



# **Executive Summary**

**Cross Creek 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?**

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Cross Creek School is an area-based center serving the Emotional Behavioral Disabilities (E/BD) student population of the northern half of Broward County. The school is located in Pompano Beach, FL. Due to the fact that Cross Creek School is not neighborhood based, but area based, multiple factors present challenges. These factors include transportation difficulties, providing before and after-care services for students, an inability to offer extra curricular activities, partnership challenges with community businesses and lack of parental participation due to distance from home to school.

In the 2013/14 school year, Sunset School closed and Cross Creek School received 70% of their students and staff. This would be a stressful transition for typical students, but due to the complex nature of our students and their intense mental health and behavioral needs, the difficulties were magnified. The summer before the schools merged, the support staff from both schools worked together to incorporate the best parts of the two schools' elaborate and comprehensive behavior management systems, in addition to maintaining a strong academic focus. During the year of the initial merger of the two schools, trust and relationships had to be established with both staff and students. It was a struggle and we saw an increase in our suspension rates as inappropriate behaviors increased. We also did not see the learning gains in our students that we know they are capable of making.

In the two years since the merger, we have established stability that has resulted in a 67% reduction in our suspension rates and a substantial increase in the number of our students who participate in the general education setting in their neighborhood schools on either a part time or full time basis.

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Cross Creek School has an enrollment of approximately 150 students in grades K-12. All of our students are identified as Exceptional Students and have Individual Educational Plans. Our school provides a therapeutic/behavioral environment for E/BD students. Most students who attend Cross Creek School have been diagnosed with a mental health illness by a psychiatrist and many are prescribed psychotropic medications. Our students face many of the identified risk factors that play a role in their learning. A significant percentage of our students are in foster care or reside in group homes. The unpredictable and unstable home situations cause our transiency rates to be high. When students move into our area and have intense needs that require an E/BD center, we often do not have much information about the student and it takes time to gather the necessary data to know the appropriate services and interventions that will best help the student. Because 90% of our students are working toward a standard high school diploma, our teachers are required to be certified in both ESE and their content areas. This makes it difficult to get and retain qualified staff. Additionally, our high school course offerings are limited due to our small student population.

Cross Creek's Student Demographics are as follows:

Black or African American	48%
Hispanic	11%
Multi-Racial	3%
White Non-Hispanic	38%

Cross Creek's Staff Demographics are as follows:

Asian	3%
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## Executive Summary

Cross Creek School

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Black or African American	45%
Hispanic	12%
Multi-Racial	3%
White Non-Hispanic	37%

## **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.**

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### **Vision**

Cross Creek School is a place for all children to achieve their highest potential in their academic, creative, physical, emotional and moral development. A caring place where children and adults feel they make a contribution and are valued individuals.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of Cross Creek School is to provide, through a psycho-educational approach, a safe, orderly, and nurturing environment whereby all students are treated with dignity and respect. All students are provided with realistic goal training, supportive counseling for emotional independence, and quality academic preparation for reintegration into the least restrictive educational and social environment.

Cross Creek has a team of 11 family counselors who provide counseling services to our students in individual and group sessions. Additionally, we have 15 Behavior Technicians that have training in Professional Crisis Management with an emphasis on verbal deescalation skills to provide a safe environment. The School Psychiatrist oversees the mental health needs and progress of our students. Two Behavior Specialists assist conducting Functional Behavior Assessments and writing Individual Positive Behavior Intervention Plans. They also provide conflict mediation. All students participate in a school-wide Behavior Management System. Through the IEP process, school personnel, the student, the student's family and any outside agencies the parent invites meet at least annually to ascertain the student's present level of performance and identify the academic, social, emotional, and organizational goals for the student for the coming year. The IEP process also addresses the supports and accommodations the student needs to progress, the services the student requires and the least restrictive setting that the IEP can be implemented. This is done at least annually and more often if needed.

## **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.**

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Since 2013, Cross Creek's suspension rate has been reduced by 67%. The School-Wide Behavior Plan and Individual PBIPs have reduced significant behaviors. The restructuring of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) have involved the family counselors in our academic PLC groups. This allows the therapeutic staff to have a better understanding of the rigorous academic challenges our student face and to help them to better cope with these stressors. The PLCs also provide a mutual understanding between the teachers and the therapists that encourages a focused delivery to our students.

The number of students who participate in a general education setting has increased by 50%. Prior to entry into Cross Creek School, these students were unable to manage their behaviors and have academic success. Now, they are flourishing in the general education setting. Because Cross Creek is not a neighborhood school, we often have difficulty getting business partners. Our Business Partner Liaison has developed relationships with various agencies and organizations and established contacts to assist our school with student incentives and staff appreciation items. Our partnerships have also added to our Elementary Literacy Program through "Wags and Tails." where elementary students improve their reading fluency and confidence by reading to a dog, their friend Princess Grace.

Another challenge we face is when students enter Cross Creek they have been unsuccessful in their neighborhood schools and are often facing low grade point averages or a history of failure in school. We provide students with counseling and support to help them better manage the stressors of school. While learning coping strategies, students are often not able to put forth their best effort academically. When students are able to regulate their emotions and behavior, using the coping strategies they have been taught, they return to their home schools. The state did not calculate learning gains last year because it was the first year of the new assessment. This year, however, we expect to see our students make learning gains.

Over the next three years, we plan to continue with our PLCs to increase learning gains. Our staff work together in their PLCs to continuously evaluate teaching strategies. By using formative assessment data, teachers can pinpoint the best teaching strategies along with motivational strategies for their students.

Attendance is a major barrier to student achievement. We work closely with the school social worker, parents, and students to help improve attendance with limited success. We have developed a comprehensive attendance plan to offer incentives to students and support for parents to improve our attendance.

## **Additional Information**

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

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Cross Creek is the most restrictive school setting, however with the multidisciplinary approach many students are able to meet their academic and therapeutic goals. Teachers are required to be certified in both ESE and their content areas, as well as other specialty certifications to meet the highly qualified criteria in accordance with the state.

Many of our students are not college bound and their post secondary options are often limited. We are establishing partnerships with post secondary organizations and providers. We have partnered with a program that offers our high school students job skills training during the school year. Upon successful completion of the program, they will be placed in a job with job support. Through a grant, students are able to earn a salary with no cost to the company who allows them to work at their site. This will provide the students with much needed experience and the job site has nothing to lose. We are also hosting our first Transitional Fair. Post-secondary organizations will come to the school, speak to the students and provide them with many options available following their high school education.

Several of the great difficulties we have is motivating students to first, come to school and second, do their best in their academic subjects and third, to control their behaviors. We do not offer extra-curricular activities due to transportation challenges. However, we have initiated a mentoring program through intramural sports. Our teachers and support staff volunteer to be mentor coaches and form different inter-scholastic sports teams each quarter. During basketball season we have a traveling team that go to other center schools. The criteria to play, and the mentor coaches, have both added to the students' motivation to get better grades and have fewer behavioral issues.