1. Demographic Analysis

**Local community description: Huntersville, NC**

Huntersville Elementary School is located on one of the main streets in the older section of the historic town of Huntersville, a growing suburb located in northern Mecklenburg County near Lake Norman. According to census data, the town’s population in 2015 was 52,704 people. Between April 2010 and July 2015, the town experienced a 12.7 percent growth rate, which is clearly evident in the increased amount of traffic, and continual construction of more residential neighborhoods and businesses. The School is located a quarter mile down the road from the town hall and the Huntersville Discovery Center for kids.

Demographically, the town is primarily caucasian (82.8 percent). There’s also a growing Latino population (7.4 percent) and an existing black (9.4 percent), Asian (2.7 percent), and Indian (.3 percent) population (U.S. Census 2010). This growing town diversity is also evident in the range of languages spoken. Between 2010 and 2014, census data also indicates that 7.4 percent of Huntersville residents ages five and older spoke a language other than English at home.

Overall, Huntersville is a very affluent, well educated town. Census data indicates the median value of owner- occupied housing units between 2010 and 2014 averages $246,900 (U.S. Census 2010). The median household income (2010-2014) is $85,258. This could be a reflection of high levels of education. According to the census, 95 percent of adults ages 25 and older living in Huntersville between 2010 and 2014 had at least a high school diploma. And an impressive 53.7 percent of adults ages 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher. Not surprisingly, then, the poverty level is relatively low, at only 5.7 percent.

**Huntersville Elementary and school library mission statements**

According to the school’s website, Huntersville Elementary School’s mission is to: “motivate all students to excel academically and become productive 21st century citizens.” The school improvement plan for 2015-2016, as posted on the school’s website, includes a more elaborate mission and vision statement as follows:

Vision statement - “We, at Huntersville Elementary will collectively, as a school, develop ways to motivate our students to learn. We will model respect and courtesy at all times and monitor the behavior of students to ensure an optimal climate for learning. We will improve daily/weekly planning and work as teams at each grade level to better facilitate instruction. We will provide a caring and nurturing environment to ensure students reach their full potential.”

Mission statement - “Huntersville Elementary is a learning place of high expectations where students, staff, parents and the community work toward the common goals of academic excellence, positive self-esteem, personal responsibility and respect for self and others. We will challenge the individual to reach his/her full potential within a safe and supportive environment.”

The mission statement for the school library, as posted on the school library’s website, is as follows:

“To provide an inviting and friendly environment where all students and staff are effective users of ideas and information.”

**School description: Huntersville Elementary School**

Huntersville Elementary School has a student population comprised of 750 students in grades K through 5. According to the school report card, it’s a very racially diverse school, with 69.5 percent caucasian, 11.3 percent Black, and a growing Hispanic population comprising 18.8 percent of the student body. There’s also a 3.1 percent Asian population and 3.6 percent comprising other various races. In regards to students with unique learning challenges, the school’s Exceptional Children’s Programs include 57 students identified as educationally disabled, excluding speech impaired; the school also serves approximately 65 LEP students (School Improvement plan 2015-2016).

At 750 students, the school is above the state (490) and district (706) average for the number of students it serves. However, the student population at Huntersville Elementary has actually decreased, most recently due to the construction of Grand Oak Elementary School (School report card). Despite the large student body, class sizes primarily hover around the district and state average for each grade level of 20-25 students.

Crime rate rests at an impressive 0 percent with only 1.89 short term suspensions (school report card). School attendance rates are also extremely high at 99.5 percent (school report card).

According to the 2015-2016 school improvement plan, Huntersville Elementary has 55 certified, degreed positions on staff, including 2 administrators, 1 licensed counselor and 1.5 speech pathologists. Twenty percent of staff (11) hold National Board Certification, which is above the state average (school report card). And 40 percent have advanced degrees (Masters or higher), also slightly above the state and district average. Not surprisingly, the teacher turnover rate is well below average at 8.7 percent.

Huntersville Elementary has a strong academic record and is a school of high academic distinction. In 2014-2015, they received an A+ (85) on their school’s performance evaluation, making it one of only ten schools in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system to earn this designation (school report card and Huntersville Elementary website). That year the school saw an 81.1 percent growth rate on EOG reading (85) and math (87) scores (school report card). Proficiency scores were also very high: reading EOG (85), math EOG (87), and science EOG (83) (school report card).

Additionally, Huntersville Elementary has been recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School, based upon student performance, growth, and teacher certification criteria. Their website goes on to state that “As a school in the North Learning Community, HES consistently out performs other elementary schools in the area. HES scores in the top percentile in math, reading, and science.”

Finally, the school had 95 percent of its students promoted to grade 4 in accordance with the Read to Achieve program. According to school improvement plan, the Read to Achieve program is a part of the Excellent Public Schools Act which became law in July of 2012 and applies to all schools at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. The goal of the State is to ensure that every student reads at or above grade level by the end of third grade. Students who are proficient on the 3rd-grade EOG or qualify for a "good cause exemption" are promoted to Grade 4. Only 83.3 percent of students in the district and 86.4 percent of students statewide have students promoted to grade four through this program.

Parent and teacher involvement have much to do with the high achievement rates of Huntersville Elementary School students. According to the school improvement plan, students are flexibly grouped for math and reading, allowing targeted skills to be addressed at individual student's performance level. The school also follows the CMS Balanced Literacy model for all grades. Finally, a major strength at Huntersville is the high level of parental involvement, which is coordinated through the PTA and SLT, several of whom volunteer in the library and contribute to the media center’s collection budget.

**School library profile**

*The following information is based off my in-person interview with School librarian Cindy Callahan on September 16, 2016.*

Cindy Callahan has been the school librarian for 14.5 year and prior to that, taught second grade at the school for 3.5 years. She said she had always been an avid reader and was interested in children’s literature, so she decided to pursue her masters in library science to become the school librarian. Currently, she only has one assistant teacher to help her check in and out books each morning between 7:15 and 7:45 a.m. On average she has four parent volunteers a week, recruited and trained by a lead PTA volunteer coordinator. These volunteers do clerical tasks, such as shelving, shelf reading, labeling and processing books and other basic tasks.

The school operates on a fixed schedule, and she sees each class once a week for 55 minutes; she usually does 25 minutes of instruction and leaves 20 minutes for checking out books.The media center is open every day from 7:15 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. with open check out between 7:15 and 7:45 a.m. Kindergarteners and first graders can check out one book at a time, 2nd graders can check out two, and third through fifth graders can check out three books.

She has no time to co-teach with other teachers or attend their planning sessions. However, she does collaborate with them frequently by chatting with the grade level chair and asking them what units or lessons they’re planning for the upcoming month. She then looks up teaching objectives and enhances and enriches the classroom lessons through curriculum standards. For example, she once collaborated with the fifth grade classroom teachers and school technology facilitator to help students video live news broadcasts of different natural disasters; she guided the students in the research process while the technology facilitator helped with the technology component.

The northern learning zone, which includes five other elementary schools in Huntersville, meets monthly to discuss new ideas for their media centers. This year, these school librarians will be leading Battle of the Books for their students.

According to the School Improvement Plan, two of Huntersville Elementary’s SMART goals for 2015-2016 were to “Increase students at or above the grade level in reading for 2nd through 5th grade” and to “Increase proficiency in reading for all students in our lowest performing subgroups.”Callahan says, to help the students achieve these goals, she tries to keep an up to date collection and promote a high circulation of books. However, she has a very limited budget, receiving $1,300 from the county and that same amount from her PTA to purchase books and new materials each year. While her collection tries to cover a wide range of reading levels from preschool to 8th grade, she most recently has started putting more money toward purchasing Spanish and bilingual materials to reflect the diversity in the school’s student body.

She says the Charlotte Mecklenburg School district also purchases core books to fill gaps in her collection based on survey data results; however, she says a lot of those books kids don’t tend to check out as the district is not basing their purchases on past circulation history statistics. Her goal is to purchase more recent titles and continue weeding older materials.

Additionally, she says she always likes to be proactive in promoting reading in anyway she can and prides herself on high circulation rates. She was recently featured on the front of the *Lake Norman Citizen* while teaching a class. She holds leadership roles, such as being in charge of the school's rotary club. She also promotes One Access, a partnership with Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library where students can check out books at public libraries just by using their student ID numbers.

In regards to technology, the media center owns 30 chromebooks, which the students can access in the library. Callahan also has students read Tumblebooks online. While she does have an ebook collection, she feels students aren’t very interested in reading them. The 3rd through 5th graders all have one-to-one chromebook devices they can use in the classroom and the kindergarten through 2nd graders have ipads, but aren’t yet one to one.

The school report card also indicates other accolades of the school pertaining to the media center, technology, and the collection. The number of books per student is 13, slightly below the district (15) and state (18) average. The average age of the media center’s collection is year 2000, slightly above the district and state average (year 1997). However, based upon my observations, the media specialist does an exceptional job weeding torn, tattered, and outdated nonfiction books and materials.

The school does have a full time technology facilitator. The number of students per instructional digital learning device is well above average at 2.6 students versus the district (2.15) and state (1.79) average. The number of students per internet connected digital learning device is also above average at 1.62 vesus the district (1.18) and state (1.2) average.

Overall, Huntersville Elementary’s media center and school librarian seem to be very in tune to the needs and demands of the student body by contributing to student academic achievement and personal growth.

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