

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Dara Bennett

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Pierce County High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4850 County Farm Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Blackshear City GA State 31516-8599 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Pierce County

Telephone (912) 449-2055

Fax (912) 449-2061

Web site/URL http://www.pchs.pierce.k12.ga.us

E-mail dbennett@pierce.k12.ga.us

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*Dr. Kevin Smith

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail kevinsmith@pierce.k12.ga.us

District Name Pierce County School District Tel. (912) 449-2044

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 Mrs Linda Zechmann

(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. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	154	126	280
10	138	118	256
11	125	131	256
12 or higher	136	101	237
Total Students	553	476	1029

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 9 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 82 % White
 - 0 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 11%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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 <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	39
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	78
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	117
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	1101
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.11
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
13 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 51%
Total number students who qualify: 525

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
104 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.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>7</u> Autism | <u>20</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>19</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>44</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>8</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>18</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>3</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>20</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 7
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	4
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	49
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 21:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	95%	93%	95%	90%	95%
High school graduation rate	91%	89%	91%	88%	89%

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 2018.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	253
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	35%
Enrolled in a community college	35%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	15%
Found employment	10%
Joined the military or other public service	5%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

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.

Pierce County High School commits to excellence as the standard. Graduates of PCHS will be creative problem-solvers who excel in a competitive global environment.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Pierce County High School is located in Blackshear GA, a small rural town, in Pierce County. The entire population of Pierce County is 19,103 according to the 2015 census, and we are classified as a low wealth system. Like much of Southeast Georgia, our county is rural and agrarian with limited industry and a relatively small tax base. Improving local graduation rates and postsecondary experiences are vital to improving the lives of our citizens. Our schools play an important role in this process. It is noteworthy that as improvements are made in local schools, we enjoy the support of our community. Although many families are classified in low socioeconomic status, they care about their children and their academic success.

PCHS has been accredited through AdvancED since 1913, and our CTAE Department has received positive, complimentary remarks during their recent CTAE Review. A major initiative that began 5 years ago at PCHS is Dual Enrollment. PCHS currently has 25% of its student population taking college level courses on campus. It has been a challenge to provide rooms for college courses to meet in an already full building; however, creative scheduling and thinking outside the box has made this work. Due to our growing student body and diverse academic success, a brand new school building is set to open January 2020. This will accommodate all student academic initiatives and will allow for more flexibility in courses. Five of our PCHS certified teachers teach college courses at the high school. The teachers are compensated for each college course they teach with the money the school receives from the college. This gives our teachers an incentive to obtain the additional college credits necessary in order to teach those courses.

The School's Motto is "Excellence is the Standard." PCHS administrators and leadership teams commit to a culture of excellence throughout their tenure in Pierce County. From the beginning of the school year, our staff has developed strong, positive relationships with our parents and students. Parents know that we do our best every day for their children, and we expect students to work hard as well. They understand that in striving for excellence in all we do, less than one's best effort is not acceptable. This way of thinking has proven to be true in the many success PCHS has attained recently. Our CCRPI score is 87.3 and our 2018 Graduation Rate was 90.84. Our CTAE Department has had End of Pathway Exam success with 92% passing the CNA exam, 96% passing the Teacher Education Exam, 100% passing the Early Childhood Exam, and 50 have received Microsoft Office Specialist certification. For the 2018-2019 school year, we have also had athletic and fine arts success with two state championships and six region championships. In addition to our academic and athletic success, PCHS offers many clubs and extracurricular activities to keep students involved and maintain our positive school climate.

PCHS believes in working together to achieve success. We are dedicated to student success and consistently collaborating with each other to find ways to improve. Decision making and any newsworthy events are all discussed at our monthly focus groups in which all teachers attend during their planning period one time per month. This Professional Learning Community allows faculty members to stay abreast of announcements, activities, and legislative concerns in education and also allows for collaborative discussion sessions, professional learning, and pertinent instructional matters. Faculty members are encouraged to attend content-specific professional learning opportunities off campus and redeliver material as needed.

PCHS believes that building positive relationships with our students is an extremely important part of their high school career and plays a vital role in their lives beyond graduation. We have an abundance of parental and community support for our school and provide them with ample opportunities to give feedback and gain valuable information related to their student's academic success. We have a School Council made up of parents and community members that meet with our Principal once per month for up-to-date information on programs related to our school. A few ways PCHS allows for community and parent involvement are a College Fair, Curriculum Night, ESOL Night, Parent/Teacher Conferences upon request, and surveys for parent feedback.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Pierce County High School emphasizes reading and writing specifically in our English/Language Arts Department, but also extends the skill to all curriculum areas. Freshman, Sophomores, and Juniors can challenge themselves by taking honors level courses and can receive college credit their Senior year by taking our English Dual Enrollment course. Students can also explore their creative interests in our Audio/Visual and Fine Arts/Acting elective courses which includes journalism, school media outlets and script writing for original movies, plays, and sporting events. All students take a Scholastic Reading Inventory Test three times per year to determine their lexile score. Parents are kept abreast of this data with structured letters sent home after each test. Based on this score, teachers differentiate their reading material to ensure all students are reading on grade level and/or can receive assistance as needed. Teachers participate in Reading Across the Curriculum throughout the school year where they provide articles and reading material in their content area based on students' lexile scores. Those students who enter 9th grade and struggle in reading and writing receive intervention with our Read 180 Program. This intervention has proven successful and students are gaining key reading skills to enhance their reading abilities. After completion of the program in 9th grade, reading content teachers determine if the student is ready to move into a regular ELA course or if he or she may need additional assistance in 10th grade.

1b. Mathematics:

The PCHS math curriculum was designed by teachers using the GSE standards for mathematics from the Georgia Department of Education. The curriculum focuses on developing the critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills students will need to be successful, informed, productive members of society. The math department uses the latest research in the field of teaching mathematics to instruct students. Technology integration is a component of every math class, including Promethean Active boards, digital formative assessment programs, interactive web sites, and graphing calculators. A major goal of the curriculum is to prepare all students for graduation and beyond. Most students begin as freshmen with algebra, then progress to geometry, advanced algebra, pre-calculus, and calculus. The math department also offers dual enrollment to meet the needs of honor students who are ready for a challenge. The PCHS math team was developed to allow students to showcase their math skills in competitions with surrounding counties.

1c. Science:

Course sequencing for our Science Department begins in ninth grade with Honors Physical Science, Physical Science or Physics, and progresses to Honors Chemistry, Chemistry, or Environmental Science in tenth grade. Juniors take a high school level Biology course or those who participate in dual enrollment take a college level Biology course. The fourth science is an elective class that could be fulfilled with Ecology, Environmental Science, Forensics, Physics, College Biology II, College Anatomy and Physiology, Food Science, Food for Life, Essentials of Healthcare, Animal Science, Computer Science Principles, or Forestry. PCHS gives students a plethora of options to complete their science requirements to help them determine and meet their future goals. All PCHS science courses are aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence and teachers collaborate during planning periods and with professional learning communities to maintain and develop quality unit plans and disaggregate data. Students are exposed to the latest technologies and virtual programs, such as PhET lab simulations, and do most classwork and assessments via Google Classroom. Testing and assessments with Google Forms allows for instant feedback and quick grading procedures for students and teachers. Our science classrooms are rigorous and challenge the students to apply scientific processes to real world issues. Students are able to acquire and practice foundational skills through an inquiry based approach and hands on laboratory experiences deepen their understanding of science.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

The Social Studies department course sequence allows students to take American Government/Civics in grade 9, World History in grade 10, United States History in grade 11, and Economics in grade 12. Alternatively, all courses offer students an honors course option except for United States History. Students wishing an honors level course in United States History take advantage of a college course offered through dual enrollment on our campus by Coastal Pines Technical College. Upon successful completion of this course, students earn a college credit. Additionally, the department offers World History 2112, a college course for students wishing to earn college credits where their schedules permit. The social studies curriculum is developed according to the Georgia Standards of Excellence for Social Studies. Our teachers focus on targeted standards, essential questions, and differentiated instruction. The social studies department utilizes data to drive instruction and collaboration amongst common course teachers. Teachers are able to do so during common planning times or specific professional learning days built into the school calendar. Social studies teachers develop and administer benchmark exams and access SLDS to identify specific learning goals. The social studies department has distinguished itself by consistently scoring at the highest levels in the region and state in end-of-course scores in United States History and Economics. The number of students earning college credits in the social studies discipline are among the highest in our area as well.

1e. For secondary schools:

Common Course teaching teams collaborate to provide rigorous coursework and ensure state performance and college and career readiness standards are being taught. Our Career, Technical, Agriculture Education (CTAE) Department offers ten pathway options with completion exams to promote opportunities for students to excel in their industry certification of choice. In addition, PCHS offers a Work Based Learning Program, nine dual enrollment courses in the CTAE Department as well as multiple dual enrollment academic courses for students to earn college credit hours. Soft skills and work ready attributes are promoted for all students to help them become employable upon graduation.

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Arts / Music:

The music curriculum at PCHS aligns with the National and Georgia state standards. Marching Band, Symphonic Band, and chorus are open to all students and all require a rigorous practice and training schedule during the summer and throughout the school year. This year, 110 students were in the Marching Band, 70 students in Symphonic Band, and 26 students in Jazz Band. Jazz Band and Choral Ensemble classes both require advanced musical knowledge and an audition for enrollment. The high school band is quite successful in marching competitions and symphonic season with continual superior ratings. The band also sponsors its own marching festival/competition called the Sound of Silver Invitational for small and medium bands. Second semester, the band is involved in symphonic work for GMEA Festival, District (Region and State) Honor Bands, End of the Year Symphonic Competition and End of the Year Concert.

PE/Athletics and Health:

One semester of health and one semester of physical education are requirements for 9th graders at PCHS. PE classes focus on motor development, knowledge of concepts, principles of a healthy lifestyle and the value of exercise in life. Health classes focus on personal and social responsibility, analyze the influence of family, peers, and social cultures on health decisions and decision making skills to positively enhance their own health. Weight Training classes are offered for those student athletes who play sports. Extracurricular athletics play a vital role in the culture of PCHS. PCHS Athletic Director was Region 2-AAA AD of the year for the 2018-2019 school year and he takes pride in our programs and making sure schedules are free of conflict and student athletes adhere to the standards of excellence set forth by our school. Coaches not only focus on the fundamentals of their sport but work on team building, work ethic, sportsmanship, classroom behaviors, and character development. For example, our football coach, AJC/GACA Region 2-AAA Coach

of the Year, facilitates a Character Education Program. Along with the parents, he hosts nightly dinners and leads lessons about decision making and moral behavior. This brings a sense of family and camaraderie to the athletes and our entire school culture is positively affected.

Foreign Language:

PCHS students currently have the opportunity to study Spanish from levels 1,2, 3. As opportunities to utilize another language continue to increase outside the classroom, the students' options to learn Spanish are increasing here, as well. This year they had two classes of Spanish 3 from which they could choose. This has made it possible for them to have the opportunity to study Spanish 4 next year. The curriculum is aligned with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) national standards as well as the Georgia Performance Standards for Modern Languages. Students have three distinct perspectives to learn from as each Spanish teacher has a background deriving from Mexico, Ecuador, or Spain. This school year, 169 students were enrolled in a Spanish 1 course, 149 students were enrolled in Spanish 2 and 32 students took a Spanish 3 course.

Technology:

Our CTAE Department offers a wide range of technology and media courses along with extracurricular clubs in many areas. Pathways in Audio Video Technology and Film Production, Business and Technology, Engineering, Digital Technology, Computer Science, and Computer Programming. These courses are open to any student as elective pathway options and are taken in a sequential format. Students are able to learn skills, produce and edit video material, and create website, virtual games and apps for public usage. These courses create a way for students who are not involved in the arts or athletics to be successful in these areas of interest.

Character Education:

Each month, PCHS identifies a “word of the month” from John Maxwell’s book, “The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader.” Short lessons and video links are prepared and posted to our Faculty Google Classroom and taught briefly during first period classes. Monthly posters with quotes about the current word are posted in classroom and around the school. Not only do our teachers benefit from these words during our faculty book study, but students can learn career and life skills to help them with college and future job opportunities.

3. Special Populations:

PCHS teaches all students and holds all students accountable at a high level of achievement, but we provide accommodations to make sure students are able to meet those requirements. Teachers at PCHS use many different types of instruction, interventions, and assessments in order to meet the needs of those students identified as special education and those in the EL population. Many of these strategies could be used with any struggling student in the co-taught or regular education classroom.

The Special Education services are provided to better serve students who are eligible and covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The special education program at PCHS is dedicated to providing every opportunity for students with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential. Many of our students with disabilities utilize assistive technology to help them be successful, either through computer programs like “Snap and Read,” electronic reading pens, and by using various text to speech applications. We also have the Read 180/System 44 classes for our struggling readers who do not read on grade level. Co-taught classrooms are available for those special education students with accommodations or for those students who may not be identified as special education students, but who may benefit from the slower pace, scaffolding of lessons, and differentiation strategies utilized in the co-taught classrooms.

For our EL population, a variety of strategies that are used by PCHS classroom teachers to ensure the students academic success. Simplifying language used in instruction, providing additional instruction including reviews, drills, and opportunities for re-teaching, teaching in small group, allowing for peer tutoring, manipulatives, language-based technology, visual aids, and graphic organizers are just a few of the strategies utilized.

For the PCHS EL population, information is presented visually and verbally, broken into smaller sections and teachers are able to check for understanding before moving on. The assessment component may be altered for the individual learner with the ultimate goal to gradually reducing these techniques over time. The use of a word bank as well as providing the EL student the opportunity to take the test or re-test individually with the teacher/paraprofessional is an assessment strategy used by PCHS. Another assessment strategy is to simplify the language and format of the assessment to match the language utilized during instruction. Allowing for extended time is most frequently used by the PCHS staff due to the needed language processing time by the EL students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

PCHS received a five star climate rating this year, and we take pride in the fact that we provide an environment that is safe and supportive for both students and staff. High School students need constant motivation to stay focused on their school work due to the plethora of technology and online distractions. Our teachers are supported by the administration in their decisions regarding student discipline which provides for well managed classrooms and student commons areas throughout the school. School spirit, pride, and support are evident among our students and community members. Homecoming week dress up days, parades and pep rallies are events students look forward to each year at PCHS. We also support Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and students receive “shout-outs” for good behavior and for demonstrating the “word of the month” as outlined in our Character Education curriculum. They turn in these shout-outs to be entered into weekly drawings for each grade level. Prizes such as soft drinks, candy bars, and snacks are given to the weekly winners. Each nine weeks, a PBIS reward party is held for those students who meet certain criteria. Students must be passing all classes, have not received any discipline referrals and must have their lunch bills and fines paid to attend the parties. The reward party is held during fourth block in the gym and has various games, activities, food, drinks and prizes. We believe we have the best teaching staff in the country, and we do what we can to motivate and inspire our teachers as well as students. Teachers love jeans passes, and free planning block passes and we celebrate our school accomplishments with faculty lunches. We also provide food during monthly professional learning days. We host a faculty Christmas party with staff gifts and many door prizes, and we celebrate teacher appreciation week with daily treats, gifts, and meals. All staff birthdays are recognized with a local restaurant gift card. Our Teacher of the Year has a reserved parking spot and is recognized on the school’s active social media accounts.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Technology integration is vital not only during the school day, but also to connect us to the outside world. Stakeholder and community involvement is encouraged at PCHS directly through mechanisms such as Remind 101, social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter, and a mobile app that displays updated school related information and alerts from the Pierce County School District. In addition to technology alerts and communication, PCHS also holds events like Curriculum Night/College Fairs, Parent Involvement, School Council meetings, and ESOL Nights to involve parent and community members. Online networks (ESE, NFHS) provide sporting event coverage and school related activities, morning announcements, as well as social and local print media outlets. PCHS has its very own news network, Bears Digital Education Network (D.E.N), which is student driven and broadcasts each morning during school. Students in the Audio Visual class gather newsworthy information and create one of a kind commercials, newscasts, weather forecast, and sports reports. In addition to the daily news, Bears D.E.N. also live streams special events such as athletic games, senior walk at prom, graduation, and homecoming pep rallies to name a few. Bears D.E.N. has its own Facebook page and posts the news and events to the page frequently. This allows the community to be involved in PCHS news and productions.

PCHS leaders and staff align their decisions and actions with goals established in the School Improvement Plan. The School Improvement Action Plan outlines the goals of the school concerning data, student growth, a safe and secure environment, as well as community and stakeholder feedback and engagement opportunities. School leaders communicate effectively with the stakeholders in the community. Every effort is made to ensure that best practices and strategies are implemented in order to improve student achievement as outlined in the School Improvement Plan.

Our CTAE Department has a Community Advisory Council made up of community members associated with our CTAE pathways and career instructional programs as well as and school CTAE faculty and administration. The Advisory Council meets two times per year to discuss the CTAE department and provide feedback to better prepare students for work related job opportunities beyond High School. Attendance at these meetings is high do to the interest of our students and school in the community.

3. Professional Development:

PCHS realizes professional development is continuous process of improvement and should bolster instructional practices and be supported with educational research. All professional development activities focus on increasing student achievement by improving teacher practice, as stated in the PCHS school improvement plan goals for the year. Our local RESA holds various professional learning opportunities throughout the year that teachers take part in. Teachers are also encouraged to attend content specific professional learning sessions and workshops outside of our local area and redeliver the information to all staff at our monthly staff focus groups, if applicable. Research-based strategies and programs that improve student achievement are supported by PCHS and recommended in the school improvement plan; however, teacher leaders and administrators meet to determine how the programs should be implemented for content areas. Teachers are also supported and welcomed into each other's classroom to gain insight into innovative classroom strategies, collaborate and learn to use new technology while watching other classrooms.

In recent years, the faculty participated in book studies on John Maxwell's book, "The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader," and this year we are reading "The Power of Positive Leadership" by Jon Gordon. The PCHS Leadership team chose 10 of the 21 qualities to be our "word of the month" from August until May. We got our students involved with the word of the month by creating posters with various quotes that represented each word to post around the school and in all classrooms. They are changed each month to represent the current month's focus word. Character Education lessons are posted in our Faculty Google Classroom with videos for teachers to show students and have meaningful discussions with them in class. Our current book study, "The Power of Positive Leadership" is divided into chapters and each month a different teacher team presents a new chapter for discussion at our monthly job embedded professional learning session. During presentation of the chapters, teachers are encouraged to not only discuss the chapter and how it impacts them as leaders, but also introduce a new teaching strategy or technology tool as the medium of presentation. Getting our faculty and staff involved in the professional learning gives them a sense of ownership and allows for a pleasant learning experience.

4. School Leadership:

Pierce County High School's leadership begins with one principal who oversees all components of the school and makes informed decisions based on what is best for the students at the school. Three assistant principals each have duties and responsibilities of their own aside from general student supervision. One AP handles student discipline, emergency management plans, and school facilities inspections. A second AP develops the School Improvement Plan, monitors the ESOL program, and monitors teacher unit plans and professional development opportunities. The CTAE Director is the third AP. She monitors the CTAE Department and handles student discipline, attendance, and fines. The principal and assistant principals work very closely together. There is a strong element of trust with these professionals as they work together with a common mission, which is student achievement. Administrators are sensitive to the needs of the teachers and accommodate them with their classroom needs, supplies and equipment and with professional learning opportunities that will enhance their content knowledge and teaching abilities. Two counselors are responsible for student scheduling, testing, dual enrollment and psychological well being of students. PCHS has an Instructional Lead Teacher who teaches one block of ELA and works with teachers the rest of the day to assist with classroom needs they may have. The PCHS Leadership Team is comprised of department heads and teacher leaders and meets at the beginning of the school year to to prioritize school needs and address school improvement goals for the year. Ongoing meetings throughout the year have a structured agenda and sign in sheet for documentation. department heads meet with their departments regularly to relay information from the Leadership Team meetings, discuss departmental needs and professional learning opportunities and to disaggregate data from benchmarks/common assessments. The data is used to drive instruction, planning and collaboration among common course team teachers.

The School's Motto is "Excellence is the Standard." PCHS administrators and leadership teams commit to a culture of excellence. Administrators and teachers are seen on morning duty stations each day and administrators perform lunch duties so teachers can have a free lunch period. Students and teachers understanding the importance of education with the high expectations that have been set is crucial to our

success. Administrators understand that in order to support this goal, teachers must know that they are supported, and students to know that the administrators are fully committed to monitoring their education.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Pierce County High School's implementation of common course teams and common assessments has been extremely instrumental in the success of our students and our school. School effectiveness and student performance are evaluated through achievement data collected from common assessments, pre and post tests, and Georgia Milestones End of Course Assessments. The testing schedule for common assessments is set up by the administration while the standardized testing schedule is set up by the Pierce County Testing Coordinator and follows state guidelines. Our creative, modified block scheduling of courses has provided teachers and staff with the ability to have common course teams which, for the most part, have common planning periods. This enables teachers to meet, collaborate and plan together frequently to ensure all standards and expectations are being taught. In addition to planning periods, one full planning day per semester is built in to our calendar to allow further collaboration, unit planning and data processing.

PCHS utilizes common assessments in each classroom, where common courses assess students with the same assessment. Common course teachers collaborate and create common assessments to be given each nine weeks. These assessments are built upon from standards and content taught from the previous nine week term. This gives students an ongoing review of material and standards throughout the year. Data is collected and analyzed on an ongoing-basis through common course team meetings and planning days, and teachers use the data to drive their instruction. Common course teams meet to disaggregate the data and compare it to the common course classes to identify those students needing support and/or remediation. Teachers identify questions that may need modifying or discarded and can update the assessment as necessary. These common course teams have been used at PCHS for the past seven years and have resulted in great gains in student achievement. Teachers see common course teams as vital to meeting the requirements set by the Georgia Standards of Excellence.