



Executive Summary

Jasper City Board of Education

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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?

The Jasper City School System is located in north/central Alabama and consists of five schools. The district proudly serves approximately 2,731 students. Until the fall of 2017, the school district had three elementary schools, all within two miles of each other; T.R. Simmons Elementary, Memorial Park Elementary, and West Jasper Elementary, one Middle School for 6-8th students, and Walker High School served the 9-12 students. West Jasper was a high poverty/minority school (89%), With the completion of the new Jasper High School, we had room to reconfigure all grade levels to make the elementary schools more inclusive. The school system now has one primary school (T. R. Simmons Pk-1st), an elementary (Memorial Park 2nd and 3rd), an intermediate school (Maddox 4-5-6th), Jasper Jr. High, was newly established as a 7th and 8th grade school and are housed at west wing of Jasper High School, with the 9-12th grades at Jasper High School. Prior to the reconfiguration, we could not say that our schools were diverse and inclusive. Historically, our students did not come together as a whole until the sixth grade. The realignment has allowed students to start their educational experience together and hopefully, graduate together. The realignment has fostered integration and diversity among all schools and students at a young age. We are experiencing stronger communication and collaboration among students and teachers from different backgrounds. We have also seen an increase in achievement with our poverty and minority students.

Geographically, the city is favorably situated with relatively short driving distances to Birmingham in the southeasterly direction, Huntsville, to the north, and the Gulf Coast to the south. Residents of Jasper enjoy many of the advantages of a semi-rural community while fortunately being located within a few miles of excellent medical facilities, shopping, and abundant cultural and recreational opportunities. The University of Alabama, UAB, Birmingham Southern, Samford University, University of North Alabama, and Beville State Community College afford ample continuing educational opportunities. With Lewis Smith Lake, a pristine recreational lake, located just 10 miles to the north, many families choose to live in the Jasper area for the sole purpose of having their children attend Jasper City Schools. According to the 2017 estimates from the US Census Bureau, the population of Jasper is 13,618. Residents of Jasper include 11,600 Caucasian (82.1%), 2,133 African American (15.1%), 327 (2.3%) who report 2 or More Races, and 77 Asian (0.5%).

The city is the county seat of Walker County and once ranked among the world's leading producers of coal. The city has a total area of 26.9 square miles. Estimated median household income in 2017 was \$39,075. This is an increase of \$1,860 from the 2009 estimate. The estimated per capita income in 2017 was \$23,899, which is lower than the 2009 estimated per capita income in 2009, which was \$24,265. The percentage of persons below poverty level in Jasper is 17.3% of families and 21.3% for individuals. 31% of those under 18 are in poverty.

With the vision of a high quality education being the fundamental right of every child, the school system is governed by a five-member Board of Education appointed to a five-year term. The primary responsibility of the Board is to formulate policy that directly impacts educational programs. With a dedication to students and quality instruction, the business of the Board is to promote and improve student learning in a high quality, safe environment. The day-to-day operations of the school system are entrusted to the Superintendent of Education who is appointed by the Board. The Superintendent's primary responsibility is that of implementing board policy and successfully administering educational programs to fulfill state requirements, as well as community stakeholders' expectations.

Jasper City Schools provide program offerings to students through five schools and an Alternative School, which is located at the

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former high school. There are 327 employees, of which 214 are certified personnel while the other 113 serve as support staff in such positions as secretarial/clerical, bookkeeping, maintenance, bus driver, teacher aide and lunchroom workers. The student population of the school system is reflective of the Jasper City area with an enrollment of 69% white students, 17.05 % black students 1.13% Asian students, 11.42% Hispanic students, .33% two or more races and .29% American Indian/Alaskan. The number of English Learners since 2013 has grown from 53 to 217 in 2018. We have Spanish, Tagalog, Quiche, Chinese, and Arabic speaking students in the district. Fifty-five percent of the students in the system are eligible for free or reduced meals. This is an increase from 2013 when we had 46% of the student population receiving free or reduced lunches. There are 401 students currently receiving special education (non-gifted) services as defined by the Alabama State Code. The system currently has 150 students eligible for gifted services.

The system's strengths can be found in the areas of leadership, teacher recruitment, quality of staff, collaboration among stakeholders, and community support. A challenging curriculum, founded on the Alabama Course of Study/College and Career Ready Standards, is also a major strength. Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses produce high performance expectations for students pursuing college. Career technical courses and challenging academic classes set high expectations for students interested in business and industry fields. Recent investments in Project Lead the Way programs and a focus on STEM offerings have sparked an interest in STEM careers and are bridging the ethnic and gender gaps found in math and science fields. Individualized educational plans, Response to Instruction, and benchmark assessments support the implementation of the rigorous and relevant curriculum. Continuous Improvement Plans at local schools drive the instructional process and support the system's Strategic Plan. The system is enhanced with community support and collegial relationships through partnerships with local businesses, community services agencies, institutions of higher learning, and governmental agencies.

An enormous challenge for the district continues to be lack of state funding. The system is faced with the challenge of increasing academic achievement on an extremely limited budget. As indicated in student performance data, however, Jasper City Schools continues to meet the challenging academic needs of our students, even in times of extreme financial difficulty.

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.

The mission of the Jasper City Schools, a system characterized by academic excellence and superior achievement, is to "inspire students to achieve academic excellence and make positive contributions to our interconnected community and world."

The vision for the district is characterized by "excellence in education and a focus on the future."

The district's motto is "Future Focused. Tradition Rich." The district's strategic plan outlines five overarching goals; equip all students with learning, leadership and life skills for success in college and/or their chosen career, engage all student in relevant and rigorous curriculum, foster and engage the community to actively promote student achievement and success, maintain a safe and healthy environment in well-maintained facilities, and to maintain the efficient use of funds in order to provide resources needed to promote quality instruction, technological advancements and high academic achievement." Over the past years, Jasper City Schools' improvement efforts have been thoughtfully guided by details in this strategic plan. The objectives of this plan are listed and serve to help guide the system. Our goal is to see that all students perform at or above proficiency and show continuous improvement, that all students succeed, that every student graduates well from high school well prepared for continued success.

While the world has continued shifting with the times and the economic challenges, our strategic plan has provided the clarity and continuous guidance necessary to support the outstanding academic achievement demonstrated by students in the Jasper City Schools. Our community has an ongoing commitment to high performance, high standards, and high expectations as documented in our framework. These three elements undergird this plan and guide the accountability of the school system daily. Annually, we evaluate our progress, assess our performance, and adjust our plan to ensure that we are successfully building a school system where every child has the opportunity to succeed. It is our goal and intention to provide schools where academic success is not predictable by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, or disability.

Our core values articulate our commitment to students. We believe that all students can learn, succeed, and be prepared for life. We believe it is important for students to attend school every day in a safe, secure, and supportive environment. We value technology and see it as a progressive learning tool. Our core beliefs reaffirm that every student deserves a rigorous, relevant, and engaging learning experiences including extracurricular and fine arts experiences. We value our students as individuals and respect and empower them to reach their greatest learning potential. We believe that every student is inherently unique and diversity enhances learning. Open and honest communication are vital for establishing and maintaining relationships. We believe that effective teachers have the greatest impact on learning. Schools should be connected with students and families to support the shared responsibility for the home, student, and community partnership. Leadership matters at every level.

We continue to believe that our system grows stronger when we work with our many stakeholders, including staff, students, parents, elected officials, business, civic and community leaders in close collaboration. In building and nurturing strong relationships, we forge the bonds necessary to keep moving this system forward, even in the most difficult of economic times. We believe that tradition and heritage of our schools and community is vital to our success. Community priorities include maintaining safe and secure schools, having supportive and caring staff. The community supports progressive and high performing academic, arts, and athletic programs.

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It is essential for an organization to be committed to its plan if it is to make sustained systemic improvement. Indeed, the success of our system rests in large measure on the commitment of our individual staff members. There are 337 staff members to carry out the work of this plan each and every day. We ask a great deal of our employees in order to provide the highest quality instructional program and support services to more than 2,731 students. We are proud of all that they have done to make JCS one of the most respected school districts in Alabama. In addition, we set high standards for our students. We strive every day to help students attain their goals while preparing them for a 21st century career.

The JCS strategic plan includes equipping all students with learning, leadership, and life skills for success in college and/or their chosen career. With this goal in mind, we strive to improve achievement across content areas and sub groups. Increasing student engagement in learning as well as increasing student responsibility for learning, continues to be a focus district wide. It is also important to our community and stakeholders that we continue to emphasize mentoring opportunities and character development. While we are charged to educate the young people in our community, it is important that we assist in developing young men and women to be leaders and good citizens.

In this plan, we continue to refine the overall direction of the school system by focusing on eliminating the achievement gap and raising academic achievement for all. It is important that our strategies are focused on achieving our targets so that we can provide every graduate with the skills necessary to be successful in college or the world of work. Our commitment is to provide nothing less than the best for our students. If we continue to work together as a community, we know that our children will be well prepared for the world ahead.

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.

Jasper City Schools prides itself in sustaining high student achievement results. Historically, the district has maintained a solid graduation rate and high proficiency levels on the Alabama state assessments.

JCS technology infrastructure and accessibility is second to none. JCS has always ensured students have broad access to technology. During the 2012-2013 school year, became a 1:1 iPad initiative. Since then, we have assessed the needs of our students and determined that grades 6-12 would be better served using laptops, which our PK-5th students continue to utilize iPads. JCS has continued to maintain a low student to computer ratio, around 1:5. The JCS student computers has risen from 1400 five years ago to 3,200 in 2018. There are 326 administrative and teacher computers. All computers have MS Office installed and appropriate educational software is available on every computer. We are starting to replace Smartboards with Smart TVs. Jasper High, Jasper Jr. High, T.R. Simmons and Memorial Park all have Smart TV's and the Intermediate School will be transitioning next.

RECONFIGURATION and FACILITIES UPDATE

The new Jasper High School first housed students in January, 2017. Due to the size of the school, we were able to move the 7th and 8th grade, becoming Jasper Jr. High, to the west-wing of the high school and create a school within a school. The Jasper Jr. High was established in August 2017. JCS chose to close West Jasper Elementary in June of 2017 due to racial and socioeconomic reasons. The school was donated to a non-profit organization, The Jasper Family Resource Center, to benefit the West Jasper Community and beyond. This provided an opportunity to reconfigure the entire system. As noted previously, we reconfigured from 3 Elementary Schools and one Middle School, to one Primary, Elementary, Intermediate, Jr. High and High School. This was done so that all development resources could be housed at each school and all students would be assured of high level instruction and academic achievement. The changes have created an integrated and more diverse school system.

North Highland School closed in June of 2017. North Highlands had been a special needs center for many, many years. Most of the North Highlands students have been integrated at all schools, however, due to the medical fragile needs of the North Highlands students and a few incoming students, several are in a self-contained classroom at Jasper High School built especially for medically fragile students.

Currently, Walker High School is used to house the JCS Alternative School and a few administrative offices, as well as the Walker County Alternative School programs. This collaboration was created when the County School system ran out of room for their Alternative School that was at the Walker County Center of Technology. They provide several programs that a system our size cannot afford, in return for the underutilized space we had, they provide non-punitive alternative school programs for our students. This collaborative effort started in August 2017 and last year we had a student to graduate that otherwise would have been a dropout.

The Career Technical Education program continues to expand. STEM learning through Project Lead the Way is part of Maddox Intermediate's REACH program and the 7th and 8th grade enrichment program. The new Culinary Lab and Viking Rock Café, operated by culinary students, and the HOSA lab, with emergency simulation rooms, have prompted greater interest in Career Tech Education. The JROTC is a robust program that continues to grow each year. A partnership with Beville State Community College has afforded students an accelerated student. Two dual enrollment classes are offered on the high school campus each semester (Fall and Spring). There is a [scholarship program available for student in the Career Tech and dual enrollment program.](#)

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Memorial Park School was named a National Blue Ribbon School for the 2016-2017 school year. The school's faculty, parents, and staff are to be commended for their dedication to helping students reach high levels of achievement. The National Blue Ribbon award is the highest honor given by the U.S. Department of Education to a school. Memorial Park School was in the "Exemplary High Performing" category, meaning, at a minimum, the school must be in the top 15 percent of all schools on performance on statewide assessments.

INCREASED SAFETY MEASURES

- CRISIS GO

In October of 2018 the system will be rolling out Crisis Go as a crisis management program. Crisis Go brings all safety communication together, empowering teachers, administrators and first responders of any type of emergency situation. It provides a venue to communicate with each other during emergency. The program can be used by teachers or administrators on or off campuses. Features include an emergency checklist with role based actionable interactions to guide individuals through the proper response steps. Crisis Go allows for mass communication for large scale emergencies or isolated emergencies can be handled through direct contact and request for help. Alerts, panics, and reports can be sent to administrators and law enforcement agencies. Teachers can access student rosters, take attendance, access emergency contacts for students and assist in the parent reunification process. Students have access to the program and can anonymously and discretely report bullying.

- BeRThA

JCS will be implementing a Behavioral Risk Threat Assessment program in the fall of 2018 for proactive crisis management and school safety. BeRThA is a program that empowers school employees to identify, assess, manage and monitor students who may exhibit behaviors of concern, long before they pose a threat of violence to themselves or others. The goal of BeRThA is to recognize the warning signs and address the concerns before violence is brought to school. BeRThA is made up of 4 core components: Awareness training to understand the warning signals and how to report them, Intelligence Networking with reporting and monitoring capabilities, Central Repository with identifying behaviors/tips/incidents being reported, and the BeRThA process which includes tips report intake, Behavioral Risk Screening, Action and Monitoring Planning, and sign-off and record keeping. BeRThA establishes a trained behavioral management team at each school that is comprised of a multi-disciplinary group that represents different perspectives and other professionals familiar with the student body. This team will come together when a student investigation is needed, to conduct a behavioral risk screening, in order to determine the risk level posed by that student.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

JCS has a low teacher turnover. However, in the last several years many teachers have retired. During the 2018-2019 school year alone, the district hired 34 new teachers, many being first year teachers. Having a young workforce, while good in many ways, presents it's on set of challenges. Providing quality professional development, mentoring, and reinforcing the urgency expected in day-to-day teaching, are all areas that will be monitored closely.

Although the JCS teachers have attended extensive training in the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards (CCRS), additional on-going, and job embedded training will be needed. Ongoing curriculum alignment is needed as well. Ensuring that all teachers are delivering standards-based instruction will be a focus. More work is to be done developing SREB strategies in Math and Literacy. During the 2018-2019 school year more teachers in grades 7-12 will receive professional development training in SREB-Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) and Mathematics Design Collaborative (MDC).

Since our last accreditation visit, we have identified an additional upward trend in the district's vast increase in free/reduced lunch population and EL population. The number of students receiving free or reduced lunch has increased from 37% in 2009 to 46% in 2013 and 54% in 2018. The increase of EL students from 53 to 217 in the past five years has created more opportunities for additional EL support and

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resources. This substantial increase in at-risk students has resulted in a great need for professional development to address diversity, differentiated instruction, and other research-based instructional methods to meet the needs of this growing population. Ensuring that teachers are implementing quality Tier II instruction and Tier II interventions is an on-going process, particularly at the secondary level. Addressing instructional needs with regards to increased poverty level and the ever growing EL population is certainly areas of concern.

While JCS is rich in technology resources we are constantly striving to find ways to challenge our students in creating technology projects. Making sure our teachers are comfortable and knowledgeable with using technology in the classroom has been an on-going challenge. We are constantly seeking to find a balance.

Assessment data of varying forms are used to complete site data reviews on a quarterly basis for all schools. The school based leadership teams and Problem Solving Teams (PST) will review data and develop strategies and interventions based on the needs of students. The school data review meetings will create a list of strategies and interventions based on the needs of students in each school. Interventions, strategies, and student outcomes will be monitored continuously at each school. The district-wide leadership team will meet once each month to share school data and work together to formulate system-wide plans for improvement. In order to provide for long term and short term growth, JCS will monitor data closely through frequent common formative assessment data, interim data, and yearly summative data.

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 district locally funds two four-year-old premiere preschools for at-risk. The locally-funded preschools each operate full day programs. Each program serves 25 students daily. The Jasper City preschool programs encourage our young students to initiate their own learning activities rather than act as mere passive recipients of information from others. This is central to developmentally appropriate practice for young children. Such active learning encourages children to solve their everyday intellectual, social, and physical problems and to assume a measure of control over their environment. Our preschool programs empower parents by involving them as partners with teachers in supporting their children's development. The programs strengthen parents' ability to view their children as able, active learners and to support their children's development of intellectual, social, and physical abilities.

The Alternative School program has expanded through a partnership with our neighboring Walker County School System. We are now able to offer a traditional alternative school program, as well as two other non-traditional programs to help meet the needs of all learners. The Twilight and Hope Programs offer non-traditional school hours and formats for students who might not succeed in the traditional 8-3 p.m. setting. Jasper High School provides a virtual program for its students by offering approximately 120 classes through ACCESS. The goal of distance learning is to create equity through additional educational offerings for all students. It provides equal access to high-quality instruction, through a 21 Century infrastructure, by delivering quality learning opportunities and greater equity for all students. ACCESS also provides virtual opportunities for the non-traditional at-home learner.