U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I   [ ] Charter   [ ] Magnet   [X] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. James Mario Meneguzzo
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Newton County Theme School at Ficquett
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2207 Williams Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Covington   State GA   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 30014-2448

County Newton County

Telephone (770) 784-2959   Fax (770) 784-2963

Web site/URL
http://www.newtoncountyschools.org/ncts
E-mail meneguzzo.james@newton.k12.ga.us

Twitter Handle
https://twitter.com/nctheme   Facebook Page   Google+

YouTube/URL   Blog   Other Social Media Link
http://instagram.com/nctheme

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

_____Date_____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mrs. Samantha Fuhrey   E-mail fuhrey.samantha@newton.k12.ga.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Newton County Schools   Tel. (770) 787-1330
I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

_____Date_____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Almon Turner
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

_____Date_____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.

3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.

6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.

7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.

8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district   14 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   5 Middle/Junior high schools
                                            3 High schools
                                            0 K-12 schools

                                           22 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

   [ ] Urban or large central city
   [ ] Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
   [ ] Suburban
   [X] Small city or town in a rural area
   [ ] Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	46	57	103
1	53	60	113
2	49	63	112
3	56	56	112
4	40	72	112
5	51	62	113
6	51	61	112
7	60	51	111
8	45	53	98
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	451	535	986

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
   the school: 1 % Asian
                                   36 % Black or African American
                                    3 % Hispanic or Latino
                                    0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                   55 % White
                                    5 % Two or more races
                                   100 % Total

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 22%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred *to* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	196
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	214
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	962
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.222
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	22

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
                                                     4 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Amharic

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 26 %
   Total number students who qualify: 252

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %
                                                    32 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

4 Autism	0 Orthopedic Impairment
0 Deafness	6 Other Health Impaired
0 Deaf-Blindness	10 Specific Learning Disability
0 Emotional Disturbance	4 Speech or Language Impairment
0 Hearing Impairment	0 Traumatic Brain Injury
0 Mental Retardation	3 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
0 Multiple Disabilities	5 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: <u>3</u>

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers	40
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	14
Paraprofessionals	10
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1   <u>25:1</u>

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	98%	97%	98%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
    Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
    Yes <u> </u>   No <u>X</u>

    If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

To create a collaborative environment that empowers students, parents, staff, and community members to ignite a lifetime desire and love of learning.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Newton County Theme School (NCTS) is a choice school for students in kindergarten through 8th grade. Students must apply to attend. With the exception of kindergarten, applicants must meet academic and behavioral requirements to be accepted into the Theme School. Admission is based on space availability in each grade level. All newly admitted students start at the Theme School at the beginning of the academic year. Students are not admitted mid-year. Newton County Theme School was founded on the premise that active parental involvement directly impacts student achievement. As a requirement of admission, all NCTS families commit to annually providing 20 hours of volunteer service to the school.

If there are more qualified applicants than space available in grades 1-8, then a lottery is held to determine which students are admitted. Remaining students are placed on a waiting list in the order that their names are drawn in the lottery. There are no academic or behavioral requirements for entrance into kindergarten classes. A kindergarten lottery is held each spring to determine who will attend the Theme School the following school year. Prospective kindergarten students who have older siblings at the Theme School are automatically granted admission and do not have to participate in the kindergarten lottery. In order to continue at the Theme School, all students must meet annual academic, behavioral, and attendance requirements. Additionally, their families must annually complete 20 hours of volunteer service to the school.

PART III – SUMMARY

Newton County, Georgia, named after Sergeant John Newton, a soldier of the American Revolution, is located approximately 30 miles east of Atlanta. Newton County is home to approximately 100,000 residents and serves approximately 19,500 students in our public school system. 21 of our 23 public schools are eligible for Title I funding. From 2000-2006, Newton County experienced explosive population growth, which in turn led to dramatic economic decline as a result of global monetary issues. Newton County was ranked among the ten fastest counties in the nation only to be named one of the most economically distressed by 2009.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

NCTS offers a child-centered curriculum that is well-rounded and developmentally appropriate in all academic areas for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Students receive instruction in language arts, mathematics, science/health, and social studies. Curriculum objectives are based on state and local requirements, thus ensuring that all students receive comprehensive instruction in all areas of study. In English/Language Arts, students in grades K through 5 are focused on developing comprehension strategies that will enable them to manipulate grade-level texts of appropriate complexity, and communicate effectively both in writing and in speaking. Students begin to anchor their inquiries and responses firmly to the text, whether literary or informational, using increasingly specific and relevant evidence to support their claims and inferences. Students' analytical skills extend to identifying main idea/theme, understanding character and plot development, and evaluating the impact of word choice. ELA instruction in grades 6-8 addresses students' increasing maturity and the growing sophistication of their abilities, culminating in the development of students who are ready to succeed in high school. In addition, students comprehend more challenging books and articles, basing all of their analyses, inferences, and claims on explicit and relevant evidence from the texts. Their analysis of basic literary elements extend to identifying connections and complexities within narratives and how individual elements weave together to advance plot and reveal character. These skills are incorporated into the students' own narrative and expository writing. In addition, students become increasingly adept at understanding an author's biases, the use of complex rhetorical devices including logical fallacies, and tailoring his or her own prose for maximum influence.

In mathematics, students in grades K through 5 focus on the Standards for Mathematical Practice that rest on important "processes and proficiencies" with longstanding importance in mathematics education. The first of these are the NCTM process standards of problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication, representation, and connections. The second are the strands of mathematical proficiency specified in the National Research Council's report Adding It Up: adaptive reasoning, strategic competence, conceptual understanding (comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations and relations), procedural fluency (skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently and appropriately), and productive disposition (habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful, and worthwhile, coupled with a belief in diligence and one's own efficacy). In grades 6 through 8, the standards specify the mathematics that all students should study in order to be high school ready. The middle school standards are listed in conceptual categories including Number Sense, Algebra, Expressions and Equations, Geometry, and Statistics and Probability.

In science, students are provided an opportunity to; achieve scientific literacy, attain the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful at the next educational level, and to learn about the process of science. The goal of the science standards is to have students do science not just view science. Science needs to be experienced rather than learned, so the classroom environment will be hands-on, student-centered, and inquiry-based. Students will study Earth Science, Weather patterns, Seasons, Physical Science, Sound, Shadows, Magnets, Life Science, Characteristics of living things, and Basic needs of living things.

In social studies, students in K through 5 study the history, geography, government, and economics of the United States. Important themes in these grades include American holidays and symbols, historical figures, the Creek and Cherokee cultures in Georgia, the origins of American democracy, the development of Native American cultures, the antebellum period ending in 1860, the Civil War, and the U. S. Constitution. In sixth grade, students study the history, geography, government, and economics of Latin America, Canada, Europe, and Australia. In seventh grade, the students study the history, geography, government, and economics of Africa and Asia. In eighth grade, students study Georgia geography, history, government, and economics. While the four strands are interwoven, ample opportunity is also provided for in-depth study of the geography of Georgia and the government of Georgia. U.S. historical events are included, as appropriate, to ensure students understand Georgia's role in the history of the United States.

Educational services are offered through the Quest program to academically gifted students in K through 5 who meet state eligibility requirements. At the elementary level the program is one of enrichment, utilizing specially trained teachers. Elementary teachers focus on assessing each student's level of individual achievement in reading, math, and writing. This assessment information is used in developing plans for student improvement in these basic areas.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

NCTS offers a child-centered curriculum that is well-rounded and developmentally appropriate in all areas. Students at NCTS are offered the opportunity to participate in a variety of supplemental activities. All students in grades K through 5 participate in computers, music, art, and physical education as a part of their weekly schedule. Students in middle school participate in art, physical education, Spanish, and band. Students choose one elective class per semester as a part of their daily schedule.

Students participating in Visual Arts work to develop aesthetic perception, personal expression, and artistic skills. In a problem-solving context, students meet the challenges of focused study, engaging in higher-level integrative thought processes. This class is a means to engage all the senses for learning and expression. Art provides opportunities to develop inherent creative abilities and fosters and preserves individual identity, uniqueness, self- esteem, and personal accomplishment. Students participating in music embrace a sequential and quality performance-based curriculum that is developmentally appropriate. These classes teach the Georgia Performance Standards in K-5 General Music which are modeled after the National Standards for music as published by the Music Educators National Conference (MENC).

Students participating in physical education develop health-related fitness, physical competence in movement activities, cognitive understanding, and positive attitudes toward physical activity so that they can adopt healthy and physically active lifestyles. This course is also important because it provides learning experiences that meet a student's developmental needs, which in turn helps to improve the mental alertness, academic performance, readiness, and enthusiasm for learning.

Students participating in computers are introduced to essential skills and concepts that assist in the discovery of their personal talents and interests, explore career possibilities and a potential high school career pathway. These skills include basic keyboarding skills, Internet safety and usage, and computer applications. Students will explore how personality traits and personal values align with career choices and will develop a career plan. Personal, professional, and ethical standards of behavior for the workplace will be examined and reinforced in this class.

Students participating in Spanish focus on the development of communicative competence in reading, writing, speaking and listening and viewing, as well as on understanding Hispanic cultures and issues of identity of heritage speakers of Spanish in the United States. Students will also develop an awareness and understanding of Hispanic cultures, including language variation, customs, geography, history, and current events.

Students participating in band follow the Georgia Performance Standards for Band. These standards are arranged in four categories: Skills and Techniques/ Performance, Creation, Critical Analysis/Investigate, and Cultural and Historical Context. The standards help organize the curriculum into manageable and related units designed to guide the student through valuable musical experiences. Band standards are divided into four experience skill levels: Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced and Mastery. Since the time allotment for band class varies across the state, the levels are based on student progress rather than on an academic school year. Students who participate in the above electives are taught through rigorous course standards outlined by the department of education. Teachers who teach these classes are required to attend professional learning, lesson plan, and use research-based instructional strategies to deliver instruction.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

At NCTS, students participate in Quest STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math), STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Art Math), Flexible Fridays, Wacky Wednesday, EIP (Early Intervention

Program), Enrichment, and Morning Academy. Our elementary Quest students participate in a pull out model of instruction where students receive an additional, differentiated curriculum one day of the week. These students participate in unit studies that allow them to apply what they have learned in the regular classroom to real world situations. This is a rigorous, engaging, and hands-on approach to learning. Students participating in STEM work with Quest and science teachers in interdisciplinary content studies that are coupled with hands-on, problem-based learning. We offer this through our STEM lab for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders and on team with our 1st graders. Our 2nd grade students participate in STEAM. This is done on team during their Enrichment time at the end of the day. This allows students to do hands-on, project-based learning activities involving Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. On Flexible Fridays, students veer from their daily schedule and participate in activities that promote personal, academic, and career growth. This is done through project –based learning, career planning, and mentoring opportunities. Wacky Wednesday is designed to meet the needs of all learners through homo and heterogeneous grouping. The needs of these students are met by differentiating instruction based on their academic and personal strengths and weaknesses. The EIP program at NCTS is a pull-out program that provides additional instructional resources to help students, who are performing below grade level obtain the necessary academic skills to reach grade level performance in the shortest possible time. For our students in grade 6-8, there is an Enrichment time that is used to develop students' critical and logical reasoning skills in order to solve real world problems. This time is also used for struggling students to preview content that will be taught later in the week. This allows for the additional building of background knowledge needed for student success. Finally, in morning academy, students receive at least 30 minutes of academic programming including homework help, academic tutoring, and time to utilize online interventions.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

NCTS uses county generated benchmarks to monitor progress of students' mastery of the content. Once all data has been collected from the Benchmarks Tests, NCTS uses benchmark protocol and data talks as a systematic process for reviewing the data. Once Benchmark Tests are administered, all teachers view and use the following reports: At Risk Students by Standard, At Risk Subgroups by Standard, Standard Analysis, Distractor Analysis, and Report Card by Standard for Students. In addition, teachers identify (at a minimum) the three lowest performing subgroups and the cause(s) for the low performance, the three lowest scoring standards and the cause(s) for the low score, the three highest scoring standards and the cause(s) for the high score, and the lowest performing demographic and the cause(s) for the low performance. Teachers then create action plans to remediate the learning for underperforming students or accelerate the learning for high achieving students.

In addition to Benchmarks Tests, teachers use common and formative assessments to monitor students' progress toward mastery of the content. Teachers use this data in PLC's (Professional Learning Communities) to develop lesson plans, remediation plans, and acceleration plans. This planning, driven by data, happens every other week. All results from the data are shared in PLC's for grade level purposes, grade level teams (K-2, 3-5, 6-8) for vertical articulation purposes, and at faculty meetings. This allows the entire school to take ownership and provide support for all students.

Parents are provided an opportunity to view assessment results through Infinite Campus (our student database system) as well as through hard copies that are sent home. We discuss the assessment results with parents at selected PTO (Parent Teacher Organizations) meetings to help them better understand the assessment data through discussion and questions. We share our assessment results with our School Council so they can help parents and community members better understand what the assessment data means. We also share our School Improvement Plan with School Council so they can show parents and community members how we use the assessment data for school improvement.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At NCTS, we have worked hard to establish a collaborative learning environment which is stated in our mission. We believe it is important that parents and teachers work collaboratively to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of our students. We do this by establishing high academic and behavioral expectations in the school which is further supported by our families at home. We encourage parents to participate in their child's education by volunteering during the school day. As a volunteer they are able to support our teachers by handling any necessary paperwork which frees up time for the teacher to plan instruction. They can also help provide support with group related activities, in class projects, or by helping students that need extra support by providing opportunities to read to continue to build on basic reading skills and comprehension, working with flash cards to support basic math skills, and other ways to help support students with basic academic skills.

We have established PLC's where teachers work collaboratively to plan instruction. Within these PLC's, teachers are working collaboratively to determine what their students need to learn, what strategies will they use to help support their learning, what will they do to help support those students that are struggling to learn, and what will they do to enrich those students that have attained the standard. Teachers are encouraged to work together and this is supported through the administrative team modeling what makes an effective PLC as well as working with teachers during their PLC's. At NCTS, we welcome parents and community members to come and see all the great things that occur at our school each day as well as provide support through sharing their expertise such as a scientist showing students how the brain works as they study an actual brain, a historian bringing history to life with real life stories and artifacts, a forensic expert showing students how to collect evidence to solve a crime, or an author bringing books to life and showing the power and joy of reading. This collaborative effort has created a positive and engaging learning environment that is clearly evident once you walk through the doors of NCTS.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At NCTS, we welcome families and community members to work with us in helping to provide the best educational experience for our students. We encourage families to come and volunteer their time at school by assisting teachers with projects, small group activities, working one on one with a student to further support basic skills, read to the class, etc. We also encourage families to be involved in the school by hosting events like STEM night, Curriculum night, Family Fitness night, etc. Events like these provide an opportunity for our parents to come and learn about things their child is doing during the school day as well as participate in fun, educational activities, with their child that they can also do at home to further support their child's educational progress.

We invite community members to help support and enrich our student's educational experience by participating in Career day. This provides a firsthand opportunity for our students to learn about many different types of careers from the perspective of people they are familiar with. This day also provides a connection between school and real-life as community members discuss the relationship between what they learned in school and what they do in their job on a daily basis. Community members are asked to come in during the school day and use their expertise to enrich our student's learning experience. We have a community member that has a trained dog, come in a couple of times a month and has elementary students that need some extra support in reading, read to the dog. We have found that this provides a safe and fun environment for our struggling readers to work on their reading skills. At NCTS, we welcome families and community members to our school at any time to see all the great things that occur on a daily basis. We invite them to participate in the fun educational experiences that occur during the school day as well as in the evenings. We encourage them to support and enrich our students with their expertise, talents, and abilities. We believe that family and community support is vital in providing our student's with the best educational experience possible.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development takes place in many different ways at NCTS. District designated half-days are used to provide professional development. During these days, we differentiate the professional development by offering different sessions to different groups of teachers, for example, we may have a professional development on reading strategies for our primary (K-2) teachers, focus on flexible grouping, cooperative learning, and student-centered learning environments for our 3-5 teachers, and how to better incorporate instructional technology, including the use of BYOD (Bring Your Own Devices) to help support and enhance student learning for our middle school teachers. The professional development sessions are planned by our Professional Learning and Instructional Design (PLAID) team which consists of teachers from all grade levels and content areas. This helps us to plan professional development that meets the needs of our teachers. Our faculty meetings are structured such that 45 minutes is used for some type of professional development. This is planned through our PLAID team to address some specific need that has been identified by the team. One of our focuses this year was to continue to build positive relationships with the students so that they feel empowered with regards to their learning. We brought in a consultant during pre-planning that provided a professional development session on the power of positive teacher and student relationships and how that can translate into motivated and engaged student learners. This professional development set the tone for developing positive relationships with our students and this has been carried out throughout the year helping to sustain the positive culture that has been created at NCTS. Through PLC's teachers discuss and share best practices which helps them to learn from each other. Teachers are also encouraged to go to professional development that is offered outside of the school and share what they have learned with their colleagues through their grade level PLC's as well as through school based professional learning sessions. The administrative team is encouraged to seek out professional development and share what they have learned with the PLAID team. The principal is currently studying and writing about professional development through his doctoral program and is using the best practices learned to provide quality and effective professional development experiences for his faculty and staff.

4. School Leadership:

The philosophy of the school leadership is that we believe in a collaborative work and learning environment that focuses on meeting the learning needs of all our students. The administrative team, which is made up of the principal, two Assistant Principals, and the Instructional Coach, meet weekly to discuss how to maintain and improve on the work environment for our teachers and the learning environment for our students so that student achievement continues to improve. We model a collaborative work environment by working with our Building Leadership Team (BLT) to help determine the best way to maintain a positive work environment for our teachers that focuses on student learning. We value the feedback that is provided by the BLT and use it in conjunction with the ideas developed within our administrative meetings to bring continuous and positive change to our work and learning environment.

The administrative team works together with the PLAID team to help determine the best way to maintain and improve the learning environment we believe our students need to continue to be successful. As these three teams, administrative, BLT, and PLAID work collaboratively, this permeates throughout the school and helps to support a collaborative working environment amongst the rest of the teachers. This is evident in their grade level PLC's where they work together to discuss how best to serve and meet the learning needs of all their students. As the teachers continue to work together and see the collaboration amongst the school leaders, this type of environment then permeates into the classroom providing a learning environment where teachers and students, as well as students and students, work together to help support and enhance the learning that is taking place within the classroom. Our scores have been some of the best in the state and have continued to increase every year and we believe this has been a result of the implementation and sustaining of a collaborative work environment for our teachers and learning environment for our students.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most important practice that all stakeholders believe to be most influential in the school's success is that of collaboration. Newton County Theme School was the first school of choice established by our Board of Education, so there were no detailed guidelines or procedures to follow in making decisions about how the school should operate. The members of the Board of Education, parents and school administrators had to work together to establish mission and vision statements, entrance requirements, continuation criteria, and daily operating procedures. School administrators, teachers, and parents also had to work together to establish ways for parents to be engaged and earn volunteer hours. The teachers learned, very quickly, that they had to collaboratively plan instruction because the students we received were ready for a faster paced instructional program than traditional student populations. As the school grew into the middle grades, teachers worked together with parents and students regarding the different types of experiences offered to middle school students. Collaboration between families and the school continues to be vital. The strong relationship with the Parent Teacher Organization provides support (in service and financially) to establish and maintain programs and resources that enhance the students' educational experience. At NCTS, the collaborative work between students, teachers, parents, and support staff, provides an educational environment that successfully prepares our students for future learning and life beyond school.