



Executive Summary

Clay County School District

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Description of the School System.....	2
System's Purpose.....	5
Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement.....	7
Additional Information	9

Introduction

Every school system has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school system makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school system 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 system, and the kinds of programs and services that a school system implements to support student learning.

 The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school system with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the community will have a more complete picture of how the school system perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school system to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

Description of the School System

Describe the school system'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 system serves?

Clay County, Florida established in 1858, is located in Northeast Florida along the banks of the St. Johns River. The county borders the city of Jacksonville to its north and prior to 1858, was the southern region of Jacksonville's, Duval County. Clay County covers approximately 644 square miles. Its county seat is Green Cove Springs and is still considered part of the Greater Jacksonville Metropolitan area.

Clay County is rich in beauty and history. Its natural warm springs have been a popular attraction for tourists dating back to the Civil War. The military plays an important role in the county. Camp Blanding, located on Kingsley Lake in central Clay County is home to the Florida National Guard. Clay County is also a popular choice of residence for military personnel who are stationed at NAS in Jacksonville and drawn to the area by the quality school system.

Clay County has 197,572 residents (80.3 percent white, 8.9 percent African American, 6.2 percent Hispanic, 2.6 percent Asian and 1.6 percent other). Children ages 17 and under make up 24 percent of the population, while those 65 and over make up 10 percent of the total population.

Just over 50 percent of the county's residents commute to Jacksonville and other surrounding counties to work. With no large industries or companies located in the area, the School District of Clay County is the county's largest employer with over 5,000 employees. Small business and retail establishments dominate the area however, there are also numerous small manufacturing, financial and technical companies as well as health service agencies. The lack of large business within the county makes for a small tax base thus making funding a challenge.

The School District of Clay County was established in 1854 when the Middleburg Common School opened its doors to 58 students. During World War II, one-room schoolhouses were established across the county for the purpose of educating the children of military fathers brought to the area to train at Camp Blanding. Since its early days, the system has grown to 26 elementary schools, 6 junior high schools, 6 high schools, 1 combination 7-12 junior/senior high school, 1 virtual school, 2 alternative schools and 2 privately operated charter schools. Today, the district serves just over 35,000 students. Fifty-two (52) percent of the students are males and forty-eight (48) percent are female. The student population consists primarily of three racial/ethnic groups, white (68 percent), African American (14 percent) and Hispanic (10 percent). A small percentage of other racial/ethnic groups generally reside in isolated areas of the county. The district serves an increasing population of English Language Learners (ELL) who are supported through our English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program as well as a small migrant population of 0.1%. The district has 501 active ELL students. Programs and services to support the district's language immersion program are funded through Federal Title III funds and the Immigrant Grant. Students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) and the speech impaired make up the largest percent of the district's Exceptional Student Education (ESE) population (20 percent), with 3,290 SLD students and 3,066 students receiving speech services.

Student mobility rates are calculated annually. The district has an average mobility rate of 6.51% which correlates to 2,417 students. Those schools with the highest mobility rate are those with the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students. Mobility is highest within the elementary schools. Included in the district percentages is the mobility of students from Bannerman Learning Center which has a 62.7% mobility rate due to the fact that students are placed at the alternative center for a limited time of remediation then typically return to

Executive Summary

Clay County School District

their home school.

Of the 26 elementary schools, 15 serve students in grades PreK-6, 3 serve students in grades K-5 and the remaining schools serve students in grades K-6. The junior highs within the elementary feeder patterns serve either a grade 6-8 population or grades 7-8. All high schools serve students in grades 9-12 with the exception of Keystone Heights Junior/Senior High School that serves students in grades 7-12. The district provides 1 alternative school for students who have been removed from the regular school setting due to behavioral issues, teen parents or juvenile justice placement. Students may remain at the school for an entire school year but the majority of the students return to their home school after receiving needed services and academic remediation. In January 2015, the district in collaboration with DJJ, opened a PACE Center for Girls to provide a school setting designed to meet the needs of up to 50 of the district's most challenging girls. Eight (8) of the district's elementary schools are designated as Title I schools with a free/reduced lunch rate greater than 60 percent. The district's overall free/reduced lunch rate is 29 percent.

Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Services are available at each school for students with special needs. Areas of eligibility include: gifted, specific learning disabilities, hearing impaired, emotional/behavioral disabled, intellectually disabled, hospital/homebound, visually impaired, speech and language impaired, occupational and physical therapy, and other health impaired. Specific schools are designated as cluster sites and house special programs to meet the behavior and/or academic needs of students such as those with traumatic brain injury, autism, and developmentally delayed Pre-Kindergarten.

The Florida Youth Challenge Academy at Camp Blanding is a unique feature of the Clay County school system. Accepting students from all over the State of Florida, The Florida Youth Challenge Academy is a voluntary program geared toward Florida's 16 to 19 year old at-risk youth. The program consists of a 5 1/2 month residential phase and a 12 month post-residential phase. The residential phase of the program takes place in a highly disciplined and motivational environment promoting structure and academics along with leadership, health, community service, life skills, job skills, physical fitness and citizenship. The post-residential phase takes place after graduation from the residential phase and is a time when the cadet uses the skills learned in the residential phase through their placement in either a job, further education, or the military. The district also offers an Adult and Community Education program that provides high school completion classes, credit recovery and continuing education programs for Clay County residents.

Clay County is fortunate to have strong business and community partners who support students in the attainment of the 21st Century Skills necessary for higher education while improving our local workforce and promoting regional economic development. Collaboratively, school and community stakeholders have embarked on a broad and bold reform initiative that is leading to fundamental and systemic changes in secondary education and post-secondary readiness. We entitled this project, The Academies of Clay. The Academies of Clay involve the redesign of our 7 high schools into small learning communities with an emphasis on individualized learning opportunities. Beginning in August 2014, entering ninth graders selected a field of interest that placed them in a themed small learning community. The district will build upon the successful academies that have been in place in each high school and expand its academy and program offerings annually while building capacity for sustained and effective teaching to ensure that all students graduate on time, college and/or career ready.

In addition to the Academies of Clay, the district offers all eligible students motivating and challenging Advanced Placement courses, ACCEL options, gifted enhancement programs, an International Baccalaureate Program and AICE. Clay County is also the first in the state to offer an International Baccalaureate Career Certificate. To meet the needs of all students, a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) exists at the district and school level that focuses on evidence-based interventions and prevention.

Clay County has undergone significant changes in the past three years. New state standards and assessments have led to new resources and practices including a new district instructional framework. A new structure and expectation for teacher collaboration has refocused and redefined our system of continuous improvement. In the year ahead, we will focus on improving upon the work we have begun and provide

Executive Summary

Clay County School District

some stability for teachers, parents and students who have endured significant change in both practice and pedagogy.

System's Purpose

Provide the school system's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school system embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.

It is the vision and mission of the School District of Clay County to prepare life-long learners for success in a global and competitive workplace and in acquiring applicable life skills. We work collaboratively with all stakeholders to provide a public education experience that is motivating, challenging and rewarding for all children. We will increase student achievement by providing students with learning opportunities that are rigorous, relevant and transcend beyond the boundaries of the school walls. We will ensure a working and learning environment built upon honesty, integrity and respect. Through these values, we will maximize student potential and promote individual responsibility.

The district's vision and mission are built on the following foundational beliefs:

- We believe all students can learn and that it is the responsibility of the school district and all stakeholders to ensure that each child meets and/or exceeds his/her potential.

- We believe that it is the responsibility of the school district to ensure all students graduate from high school with the academic and/or work force readiness skills that will provide each student the opportunity for admission into postsecondary education or to enter the job market equipped for personal and professional success.

- We believe we must ensure equal access and opportunities for all children to utilize the latest in technology to enhance the learning environment and equip students with the technological skills that they will need to compete for jobs in a global world marketplace.

- We believe all students and school personnel deserve a safe working and learning environment and we must develop and enforce high standards for behavior.

- We believe in the on-going professional development of our teachers, support personnel and administrators and will provide relevant and engaging opportunities for professional growth.

Clay County's mantra is "innovate, engage and empower". These three words drive our districts current top three instructional initiatives. We will:

- Implement innovative instructional strategies that support students in the ability to validate and support their thinking in writing.
- Engage students in opportunities to read, write and talk in every classroom every day through implementation of a new instructional framework and expanded access to technology.
- Empower teachers and leaders to plan collaboratively each week through their participation in a relevant and meaningful Professional Learning Community

To support these initiatives, the district has instituted the following:

1. Collaborative Classroom Model Schools Project taking place at 6 elementary schools. The goal of this project is to establish 6 professional development sites in the district where teachers and school leaders can visit to see best practices in action and promote collaborative conversations across the district about the instructional shifts needed to help students master our new and more rigorous Florida Standards.

2. At every district junior high school, teams of teachers are involved in the Literacy Design Collaborative, a project taking place nationwide to

Executive Summary

Clay County School District

empower teachers to build students' literacy skills and understanding across all academic content areas through meaningful reading and writing assignments that are aligned to the Florida Standards.

3. The redesign of all Clay County high schools into small, career themed learning communities through the Academies of Clay will help to ensure our students graduate ready for college and/or the workforce. Learning within the students chosen field of interest will keep students more engaged in school thus decreasing our drop-out rates and improving student attendance and overall academic performance.

We believe that we have an obligation to provide students with multiple opportunities to engage in a learning environment that promotes the development of 21st century learning skills. We have worked diligently to increase student access to various technologies, including a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy beginning with 9th grade students, and have invested in infrastructure and devices, supported through the implementation of meaningful curriculum to work toward this goal. Simultaneously, we have carefully coordinated efforts to ensure that we build district capacity to meet computer-based assessment requirements.

To meet our goals, many distinct elements are continuously evaluated including curriculum, assessments, professional development, instruction and scheduling to include weekly time for collaborative planning among content teams and bi-weekly planning for interdisciplinary teams. Instructional personnel as well as district and school-based administrators participate in Professional Learning Communities designed to equip them with the skills and structures needed to reform teaching and learning. It is our expectation that students have the opportunity to read, write, think, and talk in every classroom, every day. In 2014-2015, Clay County launched the Framework for Intentional Teaching (Fisher and Frey). The Framework is the foundation of all professional development as well as our teacher observation system. The Framework consists of 5 critical components including: Establishing Purpose, Modeling, Guided Instruction, Collaboration and Independent Work. These components directly align and support our district's vision and mission as well as the anchor standards for college and career readiness.

Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement

Describe the school system's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school system is striving to achieve in the next three years.

The last three years have been a time of transition for all Florida school districts. Through the implementation of new standards and in preparation for a new assessment and accountability system, we in Clay County have worked collaboratively to establish a common vision for teaching and learning. We have provided training for school leaders and teachers on the instructional shifts we must see in every classroom. We have adopted new instructional materials, a new instructional framework and have made great strides in expanding student access to technology. We have laid the foundation for improvement through our elementary model school implementation, our junior high Literacy Design Collaborative structures and our high school redesign leading to wall-to-wall career academies.

Through this time of significant education reform, Clay County is pleased that student achievement has remained stable. Twenty-nine (29) of our thirty-nine (39) schools receiving a school grade in 2014 received a grade of A or B. Eleven (11) schools who had declined in 12-13, all received an "A" in 2014.

In 2012 - 2013 Clay County received its first "B" rating by the Florida Department of Education due to the state's more rigorous writing assessment and accountability. In 2013-2014, the district's overall grade remained a "B" however, the district was just 9 points away from recovering its "A" rating, a rating it had held since the inception of school grades in 2003. In 2013-2014, Clay County was one of only twenty-nine districts in Florida to earn an "A" or "B" and ranked nineteen out of sixty-seven districts in overall points earned.

In 2013-2014, the district saw a significant increase in its graduation rate improving from 71 percent to 78 percent in just one year. In 2014, the trend continued with Clay County exceeding the national average of 80 percent. In 2014, Clay County exceeded the state percentage of students scoring proficient on the state assessment at all grade levels and in all content areas. Out of the 67 districts, Clay scored in the top 15 in all areas with the exception of Mathematics at grades 4 and 8. Clay County 6th graders ranked 3rd in the state in Reading and 4th in Mathematics while grades 4 ranked seventh in reading and grade 7 ranked seventh in Mathematics.

In the seven areas of the state's grading system, Clay improved in 3, stayed the same in 2 and declined in 2 however, the decline was by 1 percent in grades 3-5 reading and 2 percent in grades 6-8 math. Algebra 1 scores on the state end-of-course assessment increased by 8 percent with a passing rate of 77 percent. While the district continued to fall behind in the area of writing in 2014, Grade 8 writing increased by 4 percent and grade 10 increased by 12 percent.

The School District of Clay County has a proven record of success transforming high schools as demonstrated by the expansion of our Career and Technical Education Academies growing from 10 to 29 over the past five years. Clay County is also one of the state's leading districts in the number of industry certifications earned by students annually. The District's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program was recently designated a Ford Next Generation Learning (NGL) Community by the Ford Motor Company Fund. The district is one of only 17 school districts in the nation who are part of the Ford NGL Community. As a recipient of this award, the district has developed a framework and structure to support the transformation of our schools. The resources generated through this partnership have allowed the district to build capacity and focus on the three pillars of the Ford NGL Essential Practices.

Three (3) Clay County School District Career Academies have earned Model Academy status from the National Career Academy Coalition. These academies include: Ridgeview High School's Academy of Culinary Arts, Clay High School's Academy of Law and Emergency

Executive Summary

Clay County School District

Services, and Fleming Island High School's VyStar Credit Union Academy of Business and Finance. The national review process is conducted by an independent committee and academies must submit an application which addresses the 10 NCAC Standards of Practice including academy mission and goals, academy structure, host district and high school support, academy faculty and staff, professional development, governance and leadership, curriculum and instruction, employer, higher education and community involvement, and student assessment and circle of improvement. NCAC reviewers also come to the school for an on-site visit. Data collected from the students who are in one of the district's career academies and/or programs shows that student achievement is higher among academy students than that of students who are not enrolled in an academy.

Technology literacy is as important to students as the core content areas. The jobs of today and tomorrow will continue to require more technologically competent employees as our workforce becomes even more global and interconnected. The district assesses its technology needs annually to prioritize funding and professional development as we support emerging standards in advanced telecommunications, distance learning and digital convergence. The use of mobile devices is expanding throughout the district and has become a valuable tool for improving student performance and academic engagement. Currently, our priority for technology expansion is focused on building an infrastructure to support mobile devices.

Over the past three years, Clay County has been awarded four grants, totaling over \$5,800,000 from the Department of Defense Education Activity. The district was eligible to apply for these grants due to our large number (over 15% district-wide) of military connected students. The goal of the DODEA grants have been to provide support and transition skills for children of military parents who may have experienced frequent changes in school placement. Grant funding is also used to support a learning environment that meets the social/emotion needs of the students as well as their academic needs through engaging programs that focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, STEM. These grants have impacted 11 elementary schools, 4 junior high schools, and 5 high schools, and have brought to the district a nationally recognized robotics program, a STEM field lab program in collaboration with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, summer science and technology camps, rich technologies, lab-upgrades, and multiple computer labs. Additionally, the grants have funded numerous professional development opportunities, including professional development for the Academies of Clay. This work has propelled our district rankings in elementary science to 5th in the state and junior high science has jumped to 10th in the state.

While the past three years have brought many new opportunities, in the years ahead we strive to refine and perfect the programs and practices recently established to significantly improve teaching and learning. Our innovative work to redesign our high schools will result in increased graduation rates and ensure college and career success remains a primary focus and goal. The vision for collaborative learning will extend beyond our model sites until all classrooms are places where kids read, write, think and talk every day. We will continue to engage and empower teachers through their participation in professional learning communities and implement with fidelity our adopted instructional framework.

Additional Information

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

To move Clay County to the top rated district in Florida, it is critical that we provide time for teachers to collaborate and plan regularly for intentional teaching. It is important that all stakeholders understand what our children will be expected to know and do to master our new and highly rigorous performance expectations. In Clay County, we are innovating, engaging and empowering through student centered classrooms and professional development. We still have much to do but we know the path to get there and look forward to taking the next step forward.