



FORT LAUDERDALE HIGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

As the oldest, continuous-functioning school in Broward County, Fort Lauderdale High School is a landmark that has demonstrated a commitment to children and families for more than 100 years. The school is home to the prestigious Cambridge AICE Programme and Prelaw magnet programs and attracts students from around Broward County, some of who travel hours by bus each day to participate in these respected and academically-rigorous magnet programs. It is also the home boundary school to a racially and culturally diverse group of families, many of who come from homes that confront the difficult obstacles of poverty, violence, and desolation on a daily basis. The school has been a beacon for these families that not only provides an excellent education to children, but also offers a diverse array of programs designed to enhance the social emotional health of students and their families. The diversity of the school is a reflection of the diversity of the community. Located in downtown Fort Lauderdale, the school has students that reside in several well-known and affluent, neighboring communities. The high-rise buildings of downtown Fort Lauderdale can be seen from the school's patio. As in many urban areas, there

are also several low socio-economic areas interspersed in the community. Many of our students reside in some of the lowest income zip code sectors in South Florida. Overall, the area is rich in ethnic diversity with families from a variety of Caribbean, South American, and Anglo-European backgrounds. Fort Lauderdale High School's total enrollment is about 2005 students, and the demographic breakdown includes traditionally underserved subgroups: 53% African American, 17% Hispanic, and 40% white. Sixty-seven percent of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. The school's success over the past five years is evidenced by the increase in enrollment, which has jumped from about 1,700 students to over 2,000. Last year alone, nearly 950 students applied for 250 available magnet seats. The faculty has been exceptionally stable over the past decade and includes 100 plus teachers, more than 50% of who have earned masters or doctorate degrees. Five administrators oversee the school's programming and operations, and there are four guidance counselors, two magnet coordinators, a BRACE advisor, an ESE Specialist as well as other support professionals.

SCHOOL'S PURPOSE

The school's vision coincides with that of the district to prepare today's students to succeed in tomorrow's world. The mission statement further communicates the school's belief in preparing students for productive lives in the future global marketplace: Within a safe, creative, and nurturing environment, we provide students with a personalized educational experience, fully enabling them to become productive members of tomorrow's global economy. To achieve these lofty goals, the school has embraced a rigorous international curriculum that focuses on enhancing a student's 21st century skills including collaboration, communication, research, and writing. Each student's coursework considers their individual academic level in order to optimize student learning and college- and career-readiness. The school's culture focuses on the importance of an academically rigorous curriculum, and it is an unwritten rule that every student will be placed in a personalized, yet rigorous course schedule. The number of students who took a college-level course has more than doubled over the past five years from 496 to 1,051. More important, access to college level coursework has been equitable across all major subgroups: 39% of African American students, 39% of white students, and 57% of Hispanic students have taken

college-level courses. Most indicative of the school's commitment to excellence in education is its historic rise in graduation rates. Last year, 95% of students graduated, an 18% increase in just five years. More important, the school has closed the achievement gap among all traditionally underserved subgroups, whose graduation rates were all over 90%. During the past three years, the school has completed a major phase of a renovation that has lasted more than a decade. During this three-year period, a new state-of-the-art aquatic center has opened along with a three-story administration building, three-story STEM classroom building, and new science facility. Even with the advantages offered by these projects, the school continues to confront barriers associated with the exceptional growth spurred by its extensive popularity. Currently, the school is overenrolled and must confront the obstacles that coincide with that including instructional staffing, facilities, and professional development.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

In 2012, Fort Lauderdale High School was one of three schools in the nation to receive the College Board's prestigious Gaston Caperton Award for excellence, access, and success in Advanced Placement Programming. The school has been rated an A+ school by the Florida Department of Education for the past four years, as well as ranked the top school in the district in its socio-economic band and eighth in the state of Florida. Last year alone, Fort Lauderdale High School was ranked the thirty-fifth Most Challenging School in the nation by the Washington Post (ninth in the state of Florida and first in Broward County), a Silver Medal School by U.S. News & World Report, and a Magnet School of Distinction by Magnet Schools of America (three years in a row).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fort Lauderdale High School continues to innovate its academic programming for the benefit of students. Last year, the school was selected from hundreds of international schools to create and complete an action research study with the University of Cambridge School Of Education. Along with seventeen other prestigious international schools, Fort Lauderdale High is researching ways to optimize school improvement, programming, and excellence in order to enhance 21st Century Learning for all students.