Executive Summary

Rocky Plains 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?

Rocky Plains, a Pre-K-5 Elementary School located in southern Newton County, opened on July 29, 2005, with an enrollment of approximately 700 students coming from Heard-Mixon, Middle Ridge and Oak Hill Elementary schools. For the 2012-2013 school year, Rocky Plains has 728 students. The school is located in a rural area of the county, with very few businesses and a large percentage of relatively new residential subdivisions.

Economic downturn over the last three years has increased the percentage of families who are struggling financially. This trend translates into less financial support of students within the classroom. Families are not always able to provide necessary supplies or be as involved in the school community as they would like to be. In addition, the location of the school has made it a challenge to secure business partners who support the overall success of the school. Currently, 71% of our students participate in the federal free and reduced lunch program, which has slowly increased from a low of 54%. As a result, Rocky Plains opened as a Title I School offering a Targeted Assistance Program (TAP) but is now a School-Wide program. In addition to providing the core subjects through regular programs, the school also provides programs in the areas of Special Education (14%), Early Intervention (27%), and Gifted Education (10%).

Due to budget constrictions, the Rocky Plains Elementary staff has been decreased, especially in the area of support personnel. In addition, the amount of funds available to classroom teachers, earmarked for classroom instructional supplies, has been decreased.

Student demographics in 2012-2013 point to a racially and ethnically diverse population that has not changed significantly for the last three years to include: White - 60%; Black 27%; Hispanic 5%; Multi-Racial 6%; and Asian -1%.

The school earned a CCRPI score of 80.7 in 2013, thus attaining the academic, test participation rate, and attendance indicators set by the Georgia Department of Education for grades 3-5. In grades 3-5, 91% of the all students group met or exceeded the Math target of 88.1%, while 96% met or exceeded the target of 94.6% in Reading/English Language Arts. In terms of attendance, 26.5% of students in grades Prek-5 were absent for more than 15 days.

The Rocky Plains staff is a very well-educated group. Among the staff, the following leveled certificates are held: 11 T-4 (22%); 18 T-5 (36.7%); 16 T-6 (32.6%); 2 T-7 (4%); 1 L-6 (2%); and 1 L-7 (2%).
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 Rocky Plains Elementary School, with support from families and the community, is to engage, encourage, equip, and educate our students to strive for excellence to succeed in our hyper-connected global world. Our school'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.

Our school 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 develop effective lesson plans; following district curriculum maps to ensure consistency throughout the school; and implementing common course syllabi. Rocky Plains has implemented the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). In addition, the school utilizes norm-referenced assessments to improve the quality of learning environment and curricular weaknesses. The Afterschool Program employs highly-qualified teachers to ensure that students are given additional opportunities for instruction and enrichment. The school also participates in regularly-scheduled review sessions for students who are at risk for failure, based on common assessment data. Rocky Plains encourages parent involvement by conducting regularly scheduled parent conferences throughout the school year and keeping parents up-to-date on important school and district news via regular School Messenger Calls. In addition, parents are kept abreast of current school happenings through the use of monthly newsletters and the school website.

In pursuit of our goals of increased student achievement and more effective teaching, Rocky Plains has implemented highly effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These PLC's meet weekly to discuss strategies for reaching instructional goals and objectives, including effective lesson planning, data analysis, and development of remediation and enrichment opportunities for students. In addition, the PLCs work closely with county support personnel in order to increase effective technology integration within the classrooms.
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.

Rocky Plains Elementary has made consistent improvements throughout the school over its 8-year history.

In the standardized testing category, the school has consistently made expected Annual Yearly Progress, according to the expectations set by the Georgia Department of Education. In particular, the students in grades 3, 4, and 5 have consistently exceeded county and state performance in Reading, English Language Arts, and Mathematics. This is directly linked to being named a Title I Distinguished School for the past 3 years.

Also, our 4th and 5th grade students participate in the Annual Reading Bowl, placing 1st in the county competition in 2012.

Our students also participate in a school-wide Mentoring Program, in which students are given opportunities to be personally mentored by the staff. We have also instituted a STEM Lab for both grades Pre-K - 2 and 3 - 5, in which students can be exposed to the interaction of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. We have opened an addition computer lab to more effectively expose our students to the world of technology and its educational impact.

One of our 5th grade students was named a Young Georgia Author for Newton County through the Young Georgia Authors program.
Additional Information

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

We do not have any additional information.