



# **Executive Summary**

**Branch Line School**

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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. <br><br> 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.

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## **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?**

Branch Line School is located in Livonia, Michigan. This is the school's first year of operation and had a population of 63 students in grades k-8, 4 teachers (2 are Instructional Leads), an Operations Manager, and a Cultural Lead. 10 of our students are Special Education students and receive additional services. One student this year made significant academic growth and no longer receives an IEP. The school was able to implement many different learning experiences for students, such as Art, Yoga, Spanish, and Crocheting, by working with parent volunteers who were experts in these areas.

The school focuses on Project Based Learning. This has been a challenge this year as it was the first year of implementation. Teachers received PBL training and collaborated throughout the year to determine how to best meet the students needs.

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## **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.**

Our Mission: Branch Line School will guide students in an individualized, small school atmosphere that cultivates intellectual freedom, respect for others and service to the community in order to produce critical thinkers and informed global citizens.

1. Leadership, staff, and students understand the Mission of the school.

- The students' first project was focused on Branch Line School. The children dissected the mission statement and showed what it meant to them and others in our school. They made large posters with the mission statement and broke apart the specific pieces and provided alternative meanings. They surveyed other classmates. They discussed the importance of intellectual freedom, respect for others, service to the community, meaning of thinking critically, and being a global citizen.

- Students are a part of multiage classrooms. The small size as well as incorporating different ages within the classroom allows students to collaborate and learn together.

- Every Monday and Friday we have all-school meetings. These meetings focus on one of the five roots of Branch Line that were developed from the initial investigation at the beginning of the year. The classes rotate planning activities for the meetings.

- The staff has worked together to unpack the mission, identify the key pillars and understandings, and create common language that will be used in the school to support the mission. Language is memorialized on posters and in classrooms to support the integration and understanding of the mission in the culture throughout the building. This practice will continue each year with our back to school professional development to further develop our understanding of the mission as well to inform new teachers.

- The mission is integrated into the culture of the school. Our community of parents, students, families, teachers, teacher assistants, and leadership are responsible for promoting a high level of respect and a culture of community. Culture is such a vital part of our mission that the leadership team is facilitating the role of the cultural lead to focus on connecting students, staff, and parents to create a positive culture throughout the school.

- Parent volunteers are integral to the functioning of the school and students are actively involved in promoting the school culture. The parents have created a PTO and are hosting events to connect the families at Branch Line School.

- The staff engages in collaboration formally on a weekly basis but can be seen collaborating daily. For the 2014-15 school year we are developing a time where the students will be engaged in project work being overseen by an administrator while the teachers meet collaboratively to reflect on what has been taught and to forward plan.

- The leadership team works collaboratively to facilitate and organize the implementation of the school's mission. The team continually cultivates intellectual freedom. The team welcomes all ideas, hears all thoughts, and works together to come to respectful and mutually agreeable decisions in all areas. On-going biweekly touch point meetings between leadership and staff encourage dialogue around implementation of the mission, educational program, and ensure continuous improvement.

- Our Vision: Branch Line will create and sustain an environment of respect, integrity, and meaningful learning. These guiding principles provide a framework encompassing a holistic vision that will enable students, families, teachers, and leadership to maintain a common and

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relentless focus on educating each child as an individual learner.

- i. Students will become critical thinkers through active participation in the learning process (Project Based Learning).
- ii. Students will gain the knowledge to become informed global citizens through service learning projects and community involvement.
- iii. BLS will provide students with experiences and tools that allow them to achieve academic success by constructing knowledge in a meaningful way during thematic units and projects.
- iv. Students will be encouraged to develop intellectual freedom.
- v. We believe respect for others is important and should be reflected in all community relationships.
- vi. BLS will provide students with multiple opportunities for authentic and meaningful service to the community.
- vii. Students will use a variety of technological tools in authentic manner to ensure technological literacy.

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## **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.**

This was the first year of operation for Branch Line School. The school was able to keep small class sizes and focus on implementing project based learning. The school did not see an increase in mathematics overall for grades K-8. This is an area that will be a focus for the next three years.

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## **Additional Information**

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

- Our Beliefs:

i. We believe students will become critical thinkers through the opportunity to actively participate in their learning process (Project Based Learning).

ii. We believe students will become informed global citizens through participation in service learning projects and community involvement.

iii. We believe students can achieve academic success by building knowledge in a meaningful way during thematic units and projects.

Teachers facilitate this learning by guiding the learning, sharing responsibility for standards mastery, sparking thinking, and cultivating positive, collaborative relationships.

iv. We believe students should be encouraged to develop intellectual freedom. Students are able to follow interests relating to a project topic. Dialogue among students and teachers drive the inquiry process for projects.

v. We believe that respect is important.

vi. We believe that students should have multiple opportunities for authentic and meaningful service to the community, as a means to deeper learning and community awareness.

vii. We believe students should be able to use a variety of technological tools in an authentic manner to ensure technological literacy and a strong base for research.

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