



Executive Summary

Holmes Elementary

Miami-Dade 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?

Holmes Elementary is situated in the Liberty City community of Miami in a predominantly African American, lower socio-economic community. Founded in 1948, Holmes houses approximately 550 students of the following demographic make-up: 98% African American, 1% Hispanic and 1% multiracial. Ninety-nine percent of the students are economically disadvantaged receiving free or reduced lunch. There are 43 instructional staff members; 67% African-American; 19% White; and 14% Hispanic of which 95% are highly qualified and 23% have advanced degrees. Forty-seven percent of the teachers are first year teachers, 26% have one to five years of teaching experience and 16% have six or more years of teaching experience. In 2007, Holmes received a much needed face-lift going through massive reconstruction. The beautiful contemporary campus serves as a constant reminder that our students deserve an excellent education.

Holmes has experienced significant change in the last three years. Unfortunately, there have been 3 principals at the helm during this period and the school's previous "C" grade designation has fallen to an "F." The leadership team has also changed. This year there are two new instructional coaches in intermediate reading and math. Teacher mobility is high due to the large percentage of Teach for America (TFA) staff employed at the school. Teach for America requires a two-year commitment and once this time has expired, TFA members are free to seek employment elsewhere. Lastly, a nearby school was closed and Holmes' enrollment increased by approximately 150 students at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year.

The challenges we face are varied. Reading test results indicate that 19% of students are reading on grade level, and generally morale among students and staff has been low. Secondly, parent involvement is increasing but is still not at adequate levels. Because of the poor economic conditions and high rate of crime, there is a general sense of hopelessness among some in the community. The need just to remain safe and satisfy the basic needs of life are a priority. The challenge Holmes faces is to highlight the fact that education is the way to a better life and to improve academic standards while developing a sense of intrinsic motivation in the school and community.

There are features unique to Holmes Elementary that will propel us toward meeting our challenges. In the academic realm, Holmes receives support from the state, school district and a variety of organizations and businesses. Holmes has been designated as one of the lowest 100 schools in Florida in reading. As such, Holmes receives funding to provide an additional hour in the school day for reading intervention. Interventionists work with small groups, assigned using various assessments for an hour each day. Enrichment groups are also formed for those students who are on or above grade level to meet their academic needs. Holmes is also the recipient of a 21st Century grant which funds the afterschool program targeting 120 students in grades 2-5. In addition, AmeriCorps supports the academic program by providing 3 tutors who assist teachers by working with small groups of students during differentiated instruction and other times of the day.

Also, in terms of academic support, Teach for America Corp Members are employed at Holmes. They bring an energy and desire to make a difference that stimulates the entire school culture to move towards excellence. In addition, through Teach for America, Holmes has partnered with Gulliver Preparatory School to increase student reading achievement. 40 volunteer students from Gulliver come on Saturday mornings and pair up one-to-one with a 3rd or 4th grade student. They engage in read-alouds and encourage social interaction.

Holmes shares a plot of real estate with Miami Northwestern Senior High School. This unique arrangement allows for a partnership in a variety of ways. The science coach and the 5th grade science students explore many science topics including plant and animal life through

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the Aquaponics plant and gardens housed on Miami Northwestern's property. In addition, Holmes has partnered with Reviving Baseball in the Inner Cities (RBI) and the Marlins Baseball organization to form a baseball team. The team uses the baseball field at Miami Northwestern Senior High to practice. Lastly, Miami Northwestern's band led the way at our Literature Day Parade, and football players from the Northwestern have been guest readers during our literature week.

Due to it's high profile status in the community, a number of organizations and benefactors give to improve the school community. Invest in Our Children, and Miami Northwestern Classes of '64 and '72 contribute school supplies to our students. To support our Positive Behavior Support program and academic incentives for our students, McDonald's provides 160 hamburgers a month and the South Florida Youth Foundation funds Play Stations and X-Box consoles for our game room. Lastly, the Barbara Harris Foundation (the granddaughter of the school's namesake) makes generous donations yearly to support the school's program.

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.

School's Purpose:

At Holmes Elementary, we eliminate educational inequality in our urban community through character development, high academic expectations, rigorous instruction, and real-world exposure, ultimately empowering our students to successfully compete in the global marketplace.

School's Mission:

The mission of Holmes Elementary School is to develop and nourish lifelong learners by creating high expectations for student achievement, building self-esteem and providing a sequential, data-driven instructional program based on students' needs.

School's Vision:

Our vision at Holmes Elementary School is to empower students to be critical thinkers, effective problem solvers, avid readers, and technologically literate, which will allow them to be productive citizens in our global society. Holmes Elementary School will create a safe, positive, learning environment where students demonstrate the 5 Pillars of Power: Grit, Community, Excellence, Professionalism, and Drive.

Expectations for student success at Holmes are high. Standards at Holmes are based on "5 Pillars of Power" as detailed in our School Pledge:

I am a Holmes Elementary Champion!

Everything I do is driven by purpose!

I understand that knowledge is power and today I will become powerful as I show:

GRIT-Even when the work gets hard, I refuse to give up!

COMMUNITY-I treat my classmates with dignity and respect.

EXCELLENCE-I struggle to get right answers.

PROFESSIONALISM-I present myself to the world by speaking clearly and behaving well.

DRIVE- I want to be great!

I am proud of myself and excited about who I will become!

This pledge is recited every morning by student volunteers to reinforce the vision and mission of each student and teacher.

Our school's program offerings undergird our vision and mission. The Wonderworks curriculum drives our reading instruction. Go Math is our basic Math curriculum, which we supplement using Everglades Math and On Target math resources. For our reading intervention we use the Saxon program to provide phonics instruction and for enrichment a variety of novels are utilized to support those students reading above grade level. In science, instructors use Gizmos and other resources to support the science curriculum.

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.

Many positive changes occurred over the last three years that have affected the school wide program. Holmes Elementary became an Education Transformation Office (ETO) school in 2010. The school has experienced a shift toward providing more rigorous, focused instruction that is aligned with current data. Sustaining and accelerating academic achievement by providing ongoing support and training for educational leaders will guarantee that our students receive a quality education. Teachers are committed to employing researched based educational strategies and techniques to promote higher order and critical thinking skills. All classrooms are equipped with the latest technology such as Smart boards, Promethean boards, computers and computer assisted instruction programs to prepare students for the 21st century. In 2011, the Knight Foundation in partnership with One Laptop Per Child launched a digital literacy program that placed a laptop in the hands of every child.

Areas that Holmes is working to improve include teacher retention and parent engagement. In order to retain the Teach for America (TFA) staff, we are transforming faculty meetings from mere informational meetings to professional development sessions. We have surveyed our TFA staff and found that they are interested in participating in Book Studies. We believe that providing professional development will increase their level of competence and confidence to remain in the teaching profession.

Another area in which improvement is necessary if Holmes is to become what we envision, is to engage parents in the school community. At the beginning of the school year a decision was made to be visible in the Liberty Square community that the school serves. As such, the leadership team met with the director of the housing development and formed a partnership. The faculty walked door-to-door before the 2013-2014 school year started and the new principal introduced herself and invited parents and students to the "Back to School" event sponsored by the school's School Board member. In addition, a Black History event was held in the Liberty Square Housing Development which included students reciting poetry, storytellers, dancers, food and fun.

Of course, the primary focus is student achievement. As a result, Holmes is looking to make progress in the academic arena. In the short term, learning gains in reading are a focus. In the long term teachers are focusing on increasing grade level proficiency. We are confident that with continued rigorous planning and instruction Holmes will be an "A" school in three years.

Additional Information

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

The community has joined Holmes in helping to create an environment where children feel safe and comfortable. Hands-On Broward has facilitated many events in which various corporate members of the community have donated their time and talents to produce murals, organic gardens, and lush landscaping. Other partners such as SAP Technology and Panhellenic Council have contributed school supplies, computers and toys during the holiday season. Also, 5000 Role Models support a select group of boys through its mentoring program.

In addition, organizations such as the University of Florida have assisted our staff through the support of our Professional Learning Communities. In these sessions, among other activities, teachers perform action research to enhance their understanding of their individual classrooms, thereby improving their skills as instructors. University of Florida is also offering up to 4 graduate level classes free of charge to interested staff members.