Executive Summary

Newton High 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?

Newton High School (NHS) was originally established in 1949 and has moved several times in the past 65 years. Newton High School’s current facility is located on 1 Ram Way in Covington, Georgia and opened its doors to students on July 29, 2013. The school sits on approximately 118 acres and is one of the largest schools in the State of Georgia encompassing nearly 400,000 sq ft. of climate controlled instructional space. The campus consists of a core educational facility to accommodate 2,500 students, a gymnasium with a capacity of 2,400, a 748 seat theatrical auditorium, football and soccer practice fields, baseball field, softball field, eight lane track, four tennis courts, and a cross-country course.

The school is located southwest of Covington and thirty-five miles southeast of Atlanta. It is one of three schools serving high school age students in the county and its municipalities. The county can be characterized as part of the Greater Atlanta Metro Area with a population of 95,000. The area is experiencing a strong surge of growth as the population of Atlanta moves eastward.

For the 2013-2014 school year, Newton High School has 1,982 students enrolled. The racial make-up of NHS is approximately 75% African American, 14% Caucasian, 7% Hispanic, 3% Multiracial/Other, and 1% Asian/ Pacific Islander. NHS has an ELL population of approximately 3% and a Special Education population of 14%.

The percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunches at Newton High School for the 2013-2014 school year is 73%. NHS has experienced a steady increase in participation in these programs over the last four years. Additionally, Newton High School developed a Targeted Assistance Title I program during the 2009-2010 school year, and then transitioned to a School-Wide Title I Program the following year.

In the 2009-2010 school year, Newton High School students were instructed on a 4X4 block schedule model that provided each block with 90 minutes of instructional time. This schedule was changed back to a traditional seven period day in 2011. The seven period schedule provides each period with 55 minutes of instructional time. This change was uniform across the three high schools in the county to accommodate the implementation of an Instructional Focus (IF) period during the academic day. The instructional focus period provides students who need additional assistance a scheduled time to receive it during the school day without being penalized. The IF period is adjusted each year to better identify student needs, provide academic support, and implement interventions that promote student success.

Like many other high schools in Georgia, NHS has been presented with the challenge of implementing new curriculum requirements each year. The past three years have brought the transition from Georgia Performance Standards to Common Core Standards that emphasis literacy. Additional changes in the state math curriculum have been tremendous and have impacted student performance. For example, students transitioning from an integrated math program to the more traditional mathematics program provided under CCGPS find it difficult to meet performance targets. In order to remain more competitive in the global educational field, NHS has seen a rise in enrollment in the school’s Advanced Placement programs and has had to allocate additional resources to meet the rising demand for these programs.

NHS has been recognized as a Title I Reward school, utilizes Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) for its students, and remains one of the best public high schools in the State of Georgia. The school serves a community that values education and understands the unique contribution that each student offers our world. Newton High School is truly a place where every child can receive every chance to
succeed.
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 Newton High School is to focus all of its resources on the efforts to provide every child every chance to succeed.

Our vision for Newton High School is that it is a safe and secure place where student learning is paramount - a place where teachers demonstrate a genuine concern for students, always treating them with respect and dignity. We envision a dynamic learning community that is rich with professional learning for teachers that will drive student achievement through enhanced instructional methods.

Newton High School's common instructional expectations for all faculty and staff members are the following:
I. Maintain high expectations for all students and demand high standards of work at all times.
II. Implement state & locally adopted curriculum with fidelity.
III. Use research based instructional strategies, background knowledge techniques, and technology integration to engage students in their learning.
IV. Assess students with common assessments as designed by the school/system, and analyze this data to modify instruction as needed.
V. Participate in professional learning communities as designed by the school/system, and use these practices in regular instruction.

Newton High School's common organizational expectations for all faculty and staff members are the following:
I. Communicate and demonstrate positive interpersonal skills while interacting with students, parents, other teachers, administrators, and other school personnel.
II. Report to work and duty assignments on time and display regular attendance.
III. Adhere to school and local system procedures and rules.
IV. Demonstrate positive personal conduct, including manner of dress attire, while in the performance of school duties.

Newton High School's Beliefs are the following:
1. Students learn. What they learn is our concern.
2. Responsible citizenship demands enlightened participation.
3. Quality instruction and high expectations for student achievement are responsibilities of teachers.
4. The pursuit of education requires a safe, well-structured and stimulating environment.
5. Students should be prepared for lifelong learning.
6. Self-reliance and cooperation can be taught.
7. Educational research should be monitored in the effort to improve instruction.
8. Parents have a crucial role in forming students' attitudes.
9. Every student should have an opportunity for self-improvement.

Our school system's non-negotiable goals are: Increased student achievement; More Effective Teaching; Technology Integration; and use of Highly Effective Professional Learning Communities.

In pursuit of academic excellence, our non-negotiable goal is to prepare all students to be college and/or career ready within a supportive, engaging, student-centered learning environment that ensures continuous improvement through the use of research-based instructional
strategies. Our objectives include increasing the graduation rate; increasing the percentage of student meeting the performance targets; increasing the percentage of students exceeding the performance targets; increasing the percentage of students meeting the standards on the writing assessments; increasing the percentage of students exceeding the standards on the writing assessment; and increasing the percentage of student identified as college-ready via the ACT and/or SAT. In addition, we will expand the opportunities for students to participate in rigorous coursework via Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses; increase the percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher on Advanced Placement exams; increase the percentage of students who complete a “pathway”; increase the percentage of students who receive industry credentials; and increase communication between the home and school.

Our system has embodied this purpose/goal by implementing several key initiatives, including utilizing Marzano’s Classroom Instruction that Works and Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement to create effective lesson plans; developing curriculum maps to ensure consistency throughout the district; and developing common course syllabi.

Newton High School has implemented and will monitor the Common Core Curriculum. In addition the school system is developing system benchmarks to strategically monitor student performance throughout the year and also utilizes norm-referenced assessments to improve the quality of learning environment and curricular weaknesses.

Newton High School ensures that all tenth grade students participate in the PSAT and the district utilizes the results from the test to identify any curricular weaknesses. Newton High School hosts the 21st Century After-School Program to ensure students who need additional learning time have opportunities to work under the supervision of highly qualified teachers. The program also provides multiple opportunities for students deemed at-risk to participate in content reviews prior to high-stake assessments.

Newton High School utilizes the services of a graduation coach to monitor student progress and assist with recommendations for interventions. Newton High School currently has a comprehensive Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program that has been recognized by the Georgia Department of Education and will become fully operational by the 2014-2015 school year.

Newton High School encourages parent involvement by conducting regularly scheduled parent conferences and parent workshops throughout the school year. Newton High promotes communication through the school marquee, Twitter, FaceBook, the NHS School Website, Newsletters, traditional mailings, and School Messenger Calls/Emails.

In the pursuit of instructional excellence, our non-negotiable goal is to build the capacity of personnel to deliver high quality instruction. In doing so our objectives include using research-based strategies; building the background knowledge of students during the school day; integrating the use of technology in classroom lessons; utilizing the Learning-Focused School planning framework to develop lesson plans; developing system curriculum maps; creating common course syllabi; conducting intra-district meetings focused on content and strategies; providing content-specific professional learning opportunities; monitoring instruction via district developed walkthrough; and monitoring the learning environment via district developed walkthrough.

Our school system has embodied this purpose by contracting with Dr. Dan Mulligan to provide new teachers (during the induction process) with the instructional expectations via Classroom Instruction that Works and Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement. Dr. Mulligan also has been contracted to provide professional learning opportunities for content specialists, content leaders, and teacher leaders addressing effective research-based instructional strategies and the development of rigorous lessons. Newton High School also employs Academic Coaches to work with new teachers on a one-on-one basis to plan for more cohesive instruction.

Another district lead non-negotiable goal for instructional excellence is the integration of technology into classroom, with objectives including providing opportunities for student use of technology resources; permitting student use of technology throughout the school day; securing
appropriate and adequate technological resources; developing lesson plans requiring integration of technology; and providing professional learning opportunities to learn effective integration techniques.

Newton High School also has a Technology Support Committee that conducts professional learning on technology related topics. These professional learning opportunities are open to all administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals.

Finally, our last non-negotiable goal is to ensure high functioning and highly effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are utilized to support continuous improvement and to create a culture of high expectations for students and staff. Our objectives include developing engaging lesson plans aligned to curriculum maps; analyzing data from benchmarks and common assessments to determine strengths and opportunities for development; and devising remediation and enrichment opportunities for students to name but a few. The district is also providing on-going professional learning to address utilizing the Learning Focused Schools Planning framework to plan for utilization of research-based instructional strategies and building background knowledge. At Newton High, PLCs meet weekly to plan lessons and review data. PLCs, also, participate in professional learning and reflect on the implementation of programs.
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.

Newton High School has a long list of achievements and the following are just a few:

Georgia High Progress Reward School for Academic Performance
SSTAGE Best Practices Award
National Merit Commended Scholars
National Achievement Scholars
Robert C. Byrd Scholar
GATES Scholars
AP Scholars with Honors
AP Scholars with Distinction
AP Scholars
Coast Guard Academy Appointment
PBIS Emerging School

During the next three years, our plan is to focus on the development of Professional Learning Communities and continue to hire highly qualified faculty and staff members as well as athletic coaches and sponsors for our clubs. We will continue to integrate Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports into the fabric of our practice and develop teacher leaders within our building to support student learning.
Additional Information

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

At Newton High School, you will find a highly trained staff, a challenging and timely curriculum, and opportunities for critical/creative thinking. These elements foster a commitment to life-long learning in our students and our staff. We pride ourselves on being a school where students are excited about learning, our teachers are passionate about teaching, and our school community is proud of our accomplishments. It is a school where every child is given every chance to succeed. Thank you for your interest in our amazing school.