Executive Summary

Newton College and Career Academy
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?

The Newton College and Career Academy (NCCA) is a charter school located in Covington, Georgia and is home to nearly 800 students in grades 9-12, all of whom are also enrolled in one of Newton County's three public high schools: Alcovy High School, Eastside High School, and Newton High School. NCCA is also home to approximately 21 pre-kindergarten students. NCCA began classes in the fall of 2011 and moved to its current facilities in April of 2012. The faculty is comprised of 55 certified faculty members, 36 of whom have advanced degrees ranging from masters degrees to doctorates. NCCA currently has a principal, two assistant principals, two guidance counselors, a media specialist, and two registered nurses. We have two teachers who are at NCCA part-time, whom we share with other high schools in the county: we share a Spanish teacher with Newton High School and a Latin teacher with Alcovy High School.

Of the student population, 62% is African American, 31% Caucasian, 3% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 3% other. Approximately 60% of students are identified as economically disadvantaged, as denoted by free and reduced lunch numbers. Identified special education students make up 7% of the school's population.

The student demographic information mirrors the makeup of the community. Though the growth rate has slowed, the Newton County's population more than doubled from 41,808 to 93,887 between 1990 and 2007. In the past three years, the population of Newton County has continued to grow, and in 2012 was estimated at 101,505 people. The student population also grew from 10,523 to 19,111, with an increase in the percentage of students on free/reduced lunch from 41% to 56%. Newton County’s 2008 graduation rate of 80.1% was above the state average, but certainly insufficient to meet today’s workplace demands. Newton County was, of course, affected by the recent downturn in the nation’s economy, but the county may be seeing improvement soon, as pharmaceutical giant Baxter announced in 2012 that it will be relocating to Newton County. Newton County’s economy is heavily concentrated in manufacturing, where many jobs are being eliminated. Recently, unemployment in Georgia reached its highest level (10.1%), and Newton County’s rate is even higher at 11.5%; that rate does, however, seem to be dropping.

NCCA operates on an alternating (or A/B) block schedule that supports a challenging academic curriculum aligned with diverse and challenging Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs. The school is home to eight Advanced Placement (AP) classes, with hopes to add more in the future. The school offers classes in two foreign languages: Spanish and Latin. We currently have seventeen identified CTAE pathways. NCCA has fourteen Partners in Education: Industrial Development Authority, Georgia College and Career Academy Network, The Center (Facilitating community preservation and planning), Georgia Perimeter College, Georgia Piedmont Technical College, Covington-Newton County Chamber of Commerce, City of Covington, and Newton County Board of Commissioners, Newton County School System, SKC, Newton County Fire Department, Abraham Baldwin Agriculture College, Hill Phoenix, and Emory.

The primary challenge for NCCA (and for most schools in the nation) has been funding the many different programs and courses we offer. Although Newton County appears to be heading out of the economic downturn, the school system will have to deal with the economic fallout for quite some time. The county projects that in 2015 the county education budget will have to be cut by approximately $2.6 million. Another challenge has been educating the people of Newton County about the mission and purpose of NCCA. There seemed to be a prevailing belief that the Career Academy was for students who did not plan to attend college or who could not function in a "normal" high school. NCCA’s Board of Directors and the faculty of NCCA clarified that NCCA is a college and career academy, and our student body consists of students
who intend to pursue a number of careers, some of which do require many years of postsecondary education. All of our students, even those who plan to enter the workforce directly after graduation, receive invaluable training and unique opportunities at NCCA which they would not be offered in a more traditional high school.

NCCA is in pursuit of excellence. We have dedicated and hard-working students, faculty, staff, and parents, all of whom display a significant amount of pride in NCCA. Our students (or, as we refer to them, associates) know that to whom much is given, much is expected and required. They challenge themselves academically and through their chosen career pathways. We have achieved many successes in the past two years, and we will achieve many more. Our desire is to enhance academic achievement and provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce. Challenging students and preparing them for the future are our main objectives.
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 need for a Career Academy in Newton County was identified through research conducted by Newton County Schools, the Chamber of Commerce, The Center Facilitating Community Preservation and Planning, and the Newton County Leadership Collaborative. Student and Parent Surveys conducted in 2008 and 2009 indicated a need for additional career counseling and increased access to technology and career courses. Discussions at Chamber of Commerce Education Roundtables centered on the need for increasing postsecondary and career/technical education opportunities, private sector involvement in the public schools, and a more highly skilled workforce to attract more high-tech industry and better-paying jobs.

NCCA was created through a partnership of the Covington-Newton County Chamber of Commerce, the City of Covington, the Newton County Industrial Development Authority, Georgia Piedmont Technical College, Georgia Perimeter College, Georgia College and Career Academies, Newton County School System, and The Center Facilitating Community Preservation and Planning. NCCA provides access for all students to "state of the art" facilities and equipment. It offers a variety of postsecondary credit options, including articulation and joint/dual enrollment, as well as opportunities for Industry Certification and work-based learning (job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, co-ops) in a number of career pathways. Curriculum and instructional methods are based on CCGPS and TCSG standards, integrating ISTE National Educational Technology Standards and Performance Indicators, and the Framework for 21st Century Learning developed by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Students benefit from the seamless alignment of academic courses with CTAE courses; the blending of high school programs with the rigor and expectations of college coursework; and the relevance resulting from the association of educational studies with the priorities and expectations of business and industry. Student support is provided through career advisement, work-based learning opportunities and mentoring, and strong relationships with teachers and fellow students developed through an emphasis on teamwork and collaboration. Preparation for the Career Academy begins in middle school as students explore careers through GCIS, complete WorkKeys assessments, and begin to define their education and career plans and identify a career pathway based on their interests and talents.

The vision of Newton College and Career Academy is to "envision being a premier teaching and learning environment which prepares associates to be college and career ready in a global market." The mission of NCCA is "to enhance academic achievement and provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce." In order to fulfill its vision and mission, the NCCA Steering Committee has established the following goals: 1) to provide students in Newton County high schools with the requisite skills and knowledge to exceed the majority of USDOE performance indicators in Perkins' accountability measures; 2) to increase the number of students receiving postsecondary credits through articulation agreements, and dual/joint enrollment courses offered through Georgia Piedmont Technical College and/or other local postsecondary partners; 3) to help students become "workplace ready" in order to be gainfully employed and continue their education and training in a variety of postsecondary options; 4) to increase the number of CTAE instructors with industry experience and improve the faculty retention rate; 5) to increase the business engagement between NCCA industry-based programs and their related business partners.
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.

NCCA has enjoyed many accolades and awards in our first few years. Most recently NCCA was designated as a Ford Next Generation Learning Community, one of only 17 schools in the nation to earn the honor. Also, our 2013-2014 Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Dolores Williams, was chosen as one of the top 3 finalists for the Newton County Teacher of the Year. In 2012, NCCA was awarded an Honorable Mention for the marketing publication for the NCCA pathways overview as well as an Award of Excellence for videocasting/videostreaming for the NCCA recruitment public service announcement by The National School Public Relations Association. In 2011, Georgia School Public Relations Association awarded NCCA Best in Category in three areas: image/identity package for the NCCA logo; marketing campaign for the Career Academy; and electronic media for the Career Academy public service announcement.

In 2012-2013, our associates received first place at both region and state competitions in Job Skill Demonstration, and first place in state competition in Woodworking Technology Display and Construction Technology Display in SkillsUSA competitions; eight business students passed the Word MOS certification test, and 45 passed the PowerPoint MOS certification test; one student received his Forklift certification; FFA students competed at the Northeast Georgia FFA Environmental and Natural Resources Career Development Event, placing third; FFA teams competed at the Northeast Georgia FFA Floriculture Career Development Event, placing third, fifth, and ninth overall; FFA students placed in the top 5 in the Area 2 Largest Floral Design Competition, in the top 10 in the Area 2 Job Interview Contest, and second place in the Area 2 Region Rally Horse Judging Career Development Event; culinary students placed first in the state in regional competition; and several students passed the Certified Nursing Assistant test, receiving their certifications.

So far in 2013-2014, a member of our DECA chapter was elected Georgia DECA State President, our FFA Horse Judging team competed in national FFA competition, and we look forward to the many honors our students will collect the rest of this school year.

Our faculty has had many notable achievements in the last two years as well: our pre-k teacher has been chosen to present at a workshop for the Georgia Association for Young Children, and she also won a Snapping Shoals Grant for $990 to set up and observe bird nesting and feeding habitats; one of our English teachers received a Top Ten Teacher Award from the Rotary Club; one of our culinary teachers received her Culinary Arts endorsement and her Certified Secondary Food Service Educator certification; one of our business teachers passed both Word and PowerPoint MOS certification tests; our Work-Based Learning director received the Georgia Association for Career and Technical Education (GBEA) Outstanding Teacher in Community Service Award as well as the Georgia Association for Career and Technical Education (GACTE) Outstanding Teacher in Community Service Award; and one of our Social Studies teachers won a Fulbright-Hays Grant to Support Research in Malawi, Africa and collected school supplies to distribute to children in Malawi.

This year, NCCA added the Firefighting pathway to our Government and Public Safety pathway; the classes are taught by Newton County Firefighters. We look forward in the future to adding an Emergency Medical Technician program, as well as working with local industries to develop programs that will train students with industry-specific skills. Also this year, NCCA added a STEM Academy, which accepted over 50 ninth graders who will complete career pathways and required academics with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and math.

To prepare students for success in the workplace, NCCA focuses on "soft" skills, such as handshaking, eye contact, conversation skills, honesty, dependability, correct workplace attire, etc. Trainers (a.k.a. teachers) are encouraged to discuss these skills with associates (a.k.a. students) weekly and to incorporate these skills into class lessons, activities, and interactions.
Because 2012-2013 was the first year NCCA offered academic classes, we will use our test scores to establish a baseline, from which we can judge improvement and growth beginning this year.
Additional Information

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

Newton College and Career Academy is truly a unique environment. We have worked tirelessly to make this a place of excellence; as our principal always says, "No one ever rises to low expectations." We set the bar of our expectations high, and we help our students build the knowledge and confidence necessary to reach our expectations. Our students know that attending programs at NCCA is an honor, not a right, and we are constantly blown away by how well they perform and meet the challenges we give them. Many adults who have visited our school leave saying, "I wish there was a school like this when I was in high school!" NCCA offers students the chance to graduate high school with additional certifications, opportunities, and honors to which they most likely would not have access in a traditional high school setting.

Thank you for taking the time to look at our school.