



## **Executive Summary**

**Stewart County Elementary School**

**Stewart County Schools**

Joann N Chester  
15582 GA Highway 27  
Lumpkin, GA 31815-4438

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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?**

Stewart County Elementary School is a small rural school located in southwest Georgia. Stewart County, located along the Chattahoochee River, is a large county in size; however, it is sparsely populated. The county consists of 5 rural towns: Lumpkin, Richland, Omaha, Louvale, and Brooklyn.

The county is best known for tourism, hunting, timber, and farmland. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the population for Stewart County was 6,058. In 2011, the population was 5,910; and in 2012, the population was approximately 5,252 people. Because of inadequate and limited job opportunities, many of the families live in or near the poverty level. The per capita income in the 2010 census report indicated that the average monthly income was \$1,301. The census report stated that 58% of Stewart County's households make below \$30,000 a year and the average income was about \$38,411. It also revealed that 24% of the residents of Stewart County live below the poverty level and 41% of the children from birth to 17 are currently living below poverty. Approximately 60% of the parents and other adults with jobs commute outside of the county to work. In 2010, the unemployment rate was 12% and in 2011 the unemployment rate decreased to 11%.

Many changes and challenges contribute to the problems that exist here. The lack of industry is a major factor. As a result of the economy, all of the industry in the county was forced to close. There are no licensed daycare centers, recreational facilities, programs for school age children outside of school, and low income housing for families. There is also no parent training for young unwed mothers, opportunities for youth and young adults to receive exposure to cultural experiences, or advanced educational resources and opportunities beyond high school to encourage young people to become more productive citizens. Therefore, the young adults who are successful graduates from high school relocate in other towns and cities for greater opportunities and better living conditions. This factor also contributes to a constant loss in population, lack of change in family lifestyles, and limited opportunities for improvements in the area. In spite of the living conditions, residents of Stewart County take pride in the community and strongly support the school system in all their endeavors which greatly contributes to the success and improvements seen in educating all students over the past years.

Stewart County Elementary School serves the vast majority of students within the county from Pre-K through fifth grade. The majority of the students are transported to school on the school bus and only a few are brought to school by their parents.

Stewart County Elementary School is a Title I School and has an enrollment of 307 students. Its population is made up of 9% White students, 88% African American students, 2% Hispanic students, and 1% others. Ninety-seven percent of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. Fifty-three percent of the population is male and 47% is female. This population includes regular, special needs, and EIP students.

There are twenty-two highly qualified teachers on staff, one principal, one part-time assistant principal, twelve paraprofessionals, one media specialist, one parent coordinator, one secretary, one school counselor, one school nurse, three custodians, and four cafeteria workers. The majority of the teaching staff are veteran teachers and all are highly qualified. The support personnel have also been aboard for quite some time. The entire staff is closely netted just like a family. The parents and other stakeholders are very familiar with the staff because of their longevity and are comfortable and confident in their teaching abilities.

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Stewart County Elementary School is faced with some challenges. Because some parents lack proper parenting skills, students entering Pre-K experience difficulty communicating with others. This problem strongly affects literacy development and social skills of our students. For the past few years, Stewart County Elementary School has experienced a loss in student population because families have relocated to other areas for employment. The economy has also affected much change in the school. Budget cuts have resulted in a reduction in staff, increased class size, reduction in the number of days students attend school, loss of student field trips, furlough days for teachers, and fewer supplies and resources. In addition, 2010-2012 students attended school 174 days. In 2012-2013, students are attending school 150 days. In spite of the challenges that face Stewart County Elementary School, the students, staff, administrators, parents, and stakeholders continue to strive for continuous school improvements and academic success.

## **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.**

Stewart County Elementary School's purpose is to provide students with the building blocks and opportunities to become successful and effective citizens.

The mission, vision, and beliefs support the school's purpose. A committee consisting of parents, teachers, other staff, and stakeholders, worked together to develop the school's purpose. Teachers, staff, parents, and stakeholders completed surveys regarding the school's purpose and direction. The committee compiled the information and made recommendations for the school's leadership team. The leadership team accepted the committee's recommendations.

Mission Statement:

Our mission is to provide students with a quality educational experience through research-based strategies that will result in lifelong learning empowered with essential skills.

Vision Statement:

Our vision is excellence in education through effective instruction, high expectations, discipline, and continued improvement.

Beliefs:

It is our belief that education is critically important to each student's future. High academic and behavioral expectations generate positive results. It is important that students understand how to make the right choices. A challenging curriculum will result in our students exceeding state and national standards. Technology is used to enhance student learning. A qualified professional and well-trained staff is the foundation of Stewart County School System. Parental or Guardian involvement is critical to every child's educational success. We believe that all students can learn.

The school's purpose and goals are discussed in our school plans. The School Improvement Plan, the School Balanced Scorecard, and the Title I Plan consist of our school focus. These plans include an analysis of the school level data, goals, student performance, demographics, professional learning, whole faculty study groups, student's needs, intervention programs, technology, parent involvement, and other school initiatives. The Character Education Program is also an important component that contributes to the success of our students.

It is the faculty and staff's ultimate goal to fulfill our purpose and to provide the best quality education for our students.

## **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.**

### Notable Achievements

Stewart County Elementary School has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for eight consecutive years and has been a Title I Distinguished School for six consecutive years. SCES ranked number one among Reading First Schools in Georgia for five consecutive years.

Stewart County Elementary School has shown great academic improvements in reading and math. The school received a plaque and banner from Voyager Universal Literacy Corporation for outstanding achievement in reading. The school received a Gold Medal banner for 90% or more of the students scoring on grade level on DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) in kindergarten through third grades. The school also received a plaque for moving the highest percentage of low-performing students and schools to standard, attaining sustainability by closing the achievement gap in reading. In addition, some of the staff members, the principal, superintendent, and reading coach were awarded a trip to Washington, D. C. to serve on a committee to represent Reading First Programs from Georgia and participate with other states in developing a model Reading First Sustainability plan for other U. S. Reading First Schools. Since becoming a Reading First School, Stewart County Elementary has successfully maintained and accelerated its reading achievement for several years. Coach Connected and DIBELS Next are assessment programs that are being used to monitor students' reading progress in K-5th grade. The third graders have consistently shown success in Reading on the CRCT. The results include 96% meeting and exceeding in 2010, 96% meeting or exceeding in 2011, and 83% meeting and exceeding in 2012. Its results and effectiveness is also evident in our fourth and fifth graders results on formative and summative assessments.

To support our reading program and encourage students to read each year, SCES has a big "Reading Celebration." This program is an incentive for all students to read AR Books. SCES students' challenge the school administrators and superintendent to come out of their comfort zone for one day as an added measure to encourage students to meet each year's reading goal. Each year the students have exceeded the goal set for the amount of books read. The goal for 2009-2010 was to read 9,000 books and the students read 11,700 books. In 2010-2011, the goal was 10,000 books and the students read 14,973 books. The goal in 2011-2012 was 16,000 books and the students read 16,579 books. This has certainly contributed to our success in reading in a fun way for kids.

Stewart County Elementary School has also shown great improvements in mathematics. Mathematics had become a great concern in 2010 at the system level. The school district hired a math coach to support and implement goals and professional support to teachers in order to provide for the needs of each school. In an effort to improve achievement in mathematics, a benchmark assessment program was implemented (STEEP - System To Enhance Educational Performance), unit tests were developed by grade levels and results analyzed, goals were established, GPS (Georgia Performance Standards) were vertically aligned, professional development in math consistently implemented, classes were monitored more frequently, and successes were celebrated. The math CRCT scores for students in 3rd through 5th grades have increased steadily. In 2010, 82% met or exceeded the standards; in 2011, 86% met or exceeded the standards; and in 2012, 86.4% met or exceeded the standards with an average of 33.4% exceeding in math for the past three years.

Remediation and intervention are daily practices at Stewart County Elementary School and it greatly contributes to the success of our students. Intervention in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades is built in to the daily schedule. Remediation and intervention for

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grades four and five is a combination of the pull-out model and computer assisted technology. This year, we have adopted RAVE-O (Retrieval, Automaticity, Vocabulary, Engagement with language, Orthography), a research-based fluency program that was created as a pull-out program for use with students one-on-one and in small groups. We are currently using this with second and third grade students.

The CRCT results also indicated a need to improve achievement in science and social studies. This year the school has implemented science as our focal point. The WFSG (Whole Faculty Study Group) has developed a school wide plan of action for each grade level to implement. The WFSG monitors the progress being made by collaborating with teachers from each grade level and monitoring assessment results.

It is our intention to continue to improve in all areas of the curriculum by focusing our attention on an additional subject area each school year and continue to move more students into the exceeds category on all areas mastered on the CRCT or PARCC assessment. It is our ultimate goal to equip all students academically so that they may be able to compete and communicate with all students globally.

### Areas of Improvement:

Even though Stewart County Elementary School has maintained outstanding academic achievement, there are some areas that require further improvements that would support continued positive results. Surveys indicated that there is a need for more stakeholders' involvement in school activities. The school needs more support and services from outside agencies. More parent trainings are needed. There is a need to expand teachers' opportunities to collaborate on classroom instruction and student's data. Teachers need additional training on how to utilize the Ipad more effectively in the classroom. Students need more opportunities to utilize technology. The RTI (Response To Intervention) procedures are too timely for students needing immediate support. The parent survey indicated that there is some need for improvement from the governing body in relation to school leadership. We believe that with improvements in these areas along with continued implementation of the current curriculum and high student expectations, we will be able to sustain academic success.



## **Additional Information**

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

There are many other facets to what makes Stewart County Elementary School an exemplary school. Class Keys provides excellent criteria for composing a significant summary of all the areas that effectively contribute to the school climate and academic program of our school.

### Curriculum

In 2010, 2011, and spring of 2012, the curriculum was based on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). This fall the staff immediately began transitioning and implementing Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in Math and English Language Arts. Our reading program for K-3 also includes Voyager Universal Literacy Program correlated with CCGPS and strictly CCGPS in fourth and fifth grades. Math, writing, science, and social studies curriculum is standards based. The teachers support the curriculum with research based strategies and sequence their instruction to ensure that students know and understand what to do and what they are expected to learn. Teachers plan collaboratively by grade levels to ensure that each student is taught the same core content and is provided the same formative assessments in each grade level.

### Assessments

Assessments drive instruction and are a priority for the success of all students. Each teacher has a data notebook which contains an intervention plan of action for students needing extra intervention, remediation, or other academic support. The data notebook also includes progress monitoring results in reading, math and other assessment results. Each grade level plans units and nine weeks assessments and analyze student's results. Students test results are kept so teachers can refer back to them when needed. Students are given a pre-test and post-test in first through fifth grades in reading, math, and science.

Benchmark assessments are administered in reading and mathematics three times a year. All students in kindergarten through fifth grades are administered DIBELS Next in reading to measure students ability to phonetically decode words and their reading fluency. STEEP (System To Enhance Educational Performance) is also administered to students in first through fifth grades to measure students fluency on math basic fact skills. STEEP has additional components which measure students' ability in word usage and math skills based on the Common Core Standards. The Response to Intervention (RTI) process also serves as an assessment tool.

To support teachers and students, SWAT (School-Wide Assessment Team) teams monitor students' progress weekly and biweekly in reading and mathematics. Coach Connected, OAS, and ALEKS are additional online assessments and individualized instructional programs that enhance the delivery of standards based instruction. The formative, on-line, and benchmark assessments are all valuable tools for evaluating and monitoring students' academic growth.

### Instruction

The daily instruction is clearly aligned to Common Core GPS. The instructional frameworks are evident in the classroom and included in teachers' weekly lesson plans. Lesson plans reflect goals, standards, assessments, and performance tasks. Students receive instruction in reading, language arts, math, science, social studies, and physical education daily. A master schedule reflects the time each subject is being

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taught. The standards are posted for the students to refer to in the classroom and students verbally state the "I Can" statement to ensure that students understand what they are expected to learn. Teachers collaborate and plan lessons together by grades to address all students' instructional needs. Classroom instruction is delivered in whole group and small groups. Instruction is differentiated to meet students' needs. Research-based instruction ensures that current instructional practices are being implemented. A well-balanced instructional program is provided for all students.

### Planning and Organization

Planning and organization is an on-going process. Each teacher is required to complete lesson plans weekly, participate in WFSG (Whole Faculty Study Groups), and maintain a data notebook, student portfolios, and EIP (Early Intervention Program) portfolios for designated students.

At the beginning of each school year, teachers' collaborate and study students' data based on CRCT results to determine the academic needs or areas of weakness for the school. After the areas needing improvement has been identified, based on the decision making cycle process, whole faculty study groups (WFSG) are organized. The WFSG implement research-based strategies to improve instruction in science, writing, and math. After these areas were identified, teachers selected the subject area that would best help them improve their students' needs. Each WFSG administers a pre-test and post-test to students and develop an action plan which contains targeted goals for students' to achieve. Each group shares research-based strategies, implement them in their classrooms, monitor students' progress, and logs the information discussed in each meeting. Whole faculty study groups share their logs with the school administrator and they are also available in the media center workroom for all teachers to view.

Each year teachers develop Smart Goals and students' individual targeted growth based on their annual CRCT results. Stewart County Elementary's School Improvement Plan and Balanced Score Card also reflect school-wide academic goals and initiatives.

### Student, Family, Community Involvement Support

Teachers communicate with parents regularly. Parents receive class newsletters, STAR Reports, report cards, surveys, phone calls, and attend parent-teacher conferences. Parents and stakeholders attend assembly programs, PTO meetings, parent-teacher conferences, parent math & science nights, open house, mid-year progress report conferences, grandparent meetings, Family Connection meetings, Student of the Month Breakfasts, Fall Festival, School Council Meetings, and school celebrations.

Each year during our Christmas assembly, one of our partners in education, CCA (Corrections Corporation of America), provides toys for every boy and girl along with a special visit from Saint Nick. To encourage and enhance parent and stakeholders support, the school system adopts a theme each year. This year's theme is "We Are One."

### Professional Learning

Teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals participate in a variety of professional learning training. Professional learning is provided by redelivery from staff members, Chattahoochee-Flint RESA consultants, GLRS consultants, RESA-GYSTC consultants, GSLI Training, and webinars. Teachers also attend trainings sponsored by the GA Dept. of Education.

Teachers are receiving extensive training on the Common Core GPS. In 2010-2011, Stewart County Elementary was very fortunate to have a Math Coach that provided math training and then followed up with class observations.

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### Leadership

The Stewart County Elementary School Leadership Team consists of the school administrators, grade level lead teachers, media specialist, counselor, and the parent coordinator. The team is responsible for coordinating, communicating, and making decisions concerning all school activities and programs. They are responsible for communicating information to and from the staff members concerning issues addressed in Leadership meetings. They provide a cohesive relationship for all personnel in our school. Teacher leaders serve as voluntary mentors to new teachers in the grade level. They work closely with new teachers to ensure the fidelity of the implementation of the curriculum (CCGPS), Voyager, technology, and professional learning.

Teacher leaders have received training from GLISI (Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement) or have sustained excellent instructional practices and good interpersonal skills.

### School Culture

Stewart County Elementary School is a school which functions very much like a family. Students and staff members celebrate each others successes and are unhappy about each others misfortunes. Staff members believe that students' personal needs and home environment affect their academic needs. There are safety nets in place to provide small group remediation and intervention programs for students needing extra academic support. Nevertheless, teachers set high expectations for all students and provide a quality instructional program for them.

Other support systems are also in place. The school counselor and parent coordinator provide support for the students and their parents.

All students are special. Our motto is: Stewart County Elementary School: "Where Every Student Is A Star." The school rules provide an atmosphere that is safe and supportive to all students' needs.