



# **Executive Summary**

**Rickards Middle School**

**Broward County Public Schools**

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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?**

James S. Rickards Middle School has been serving this community since 1968 as a proud educational establishment in Broward County School District. Rickards Middle is a Title I school due to the fact that over 80% of the students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. Eighty-five percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch have had that status for the last three years. Rickards is located in an economically diverse area in Oakland Park, Florida. Homes approximately one mile east of the school are very expensive and the area exclusive, but the area to the west of the school is much older, run-down, and homes have lost their value, with many sitting empty having been foreclosed on by the banks. Families from the wealthier neighborhood typically send their children to private schools located in the surrounding Fort Lauderdale area. There are a total of 928 students divided by 470 girls and 458 boys. The student population is made up by 43% Hispanic, 29% Black, 23% White, 4% Multi-Racial/Mixed Race, and 1% Asian-Pacific. Twelve percent of the students are English Language Learners.

## **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 James S. Rickards Middle School is to individualize our educational process in order to expose learners to literacy, technology, self - awareness, and problem solving skills as we embrace the whole child. We provide a rigorous, academic program where effective educators lead students to take responsibility for learning. We are committed to sustaining a school in which individuals representing diverse cultures and experiences share with one another, thus giving meaning and value to our school community and the joy and importance of lifelong learning. Additionally, Rickards Middle School strives to be the benchmark of academic excellence in college preparatory education through superior teaching of a rigorous curriculum. Further, we provide more than just educational experiences - we are preparing young people to be well-adjusted adults.

## **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.**

James S. Rickards Middle School is working in synergy to establish a learning environment that is conducive to the higher order thinking and motivates their students to reach their highest potential. Our Rickard Honors Academy is a special program that selects high performing students and provides the opportunity to obtain up to seven (7) high school credits in advanced and rigorous classes. All of these classes are articulated with high schools courses for curricular continuum.

At Rickards Middle, we have programs and courses that meet the diverse needs of our learners. We have established an ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Essentials course. It is an innovative program of instruction designed to infuse technology and to engage students with specific and individualized technologies. The program is designed to raise digital technology literacy in our students. The program allows our students to receive industry certification in the fields of Multimedia Essentials, Database Essentials, Web Design Essentials, Programming and Logic Essentials, and Gaming Essentials. We have several students who have received Industry Certification in Database Essentials.

We also have a diverse elective program celebrating the arts and enhancing the talents and interest of our students. Our music and art programs provide hundred of students an education that motivates them to showcase their talents in band concerts and art exhibition bringing the community together.

In an effort to increase and expose our young ladies to the careers of technology and engineering, we partnered with Northeast High School and IT Women to have a "Summer Robotic Camp". The camp helped ignite a passion for technology in our 16 girls that attended the summer camp.

For twelve years, we have had a strong relationship with Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Broward County. Every Wednesday, we have student volunteers from Cardinal Gibbons High School, serving as mentors for our 6th, 7th, and 8th grade at-risk students. The program has proven to be very successful here at Rickards Middle School. Outcomes show that the students being mentored, improved academic performance, attitude towards school, increased their preparedness, improved behaviorally, and overall self - esteem.

For the past two years, we have received the "School Is Cool Grant". The grant is valued at over \$80,000.00 and is used to help fund after school programs for our students in the field of science, the arts, and sports. The clubs that were created by the grant have helped our students in developing better academic and interpersonal skills. The students in the program have improved their attendance, behavior, and course performance in reading and math. In addition, this program has helped the students feel as if they belong to something special. They have attended several educational fieldtrips, as well as have performed for the school during Black History Month and other notable holidays.

With the assistance from our partner Home Depot, the students of our Anatomy and Physiology class participated in the national Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. In collaboration with the A Plus Foundation of the Chi Psi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, they received a \$5000 grant to build "A Blooming Tranquility of Health and Wellness" Garden. The students also competed in the 2016 DuPont Challenge Science Essay Competition. We had two students compete in the Broward County Science Fair, where one of our students placed third overall in Chemistry.

To help bridge the learning gap we offer Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) which includes afterschool tutoring and Saturday Academic Camp. After school tutoring is offered Monday through Thursday from 4:00 pm-4:45 pm. The students are able to work on homework assignments and get help from teachers certified in all subjects. Saturday Academic Camp is offered from 9:00 am-11:45 am for all our students. We received a \$3000 grant to help create smaller Saturday Academic Camp classes for our ELL student population. In addition, computer based programs such as Achieve 3000, USA Test Prep, I-Civics, Gizmos, and Vocabulary.com are other tools used to help students remain on track academically.

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## **Additional Information**

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

- Support Facilitators do Push In/Pullout for increased instruction of ELL and ESE students;
- Departmental Collaborative PLC: Best Practice Sharing Presentation/Data Presentation
  
- ESE Parent Night: Our Parent Night consists of an introduction to our Exception Student Education Program to our parents. The purpose is to explain the services that we offer to our Exceptional Student Population and provide the tools for them to be successful in the school setting.
  
- Collaborate with feeder elementary schools to invite incoming 6th Graders to our Open House (Mid-Year and End of the Year)
  
- Begin working with our feeder elementary schools' kindergarten students to experience our Dr. Seuss Day during the Christmas season. This experience allows us to sell Rickards Middle to our feeder elementary schools students and provide enrichment reading and math activities for those students who attend.