



Executive Summary

Norcrest Elementary School

Broward County School District

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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?

Norcrest Elementary is located in Pompano Beach, just on the border of Lighthouse Point. These two communities are very different, Pompano Beach being a lower income, highly transient community made up of many immigrants, and Lighthouse Point being an affluent community. Our school's population size has remained fairly stable over the last three years, showing just slight increases from 816 students in 2013-14 to 836 students in 2015-16. However, during the last three years we have experienced some significant changes, such as a significant staff turnover, changing from an International Baccalaureate (IB) school to our own unique T.I.G.E.R.S. program and changes in the population of our students. Some of these changes have resulted in our being moved to a different Supplemental Educational Services (SES) band.

The staff demographics at our school are similar for the past three years. It is comprised of approximately 67% white, 20% Black, and 9% Hispanic. These numbers have not fluctuated more than 2% over this period. However, the number showing staff turnover is more significant. In 2013-14, 13 instructional staff members (22%) were newly hired. In 2014-15 there were 9 (15%) newly hired instructional staff members, and this year that number rose to 23 (38%). This continuous turnover presents significant challenges when it comes to continuity of instruction for the students.

Our school had decided to discontinue our designation as an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. In order to fill that gap we created our own T.I.G.E.R.S. program. The name stands for Technology, Inquiry, Global Thinking, Environmental Research, Social-Intelligence. These are the areas we are focusing on with our students. The new program did involve redefining our focus throughout all areas of our curriculum to incorporate the T.I.G.E.R.S. qualities.

The student demographics in 2013-14 were as follows: 40.3% white, 28.7% black, 28.2% Hispanic. Currently they are 41.2% white, 28.4% black, 27.5% Hispanic. While the racial demographics are relatively stable, the numbers of economically disadvantaged students has increased. In 2013-14 our number of students receiving free and reduced lunches was 66.7%. In the past 2 years it has risen such that it is now 77.4% . Many of these students are from families whose parents are struggling to provide for their families, and do not have time to assist students with learning and homework after school. That effects how these students perform in school, and subsequently how the instructional staff reinforces learning.

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.

Our mission statement reads as follows: "The Norcrest community is committed to what's best for children by inspiring ALL to achieve their greatest potential". This is how we structure the environment for the children. When we began our T.I.G.E.R.S. program (Technology, Inquiry, Global-thinking, Environmental Research, Social-thinking) we wrote a statement that reflected what we hoped to accomplish with this program. It reads: "The T.I.G.E.R.S. program is designed to provide students with character education focusing on social, environmental, and technological sciences. Students are provided with authentic learning opportunities that align Common Core/FSA standards with thematic units, and project-inquiry based learning." The T.I.G.E.R.S. program reflects the administration and faculty belief that when students are presented with these types of learning activities, they will be more engaged and retain the information better.

The first big step in this program was to implement our Social Thinking program school-wide. All teachers were trained on the implementation of this program and it is used in all classrooms in the school, including during specials and the cafeteria. Students are encouraged to examine their behavior and the impact it has on others. Through an understanding of how one's actions influence the people around them, students begin to make positive adjustments as they react to situations that arise. The consistent use of this program has had a positive effect on the culture of the school as well as the behavior of the students. This program will be discussed in greater detail in upcoming questions.

We have begun to expand activities and programs at our school to include other aspects of this program. For example, our science teacher is offering activities after school to increase student knowledge of the environment and awareness of how they can impact their community in this area. We have also conducted science activities on Saturdays to encourage not just environmental research, but also improve their inquiry skills. Our language teacher infuses Global-thinking not only during class, but in an afterschool club and competitions as well. Even our Physical Education teacher turned our field days into a school-wide Olympics. Each class chose a different country to represent and learned about that culture.

With the delivery this year of much-needed new technology, we are able to begin focusing on the technological skills we want our children to possess. Each classroom received 6-8 laptops that students are utilizing for daily instruction, in addition to two separate computer labs. Two of our intermediate classes this year are implementing Blended Learning. These students are receiving instruction through technology, as well as the traditional teacher led lessons. Now our students are much more able to integrate technology into their regular classroom routines and lessons.

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.

One area identified and targeted for improvement was the Response to Intervention process being conducted at our location. Our goal was to promote a systemic change wherein we moved to a process where the classroom teachers have ownership and a deep understanding of Response to Intervention. Through deliberate and specific trainings, we have chunked the process into an essential tool for our teachers to individualize instruction moving our most vulnerable students forward.

Three years ago, we initiated this training by clarifying the process, defining specific steps and monitoring techniques. The ESE Specialist and Literacy Coach were instrumental in assisting faculty to identify specific interventions (from the Struggling Reading and Math charts) to support their most needy students addressed through routine data chats. Each intervention was then modeled to ensure a clear understanding and implementation pattern. Even with this instruction, over 95% of our classroom teachers relied on others to document, chart and analyze the data.

As we moved into the 2014-2015 school year, a more in depth training on data collection and graphing ensured. The teachers were now expected (yet supported) to graph the results of their individual students with respect to interventions being implemented. The Response to Intervention Team met on a regular basis with teachers separate from routine data chats. During these meetings, each teacher would bring information on their students to discuss and analyze, adjusting the instructional plan as needed. At this point, the majority of our teachers were speaking as an advocate for their students instead of simply receiving directions on how to instruct. BASIS was introduced to the teachers. However, 100% of the entries were being input by members of the Response to Intervention Team, other than the classroom teacher.

This year (2015-2016), we have evolved into using multiple, detailed sources of data to dig deep into performance and potential areas of need. It is a group effort from administration, support staff and classroom teachers to consistently monitor student performance. But the classroom teachers have taken ownership to begin the Response to Intervention process for their students. An electronic folder within our cab conference has been created with support documents for teachers to access. It shares a variety of information on the Response to Intervention process and useful information gathering documents. Once the teachers have entered the initial concern in BASIS, the members of our Response to Intervention Team are notified and subsequent meetings are initiated to monitor the effectiveness of the interventions and the progress of the student. Comparative graphs are now the expectation instead of simple performance graphs. Grade level meetings now include discussions of the Response to Intervention process and the effectiveness of interventions being used. Also, we have added a component to our New Educators Support System (NESS) on Response to Intervention providing mentorship and guidance on this most important aspect of student progress.

Additional Information

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

Norcrest Elementary has several unique programs and activities in place which incorporate learning for all stakeholders. The most unique program is the Saturday Enrichment learning camps. Normally schools offer Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) to their most struggling students, and a great deal of funds are allocated for that purpose. While Norcrest offered those ELOs to our struggling students, we also offered a Saturday camp targeted to enrich the higher level students, who are often overlooked in the ELO process. These students were given instruction on above grade level skills and topics, as well as an opportunity to present their learning through technology. The purpose was to ensure the highest students could keep their scores high. As a result of expanding our ELO vision, we then added primary ELO camps as well. We hoped that with the addition of the primary children, we could keep their skills up to grade level, thereby preventing some of them from needing remedial ELOs in the intermediate grades. Our SAC committee and our parents were thrilled that we were focusing on all children's success.

Another unique program at Norcrest is our Social thinking program, which is a part of our T.I.G.E.R.S. program already discussed. Social thinking is implemented school-wide in all classrooms. This program created by Michelle Garcia Winner, is designed to help students understand the "whys and hows" of social interaction. The program helps students to build self-awareness, develop an understanding of social expectations, and utilize problem-solving strategies to work well with others. At Norcrest, we utilize Social Behavior Maps (SBMs), which are a kind of graphic organizer that helps students and teachers to see the linear connection between behaviors, how they make others feel, how people react to us based on our behaviors, and ultimately how we feel about ourselves. Students can understand what is expected of them in various settings/situations (classroom, cafeteria, recess, etc.) SBMs can also be used to reflect on behaviors that are unexpected and problem-solve for various situations. We also use The Zones of Regulation, for getting students and teachers to build self-awareness through understanding emotions and behaviors and how they fit into 4 different colored zones (blue, green, yellow, and red). There are no right or wrong zones, rather there are expected and unexpected times to be in each zones. Students learn about what behaviors and feelings are expected for various settings. Then, when they are in a "zone" at an unexpected time, students learn coping and calming strategies to self-regulate so that they can become more comfortable and be ready to learn. This program has helped our students with their behavior and their social interactions.

Our school has another unique program called Tiger Pals. This program united our Autistic students ("A-team") with our general education students. Children in fourth and fifth grades apply to become a Tiger Pal. They are then assigned to one of the A-team students. Once a week they spend an hour with their Tiger Pal doing a variety of activities. This gives the autistic students the chance to interact with their general education peers in various school activities. The bonds that are formed become very important to both children and beneficial to the entire school. The general education students develop understanding and empathy for students with different abilities. Another school activity that involves our A-team is our Winter Wonderland. This is an evening event with many activities, games, booths and more. All of the proceeds go to benefit the needs of our autistic cluster. In preparation for this event, all children in the school create a family project at home. This is centered around characteristics that are unique to each family. The projects are then on display at Winter Wonderland. We normally have approximately at least 400 families who participate in our Winter Wonderland. These activities reflect how we value each and every child at Norcrest.