



Executive Summary

E. R. Dickson Elementary School

Mobile County Board of Education

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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?

E. R. Dickson Elementary School is a kindergarten through fifth grade school located in Mobile, Alabama. E. R. Dickson serves approximately 830 students with 60% being black, 28% being white, 3% being Asian, 3% being American Indian/Alaskan and 4% being of 2 or more races. Seventy-two percent of E. R. Dickson students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Twenty-two percent of Mobile's population is below the poverty level.

The Dickson staff is 66% white, 28% black, 0% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% other. According to the 2010 Census, the City of Mobile is 51% black, 44% white, 2% Asian, 2% Hispanic, and 1% other. The staff is comprised of Principal, Assistant Principal, 2 School Counselors, Math Coach, Reading Coach/Instructional Partner, Science Lab Instructor, Technology Support Teacher, Digital Media Specialist, Reading Intervention Teacher for grades 3-5, 42 Classroom Teachers, 7 Special Education Teachers, 2 Physical Education Teachers, 6 Special Education Paraprofessionals, 2 Physical Education Aides, 1 Media Aide, and 1 Retract Aide.

Due to a large number of apartment complexes, E.R. Dickson Elementary School has a high transient population. E. R. Dickson has approximately 75 ELL students, representing various nationalities. The geographic location served by E. R. Dickson is dense with students from very low socioeconomic status to students with high socioeconomic status. Dickson provides opportunities for before and after school learning and many extra-curricular activities, such as Choir, Engaging Youth in Engineering, Tech Team, Math Team, Mobile Symphony Youth Strings program, Music, Art, Archery, Cheerleading, Dance, Project Outreach, Student Council, National Elementary Honor Society, Safety Patrol, and Running Club. The school is focused on providing students a rigorous and relevant curriculum in an environment that is safe and conducive for learning. The 2016-2017 school year will see a faculty change of 20%. This transition of staff occurred over most grade levels.

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 vision of E. R. Dickson Elementary School is to create an exemplary school where students master a rigorous, engaging curriculum which prepares them for future endeavors in a global society.

Our mission at E. R. Dickson Elementary School is to develop independent, problem solving, life-long learners in a safe and nurturing environment.

"Commitment to Excellence" is our guiding motto this year at E. R. Dickson. We are excited about another spectacular year of learning. As a MCPSS Innovation School, our focus is on Digital Literacy through Project-Based Learning.

The instructional staff at E. R. Dickson is committed to providing high-quality instruction and has been trained on current, researched-based educational practices to foster student growth on all levels.

It is our desire for students to have a well-rounded experience at E. R. Dickson that prepares students for the curricular rigor and demands of middle and high school and beyond. This will be accomplished by focusing on the CCRS daily and by addressing all student needs as outlined in Alabama's Plan 2020.

E. R. Dickson envisions a transformative learning environment with varied engaging experiences for all levels of learners. The goals for this approach are as follows:

- Students will become skillful readers, critical thinkers, and logical problem solvers
- Students will increase learning in all academic disciplines as measured by common assessments, system benchmarks, and state/national norm-referenced tests
- Teachers will provide engaging, rigorous and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities through project based learning
- Teachers will provide systematic, multi-disciplinary, targeted instruction as aligned with College and Career Ready Standards
- Teachers will participate in more professional learning opportunities thus enabling them to have increased collaboration and the ability to create more rigorous activities
- Teachers will develop and sustain student-led classrooms through thematic units of study which encourage student-led discussion, collaboration, performance based tasks, and research

These goals will guide instruction throughout this school year.

E. R. Dickson is very involved with the community. Our partnerships include the Parent Teacher Association, the City of Mobile for hosting elections and City Council meetings, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts, Publix Grocery Stores, St. Ignatius Church's Blessing in a Backpack program, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and numerous other local Partners In Education businesses. E. R. Dickson also has partnerships with local universities, namely The University of Mobile. E. R. Dickson is the site for University of Mobile students enrolled in TE 419 (Locating and Correcting Reading Difficulties). The focus of the class is to apply learned knowledge in a school setting by working hands-on with our first grade students. We also support student teachers from Springhill College, The University of Mobile, and The University of South Alabama for their clinical and observation experiences.

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.

E. R. Dickson demonstrated progress in reading and math on the ACT Aspire in 2014 to 2015. We demonstrated progress in reading on the ACT Aspire in 2015-2016. Dickson had a 95.8% student rate of attendance for the 2014-2015 school year, and a 96.1% student rate of attendance for the 2015-2016 school year.

We currently implement vertical Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) with representatives from each grade-level that are divided into English-Language Arts, Math, Writing, Science/Social Studies, Digital Literacy, Health and Fitness, Talents Unlimited, and Student Support/Parenting teams. Throughout the school year, these teams meet to develop school programs and activities, as well as, engage in professional development.

For the past three years, Dickson's reading coach and principal have participated in the Alabama Best Practices Center's Instructional Partners Initiative. The administrative team members also participate in The Powerful Conversations Network. The Principal participates in The Key Leaders Network.

During the last three years, E. R. Dickson was awarded numerous grants including:

- A technology grant and track grant from Mobile County Commissioner Connie Hudson
- Federal Fruit and Vegetable grant that provides daily fresh fruits and vegetables for students, faculty, and staff
- \$500 Keep Mobile Beautiful grant
- STRIDE Academy grant
- \$10,000 Title II Professional Development grant.

During the last three years, E. R. Dickson has received recognition for many achievements including:

- Mobile County Public Schools awarded a single elementary student in the county with an "It Starts With Me" award. That award was given to a fifth grade E. R. Dickson student in 2014.
- Dickson's PTA received several awards, including the Golden Apple award, for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years.
- Mrs. Sara King, E. R. Dickson's Instructional Partner, won the Metro Mobile Reading Council's 2014 Reading Teacher of the Year Recognition Award.
- Mrs. Jennifer Harris, Reading Intervention Teacher, was named the Metro-Mobile Reading Council's Reading Teacher of the Year for 2015.
- Ms. Lisa Frye, a first grade teacher, was named the Metro-Mobile Reading Council's Reading Teacher of the Year for 2016.
- Media Specialist, Kathryn Pratt, received the LAMP Award for Library and Media Specialists.
- E. R. Dickson was named as Alabama's Exemplary Reading School of the Year for 2015 by the International Literacy Association. -E. R. Dickson received a 2015 nomination for a CLAS Banner School award.
- E. R. Dickson received a 2016 nomination for a CLAS Banner School award.
- E. R. Dickson was voted best public school in Mobile through the Lagniappe Mobile Nappie awards.
- In 2015-2016, Mrs. Kinn was awarded the Elementary School Leadership Award, selected by the Gulf Region Organization of Nigerians and Americans.
- National Renaissance Honor Roll School 2015-2016
- International Talents Demonstration Site
- During the 2015-2016 school year, our Student Council received the NAESP School Leadership award.

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On ACT Aspire in the 2015-2016 school year we saw many improvements.

- Third grade Math data increased by 4.4%.
- Fourth grade Math data increased by 11.6%.
- Third grade Reading data increased by 3.7%.
- Third grade Science data increased by 4.6%.
- Fourth grade Science data increased by 4.7%.
- Fourth grade Writing data increased by 5%.
- Our school-wide Indian population Math data showed an increase of 26.7%.
- Our school-wide Pacific Islander population Math data showed an increase of 16.7%.
- Our school-wide Asian population Science data showed an increase of 10.9%.
- Our school-wide Indian population Science data showed an increase of 13.3%.
- Our Third grade Reading proficiency on ACT Aspire was above the state average.

Our Local School Indicator Goal was 67% of 4th grade students to score at 85% or above on Accelerate Reader tests. Seventy-six percent of 4th grade students scored at 85% or above on Accelerated Reader tests. We exceeded our goal by 9%.

Many facilities improvements have occurred over the last three years. These include a new out-door track; walking trail; side-walks installed; murals in the lobby, hallways, and cafeteria; cafe seating in the cafeteria, parking lot re-stripped; new American flags for every classroom; projection system for the gym; new flower beds with sprinkler system; Butterfly Gardens cleaned out and replanted; and main stairwell repainted.

Areas that need improvement include increasing ACT Aspire test scores for our at-risk students. We are focusing on increased student growth and achievement on ACT Aspire Math and Reading. Tardies have increased from 3821 in 2014-2015 to 4009 in 2015-2016. Suspensions have increased from 28 in 2014-2015 to 41 in 2015-2016. These areas will be addressed in the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Additional Information

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

Each year for the last 15 years, Dickson has held a Butterfly Release. This exciting program involves the care of caterpillars throughout their life-cycle until they are released as butterflies. Each spring, Dickson students care for thousands of caterpillars while observing their life-cycle, learning interesting facts, and reading lots of fiction and non-fiction books about them. Dickson has two butterfly gardens where chrysalises hatch. On Release Day, students gather around the gardens and experience the release of the butterflies. What better way to make science hands-on than to observe this wonderful life-cycle.

In the fall of 2014 E. R. Dickson started a hands-on science laboratory for our fourth and fifth grade students. In 2015, third grade students began attending the science lab. In the lab, students experiment with hands-on activities that support the science standards they are learning about in the general education classroom. In the 2015-2016 school year, fourth grade students participated in the First Annual E.R. Dickson Science Fair. In the spring of 2016, fifth grade students prepared and presented to the public a culminating project for Project Dickson, a 12 week problem based learning experience. Both the 4th grade Science Fair and Project Dickson will be implemented again in the 2016-2017 school year.

The 2016-2017 school year will see the opening of our Technology Collaboration Lab in October 2016 where students and teachers can work collaboratively using the most updated technology available. This lab has been designed with furnishings that are attractive, unique, and encourage collaborative work.

Kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers use the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarking Assessment System as a tool to identify and monitor instructional reading levels of their students. Teachers also use the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention program as a tool to increase achievement for struggling readers. These programs are used as a resource to support students in need of additional reading intervention in grades 3-5.