



Executive Summary for Virginia Shuman Young Montessori Elementary School

The Executive Summary (ES) provides the school an opportunity to describe in narrative form its vision as well as strengths and challenges within the context of continuous improvement. Use this template to complete the responses to the various questions below. The responses should be brief, descriptive, and appropriate for the specific section.

Description

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?

Virginia Shuman Young Elementary School (VSY) is the first public elementary Montessori Magnet School in Broward County, Florida. VSY is located in Fort Lauderdale, FL. The community (zip code: 33301) consists of a population of 17,069 (2022 census). The education experience of adults within the surrounding area include 95.5% holding a high school diploma or higher, 59.8% hold a bachelors degree of higher, and 26.4% hold a graduate degree or higher. The median home price is \$1.2 million and the median household income is \$115,161. Population demographics of the surrounding Fort Lauderdale area include 45.7% White, 28.9% Black, 9.04% Hispanic, and 0.5% Multiracial, and 1.47% Asian. The VSY students come from all parts of the county, as a school where seats are awarded through a lottery rather than a neighborhood school. VSY is a one of 18 elementary schools offering a magnet program in Broward County. VSY is one of the 3 elementary schools in Broward County that uses a Montessori approach to education. VSY currently enrolls over 700 students in grades Pre-k through 5th grade. The current population consists of 62% White, 25% Black, 20% Hispanic, 9% multiracial, and 3% Asian. Using the philosophy of Montessori as our guide, while operating as a public institution can create some unique challenges. Many of our stakeholders benefit from additional training and support to fully understand the principles of Montessori. Students and parents often require a period of time to adjust to teaching strategies, classroom procedures, and individual learning paths that are different from a traditional approach to education. Founded upon the philosophy and methodology of Dr. Maria Montessori, VSY embodies the vision of mutual respect and collaboration. Using a multi-grade level approach to each classroom, students are able to become independent learners based on individual need. Children are prepared to become lifelong learners by providing an innovative educational foundation based on Montessori philosophy and methods. Our teachers believe success is tied to the degree in which children are capable and independent. Our students set a pattern for effective work habits, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility. They engage in meaningful learning activities in a safe and equitable environment.

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.

Virginia Shuman Young Elementary School is committed to fostering the development of independent thinkers and lifelong learners who make a positive impact in a diverse global society. Through the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, the mission of Virginia Shuman Young Elementary School is to prepare children for lifelong learning by cultivating curiosity, creativity and critical thinking. Virginia Shuman Young Elementary School follows students' individual needs to achieve personal academic excellence whereupon children respect themselves, others and the environment. Virginia Shuman Young is a school-wide Montessori magnet. The magnet theme is integrated into all areas of the curriculum in all of our classes. Specific Montessori hands-on didactic materials for every subject area are used daily and are aligned to the Florida Standards and B.E.S.T. standards. Through the Montessori philosophy and project-based learning, we offer many activities, lessons, field trips, enrichment programs, and remediation to address practical life and critical thinking skills. This method also incorporates collaboration and cooperative learning skills among students. When teaching reading, beginning readers start with concrete Montessori materials; these materials may include sandpaper letters, object boxes, and the movable alphabet. As students learn to read they are introduced to grammar and parts of speech using grammar boxes. Grammar boxes tie each part of speech to a symbol that children can use to label their sentences. Lessons emphasize the six traits of writing: focus, organization, word choice, voice, sentence fluency and conventions. The writing process is presented in a multitude of writing forms at each developmental level. Word study, grammar and vocabulary enrichment are paramount to the language arts curriculum. The life skills serve as a model for all stakeholders; resulting in a learning environment conducive to maximized learning. During mathematics, students learn concepts through the use of concrete materials and are then able to apply them to answer real life questions. All mathematics lessons are designed in sequential order and concepts are introduced after students have mastered the previous skills. The hands-on materials, coupled with lessons, allow students to truly see and comprehend how and why mathematical concepts relate to real-life experiences. The curriculum at VSY is unique. It integrates the goals of Florida Standards and B.E.S.T. standards with the objectives of the Montessori curriculum. Curriculum is based on several important concepts as students move continuously from concrete to abstract understanding in their learning. Freedom to learn is a central theme in all classrooms. Learning is differentiated and activities are rich and engaging. There are ample opportunities for hands-on, active learning that bring the child to a deeper understanding of concepts across learning domains. Instruction is delivered by differentiating the curriculum to meet the needs of the individual learner. Teachers are the facilitators, directing students toward lessons that challenge their individual growth by using a variety of materials and approaches. Simultaneously, teachers are creating an atmosphere that fosters creativity and respect for student interests.

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.

The high standards set forth by all our stakeholders has resulted in many achievements, both academically and socially. VSY continues to model the standard for academic excellence, resulting in performing as one of the top elementary schools in Broward County and receiving a letter grade of an A once again for the 2023-24 school year. Over the next three years, we will be working diligently towards improving our ability to meet the needs of all our students through a systematic approach to differentiated instruction in all subject areas. This will result in an increase of learning gains in English Language Arts and Mathematics. An action plan will also be implemented to

address the disparity in academic achievement found among specific subgroups. We are focused on implementing new programs and interventions to address and learning losses that occurred during the pandemic. Using Broward County Public Schools Social and Emotional Learning Initiative as a guide, our Guidance Counselor and teachers will incorporate weekly lesson assisting students to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively and establish positive relationships with others. Social Emotion Learning (SEL) provides direct instruction in skills that enable students to succeed in college, career and life by being responsible citizens and decision makers. By utilizing these lessons students will be able to see themselves and others in a positive light, manage emotions, set and achieve goals and solve problems they encounter effectively. It supports school cultures and climates to allow students to practice life skills throughout their school experience. In addition, stakeholders will have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of professional developments and community forums that will address the social and emotional needs of students from various backgrounds.

Additional Information

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

Through educating the whole child and differentiated instruction we are striving to eliminate racial and socioeconomic disparities in achievement. Struggling students are monitored using the Multi-tier Support System (MTSS) model. Teachers and support staff work together to use a tiered model to implement interventions within the classroom. These strategies have proven to be effective in improving student learning and achievement across all sub-groups. For student who meet and exceed grade level expectations, the curriculum is individualized allowing not only vertical enrichment but for horizontal enrichment as well. Project based learning opportunities are provided to deepen understanding of concepts in all grade levels. Additionally, cross grade level collaboration provides a myriad of opportunities for student throughout the school.