands on materials. Interactive Notebooks have been implemented school-wide in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies to increase student input in their learning. We utilize a plethora of technology in our school to support the curriculum. We utilize Active Boards, Active Expressions, Active Votes, I Pads, Laptops, Netbooks, ALEKS, READ 180, and Otter Creek to augment Level I and At Risk Students. A STEM LAB has been created at Middle Ridge and entered into the curriculum to address science, math and technology. Here, students use digital tools and other forms of technology to conduct research, evaluate, solve problems, create original works, and/or collaborate for learning. My Big Campus has been implemented both in and out of the classroom to extend instruction. Forty minutes of instructional focus time is employed at the end of each day to implement academic interventions in the areas of student needs across all grade levels to meet RTI demands. To meet the demands of CCRPI and career development, the counselor at Middle Ridge Elementary meets with grade 1-5 to identify and explore the 16 National Career Clusters, plus Georgia Energy. Further, a finalizing fifth grade portfolio of career specific research is planned, a field trip for fifth grade to the county career academy is organized for a second year, and career day for the entire school has been scheduled.
Middle Ridge continues to locate and obtain all resources that are available to help our students reach and exceed their expectations.
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.

To launch the new programs that were noted in Section 1 of this report, a leadership retreat was organized to develop and formulate the manner in which these programs were to be implemented during the academic day. As part of the preplanning process, teachers were introduced to and provided with professional learning for the use of these programs. As these programs were rolled out within the school, support for instructional staff came through further professional learning, administrative support, and continued assistance from the instructional lead teacher. The mentoring program was introduced to students in a school-wide assembly, where they were introduced to their houses and the staff that were members of their community. Individual families were met by their assigned staff member, and a routine "Mentoring Monday" allows that staff person to keep in touch with those students on their caseload.

On September 24, 2013 it was announced by the United States Department of Education that Middle Ridge Elementary School was chosen as an Exemplary Blue Ribbon School. This honor was received as Middle Ridge is a school with at least 40% of students who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, and Middle Ridge has made the most progress in improving student performance on state assessments or assessments referenced against national norms in reading (English Language Arts) and Mathematics in the most five recent years.

As a recipient of a fruit and vegetable grant from the Georgia Department of Agriculture for the last four years, Middle Ridge has been able to provide all its students with a daily, healthy snack. Students acquire information about the fruits and vegetables that they are receiving, gaining knowledge about the ways in which our local foods are grown.

Our Physical Education coach has been awarded the P.E.P. Grant for 3 years and the General Mills Grant for 4 years. These grants have been utilized to purchase new playground equipment, new and upgraded physical education equipment (including a climbing rock wall), an incentive bounce house for our student achievement team, sensory materials for our special education sensory room, and staff exercise equipment.

The Special Education Department at Middle Ridge Elementary is exceptional. We were recognized as the first school in Newton County to model co-teaching in the classroom. Middle Ridge's commitment to meeting all students' educational needs in the least restrictive environment is exemplified through the work of our teachers.

Students are awarded for their academic excellence, persistence, determination, and responsible behavior. Whole classrooms and individuals are recognized monthly for their participation and behavior in their "special" areas classrooms. Again, classrooms and individuals are recognized daily for being responsible, showing respect, and listening through the use of PBIS "Mustang Bucks", which can be used later for individual and class incentives. As indicated earlier, students are encouraged to read and offered an end of year incentive by earning raffle tickets throughout the year by participating in the Accelerated Reading Program, for which they can possibly win a bicycle. As a capstone to each academic year, students are recognized in a ceremony for their academic excellence, participation and dedicated behavior in Music, Art, Physical Education, and Technology.

As recognized by Middle Ridge's award of a Blue Ribbon School, we have made significant gains academically with our students. Beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, 50% of the students in third grade met or exceeded the standards on the State Criterion Referenced Competency Test. In 2008-2009 that score had risen to 53%. Over the next three academic years the scores for third grade improved a total
of 27%. There was a decrease in the percentage of those meeting/exceeding standards on the 2012-2013 Criterion Referenced Competency Test. Reading for Grade 3 improved from the 2007-2008 school year until the 2010-2011 school year. During that period there was a 23% growth in scores. Since the 2010-2011 school year there has been a decline in scores by 6 percentage points, but this has remained static.

Fifth grade has made superior movement in its academic advances. In the 2007-2008 school year, 54% of the fifth grade class had met or exceeded the standards on the Georgia State Criterion Referenced Competency Test. The fifth grade class gained 20 percentage points by the next school year in the mathematics section of the test. Over the next two academic years, they gained ten more percentage points, to reach an all-time high of 84% of the fifth grade class meeting or exceeding the standards on the Criterion Referenced Competency test. Over the last two years, Middle Ridge has dropped two percentage points, but with the changes made to our math curriculum and math strategies, we hope to make gains in our testing scores this year. Reading has been strength for those in the fifth grade class at Middle Ridge Elementary School. Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, the fifth grade class had a 77% meet and exceed rate on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test. This percentage rate grew over the next four school years reaching 96% in the 2012-2013 school year. This four year growth rate was a gain of 19 percentage points. Although there was a drop in scores during the 2012-2013 school year, the fifth grade at Middle Ridge continues to show its strength and knowledge in the area of reading.

The staff of Middle Ridge is focused daily on meeting and exceeding the expectations of the state guided curriculum. Their goal is to have every child learn.
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.