

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Matthew Anthony Gibbs
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Bleckley County High School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1 Royal Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Cochran State GA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 31014-2857

County Bleckley County

Telephone (478) 934-6258 Fax (478) 934-9707

Web site/URL https://hs.bleckley.k12.ga.us/ E-mail mgibbs@bleckleyschools.org

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. Steve Smith E-mail ssmith@expectexcellence.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Bleckley County School District Tel. (478) 934-2821

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. Mike Sasser
(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, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

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	68	89	157
10	88	68	156
11	63	95	158
12 or higher	65	78	143
Total Students	284	330	614

*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
 - 1.5 % Asian
 - 24.4 % Black or African American
 - 3.7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 67 % White
 - 3.4 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 2%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	650
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
2 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 44 %

Total number students who qualify: 270

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
99 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>10</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>20</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>41</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>3</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>20</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	34
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
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.	6

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 16:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	98%	97%	88%	56%	56%
High school graduation rate	99%	96%	98%	98%	97%

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 2020.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	164
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	43%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	6%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	10%
Other	41%

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.

Bleckley County High School's mission is "Inspiring and Empowering Students for Lifelong Success." This statement encompasses the goal of all stakeholders to guide, teach, and support students.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

BCHS started the 2020-2021 school year fully face-to-face as usual. After a few weeks of in-person instruction, there were many students who were quarantined due to exposure at school. Administrators saw a need for a solution to combat the absences that were making in-person instruction difficult and bring stability to the school environment.

In September of 2020, the school switched to a hybrid operating model in order to decrease the number of students on campus each day. This allowed the entire student population to be socially distanced at all times and prevented DPH-mandated quarantines. Administrators divided the population in half and each group of students currently attend in-person instruction every other day. Teachers present the same lesson to each group. On the days when students are home, they are working virtually using a variety of online tools to practice and reinforce skills. Students are constantly reminded about deadlines and events based on their assigned group. This model has kept students connected to the faculty as well as each other.

Those who weren't comfortable returning to campus had the option of full remote learning. There is a set of teachers who instruct this group of students online, and they are still enrolled at the high school.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

Bleckley County is a rural county in Middle Georgia. The estimated population in 2018 was 12,775 and the median income was \$45,029. The county reports a 20.8% poverty rate. Bleckley County School District ranks as one of the poorest districts in the state, ranking 171st out of 180 districts in wealth. The district continues to do the most with the least, with only three school districts in the entire state having a higher Financial Efficiency Star Rating.

The culture of the community is one of encouragement, kindness, and hospitality. The residents, leaders, and business owners of Cochran and Bleckley County donate time and money to help support academics and extracurricular activities in the schools.

Bleckley County High School (BCHS) is the sole high school in the county and serves all eligible students in grades 9-12. The school follows accreditation standards from AdvanceED and utilizes state, federal, and local resources to ensure student success. There are 614 students enrolled at BCHS.

The Bleckley County Schools' vision is "Expect Excellence." This simple statement encompasses the expectations of each stakeholder to provide academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural support throughout the system. Each teacher, administrator, and support staff member at Bleckley County High School has the common goal to inspire and empower students. Some of our beliefs include:

Challenging and aligned curricula taught by highly qualified, effective teachers help ensure success in our schools.

Our schools should focus on student-centered learning that respects diversity and individual abilities.

Students, families, teachers, and community members should form a partnership to ensure the education of every individual.

The main responsibility of our school is to ensure a relevant, rigorous, and innovative education for all students.

Students learn best in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment conducive to learning.

These beliefs are supported by multiple programs. One program is Communities in Schools (CIS) of Georgia, which provides support services including a behavioral health therapist, mentors, and a sexual risk avoidance and youth development program. CIS services have been implemented to develop relationships between students and caring adults, to develop social, emotional, and academic competencies, to increase graduation rates, and improve attendance, behavior, and coursework (cisga.org). CIS is a supplemental program to the other federal and state programs such as student support services for students with disabilities and gifted. Other programs include the Advanced Placement curricula, a local Honors Program, dual enrollments with colleges and universities, High School High Tech, Vocational Rehabilitation, multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), and Career and Technical Education classes and organizations. Our students have also continued involvement in the SOAR Clubhouse designed to provide services for children and families coping with mental health disorders. Had we remained virtual, these services would have been extremely limited.

Students attend school in person every other day and have virtual assignments accessible through Google Classroom on the days they are not on campus. This schedule has a tutoring element that supports students who are struggling with completing work at home. On their virtual day, students who need help or just a quiet place to work are able to come to the media center in order to receive assistance. The students also maintain social distancing guidelines while attending tutoring.

A strategy utilized by administrators and teachers is constant and open communication with students and parents. Because of the hybrid schedule, teachers and administrators have increased communication

channels to strengthen relationships with students and parents while creating a support system to ensure success. The communication platforms used daily include traditional phone calls, texting, Remind or other apps to message large and small groups of students and parents, automated call and text messaging from the student information system (PowerSchool), emails, Google Classroom, videos, online meetings, and home visits.

Another strategy is called the System of Study (SOS). This administrator-led program presents students with skills and habits to help them succeed. Each administrator goes into classrooms and teaches students time management, study skills, and habit-building.

When school resumed in the fall, multiple students were missing up to 14 days each time they were required to quarantine after exposure to COVID. This caused disruption in day-to-day instruction and extracurricular activities. The administrators quickly developed a plan to keep the school running smoothly for students and teachers.

BCHS students attend school on a hybrid in-person and virtual schedule so that the on-campus population is cut in half. This allows for constant social distancing to quell the number of students who have to be quarantined due to one incident of COVID. This strategy has allowed BCCHS to continue seamless instruction, in-person emotional and social support, and physical activity through physical education classes along with sports and other extracurricular programs. A remote learning option was also offered to each student this school year. These students complete courses using an online, standards-based software program called Odysseyware.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

The curriculum for ELA, math, science, and social studies offered at Bleckley County High School is based on the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE). Higher rigor classes are offered for students identified as gifted as well as for those wanting to attend a 4-year institution after graduation. These courses are designated as honors and university-level with the latter being the most rigorous of the two and opened to any student wanting to attend a 4-year college or university. Additionally, Advanced Placement (AP) courses are offered in Calculus AB, English Language and Composition, and Environmental Science.

When schools were closed in March 2020, all instruction had to be moved to a virtual platform. Teachers adapted their lessons by moving content online, creating videos of their instruction, conducting online class meetings, utilizing enrichment software such as USA TestPrep, and creating assessments using Google Forms. Chromebooks were made available to any student who needed a device and those who could not get Internet access could request printed work.

In the fall, students came back to in-person instruction or they had the option to be a remote learner. Students enrolled in a regular diploma program used Odysseyware software. Students enrolled in a university preparatory diploma program were enrolled in Georgia Virtual School. Any student in-person or remote could check out a Verizon hotspot along with a Chromebook to allow access to the Internet from home for virtual assignments.

After a few weeks of in-person instruction, there were many students who were quarantined due to exposure to another student who tested positive for COVID. These students had to remain home for 14 consecutive days. This made teaching and learning even more difficult and students were upset when they were quarantined home and could not participate in sports or other activities after practicing all summer. Many students struggled to keep up with their classes after missing many days.

The administrators proposed a hybrid schedule in order to decrease the number of students on campus each day so they could be socially distanced at all times. Students continued to wear masks and stay six feet apart while on campus. This decreased the number of students being quarantined from hundreds to just a few.

The curriculum and standards being taught in each class did not change, but a new delivery method was used. The teachers teach the same lesson for two days to each group and assign virtual work to be completed on the students' virtual days. Most lessons are videoed and uploaded to Google Classroom for remediation and differentiation. These videos are archived in the content areas to be used in the future for any remote learners and hospital homebound students. Technology support is vital. Students have access to technical support seven days per week. The software, USA TestPrep, is used and is an online, standards-based supplemental program that offers an assessment component that is closely aligned with Georgia Milestones assessments. USA TestPrep provides valuable feedback and progress monitoring to monitor students' achievement. Additionally, a variety of other online applications are used for review and remediation such as Quizziz, Quizlet, Kahoot, EdPuzzle, Gimkit, and others. Writing workshops are also offered in the ELA department.

Teachers continue to teach and assess each learning standard even though the delivery methods have been adapted for the new hybrid schedule. The standards cannot be altered since students at the high school level earn Carnegie units for each course.

With students being off-campus every other day, it is imperative that administrators, teachers, students, parents, and support staff increase communications. Administrators send videos, text messages, emails, calls to students and parents regularly to convey instructional information. Before every test, a message is sent to remind students and parents. The hybrid calendar is available online and messages are sent after a holiday to get the students back on track. Any student who is struggling or receives support services also has another teacher check grades, assign tutoring or remediation, and communicate with parents to keep them updated on the progress. The media specialist and counselor are available during school hours by phone and in-

person and after school hours through email to troubleshoot any problems with accessing grades and assignments in PowerSchool.

Formative assessment of student progress is an ongoing, schoolwide process. Teachers and support staff use progress monitoring during in-person instruction and during virtual interactions using online resources. Constant feedback through conferencing with students, calls, and emails to parents, and messaging to remind students of deadlines and upcoming assessments as well as graded assignments through Google Classroom gives each teacher a clear picture of the progress of individual students.

The administration team members use a formative assessment technique of targeting struggling learners and offer support by conferencing with students and keeping a two-way, constant communication with parents to increase academic, emotional, and social growth. This “at-risk” program creates strong relationships that allow multiple stakeholders to contribute feedback for consistent progress monitoring. This is vital for student success, especially during a crisis like the pandemic. All standardized data is analyzed regularly to drive academic improvement.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

Within all of our career, technical, and agricultural education (CATE) courses our teachers emphasize real-world applications of hard and soft employability skills regularly in class. Our teachers pour their hearts into our students so as to develop community members in our classrooms that go much deeper and bigger than just being a student but rather develop the entire person. The CTAE programs connect students to careers and opportunities through an active advisory committee and Work-based Learning/Youth Apprenticeship (WBL/YAP) programs, which further help to meet the student as well as the community's future employment needs.

CTAE classes are one of the critical pieces of our success. The CTAE classes connect the students to opportunities for future employment through the curriculum, guest speakers, job shadows, and internships. Additionally, through the Career Technical Student Organization opportunities, we are able to better prepare our students for the competitive workforce and consistently win region, state, and national awards. The BCHS WBL/YAP program currently reports that 8% of the student body is involved in WBL/YAP, has earned over \$115,000 so far this year, has worked 14,850 hours, and earned an average income of \$3,585.

The dual enrollment program at BCHS allows students to take college courses during the day using the HOPE Scholarship and Grant programs. A total of 113 students were dual enrolled in Spring of 2020. We partner with 4 different colleges and technical colleges to meet the specific needs of our students. Georgia Military College partners with the high school to teach a sequence of college courses on the high school campus, while Middle Georgia State University offers the on-campus experience for the students who are prepared for that step in their educational career. Additionally, we partner with Central Georgia Technical College and Oconee Fall Line Technical College to offer certificate programs such as airplane mechanics and welding to prepare our students for the needs of the ever-changing workforce.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The teachers of elective classes adapted their curriculums to allow students to continue to practice skills pertaining to those areas while not on campus. The art teacher made video demonstrations and students worked on projects at home then uploaded photos of the finished work to Google Classroom. Students get hands-on instruction during their on-campus days and complete projects or conduct research during their virtual days at home. In the spring, the art teacher compiled all student work and created a virtual art show to display their talents.

The Spanish classes use videos and Zoom meetings on virtual days for additional instruction and practice as

well as complete assignments at home. Students are assessed and receive additional instruction when they meet face-to-face on campus. Physical education teachers designed home workouts to be completed on virtual days.

The computer gaming and coding classes taught through the company ViziTech USA had specific software that required desktop or laptop computers. Students who did not have a computer at home were allowed to check out desktop or laptop machines in order to complete the requirements online. The nature of the ViziTech USA classes already uses a hybrid model using webcams and online interactivity. They continue to use that model with the hybrid schedule this year. A BCHS teacher acts as a facilitator and an instructor employed by ViziTech USA teaches online and visits campus a few days per week.

Drama, choral, and band classes also moved to the Google Classroom platform. During face-to-face instruction, students are provided instruction focused on music pass-offs and personalized feedback. The virtual days are used for practice. The One-Act Play and Royal Singer Chorus programs use the same model of feedback and instruction during in-person days and memorizing lines and practice singing and dancing on the virtual days.

Student access to technology is important for a seamless transition from the traditional to a hybrid schedule. The media specialist coordinates device checkout so that students have a Chromebook and Verizon internet hotspot at home if needed. Parents sign a replacement contract in case of damage or loss and that information is kept in the system-wide equipment inventory. Students have digital access to an electronic collection of books from the media center and all software programs used at BCHS are web-based for easy accessibility.

Students who are assigned to tutoring in the media center during their virtual days are monitored by the media specialist and content area inclusion teachers. The media specialist checks for missing grades, assists with assignments, administers tests, communicates with parents, and works with teachers. Administrators also monitor progress daily. A tutoring bus is available for students so they can get a ride home after lunch unless they choose to stay all day. This program has proved to be important to the success of the hybrid schedule.

Remote learners are under the instruction of two certified teachers who use Odysseyware to deliver standards-based courses online. Students also have a designated area of the alternative school building where they can take proctored assessments in a small setting, away from the general school population.

3. Academic Supports:

All students benefit from the support services within the school. Students who perform above grade level are eligible for the honors program, which provides rigorous academic instruction. Students in the honors program also take a minimum of two College Board Advanced Placement courses.

Those who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 accommodations and are performing below grade level have access to a multi-tiered support system. These include co-taught inclusion classes, study skills classes, in-school tutoring, differentiated instruction, behavioral support, and social services. There is an inclusion teacher in each content area to support students with disabilities. A study skills class gives students extra time and assistance while on campus to work with the inclusion teacher and receive remediation in all subjects. Within math classrooms, student performance is analyzed and students who are struggling are placed in Algebra I or Geometry classes that have an extra 30 or 60 minutes of instruction. These classes are kept small and they have two teachers in each classroom. Students who fall behind can also be assigned to tutoring in the media center on their virtual days to study for upcoming assessments and make test corrections. The inclusion teachers and the media specialist offer help with all classes during tutoring sessions.

Students who are eligible for the Georgia Alternative Assessment (GAA) greatly benefit from the hybrid schedule and adapted curriculum. Having in-person instruction daily allows teachers and support staff to meet their needs and keep up with any changes that need to be addressed. Since this program is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities, trying to assess and meet the needs of our students in this class would be extremely difficult if all instruction was virtual.

BCHS students with disabilities also participate in programs designed to support and give incentives for overcoming challenges. The support services lead teacher coordinates with the Georgia High School High Tech program to provide transition services out of high school and into post-secondary programs. Additionally, the SOAR Clubhouse provides behavioral resources to support families of students with disabilities. The school is also able to provide an alternative to the Special Olympics, which was canceled due to the pandemic. High school students participate in a newly-formed club called Royals Unified. Members volunteer and coordinate a field day similar to the Special Olympics along with a Buddy Ball Game, which allows students with disabilities to play baseball with support.

Behavioral support and social services are always available. The school counselor, social worker, and behavioral therapist work within the school for scheduled and emergency behavioral intervention. During the spring shutdown of schools, these employees and the support services lead teacher made home visits and communicated with students by phone to ensure their social and emotional needs were met. After returning to in-person, hybrid instruction these employees continue to serve any student in need by adjusting their schedules to meet the student at school as well as calling and texting to reach out on a regular basis.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Leaders at BCHS engage students consistently to help support the achievement of the systems' purpose and direction by offering a welcoming and safe environment for learning, providing open communication to build relationships among stakeholders, and encouraging a culture of improvement and achievement. All students are encouraged to join Career and Technical (CTAE), Fine Arts, and other clubs and sports. This promotes a well-rounded approach to learning accountability and relationship-building. Specific examples of open communication are evident in the daily operations of the school. Announcements highlighting important dates and information as well as student accomplishments are sent out daily through email and made over the intercom. Information is also disseminated through phone calls and texts. Additionally, a podcast called The BC Royal Rumble was developed by a group of students and a sponsoring teacher to highlight current events and recognize student and faculty achievements. All of these communication avenues allow students to be fully engaged and included in all aspects of the school.

Engagement is also present through videos that are sent from administrators and teachers to students and parents to communicate effectively. The Google add-on, Screencastify, records a user's screen, face, and voice and then generates a unique link to this audio-visual file that is housed in the user's Google Drive. This unique link can then be shared via email, text, and social media to communicate important announcements and information. Administrators and teachers have successfully used this tool to talk with students and parents about their individual academic progress, present content through recorded lessons, and communicate updated policies and procedures related to student safety during the pandemic.

Administrators also use friendly competitions among grade levels and courses based on standardized assessment ratings to motivate and relay passion about learning. The thread of competition allows administrators and teachers to model success in school and in life. When students improve, act out of kindness, and model success within the school, the administrators offer small notes of encouragement and small monetary rewards. An example of this is giving \$1.75 for an act of leadership among students or an improvement in grades that covers the cost of a drink from the vending machine. The administrators also speak to groups of students using motivational approaches to cheer them on and show love and comradery for all aspects of schools such as academics and extracurricular activities.

Activities such as prom and Senior Week were impossible during the shutdown in the spring, but the administrators worked tirelessly to create memorable activities. They had teachers make a congratulatory video and they reorganized the entire graduation ceremony to ensure social distancing so the students could graduate in person.

By implementing the hybrid schedule for this school year; prom and Senior Week could still be held. Reorganizing these activities took a lot of time and extra work but engaged the students and continued the familial environment. The faculty and staff care enough to put in the extra effort to make students happy.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The pandemic brought about unique family and community engagement challenges never before faced by schools in the modern era. Administrators and teachers were required to employ creative thinking for problems and concerns that did not exist prior to COVID-19.

At the onset of the pandemic, teachers worked tirelessly to call every family represented at BCHS to inquire about internet access, device access, and see if students needed print copies of materials if they were unable to access digital content. Additionally, teachers and administrators volunteered alongside school nutrition staff to ride school buses to deliver meals and printed assignments to students around Bleckley County. Teachers were able to develop deeper and more meaningful relationships with parents and students as they became the means to not only address academic needs but physical, emotional, and social needs as well. These Monday-Wednesday-Friday bus rides around the county presented some of the most valuable

opportunities to engage our community when they needed it most.

Opening the school for the 2020-2021 school year also presented problems, especially for the incoming freshman class and newly enrolled students. Instead of hosting an open house for all students, administrators and teachers provided an opportunity for the freshman class and newly enrolled BCHS students to come in shifts to BCHS in order to “walk the schedule.” This allowed parents and students both to meet their teachers, ask questions, and get a feel for the layout of the school prior to the first day while social distancing.

After the 2020-2021 school year started and BCHS had to shift to a hybrid schedule, teachers and administrators relied on phone calls and texts sent through Google Voice and videos made with Screencastify to communicate with parents and students about the schedule change, academic performance, and expectations. Additionally, the teachers continue communications with parents through these avenues due to alternating virtual and in-person days for our students.

Currently, we are engaged in conversations between BCHS, the Mayor of Cochran, the County Commissioner, Development Authority, Middle Georgia State University, and Robins Airforce Base. These meetings are designed to prepare our community workforce for the future. We have determined the initial needs of the community, and at BCHS, we are employing a backward design process of aligning our school, community, and the future workforce. Additionally, we have an active advisory council in which we collaborate to determine the accuracy of alignment of our pathways to the needs of the community. Through these community partnerships, we are working together to prepare our students for future opportunities and be at the forefront of education alignment to future career choices. Our goal is to prepare our students for the next level, whether it is to enter college, technical college, the military, and/or directly into the workforce.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Student achievement correlates to well-planned and managed classrooms whether in-person or virtually. We took a targeted approach where our teachers were empowered to take on leadership roles in addressing professional development needs brought on by the need to shift instruction due to the pandemic. This gave leadership roles to our staff and helped develop a true professional learning community where teachers were able to share their ideas with other teachers to best meet the needs of our students.

Making the shift to an all-virtual schedule during spring 2020 and then shifting to a hybrid schedule in the fall required teachers to learn and implement the many tools and resources available through the G Suite for Education, mainly Google Classroom. While the experience level of teachers implementing these resources ranged from novice to advanced, this gap began to quickly close as those with more advanced skills began to assist their less-experienced colleagues in using the available resources. Teachers began to create resources that offered what tips and tricks they had learned through trial and error. These resources were then organized on an in-house Google site, which became a one-stop location for teachers to share and receive information and informal training. Some of the teachers have become so proficient in G Suite for Education, that they have become a Level 1 Google Certified Educator by passing the certification test. Additionally, the staff members are teaming up with one another to develop summer growth academies to fill in the possible gaps in education due to the shift to all virtual learning in the spring of 2020.

The most valuable informal professional development that our teachers participated in was the bus rides around the county to deliver meals and printed assignments. This experience allowed teachers to see first-hand the physical conditions that some of our students live in. Teachers would often come back to school and share their experiences and observations while also shedding tears. These experiences provided a context for teachers to consider when designing lessons that would be completed from home.

Administrators have worked hard to support teachers both academically and emotionally. They have worked to maintain a culture of encouragement and recognition while constantly checking on teachers' well-being. All three administrators do small things that make a large impact such as adding teacher dress-down weeks, sending notes of encouragement with small amounts of money for snacks and drinks, setting up hot chocolate and coffee tables on different days, random contests and giveaways, and positive affirmations on a

daily basis. This has kept positive morale throughout the school. It is a reflection of the practice of strong relationship-building among teachers, students, and families that makes BCHS special.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy follows the system's vision of "Expect Excellence." This vision encompasses the values of the school to challenge students to excel in all areas of their lives. We attempt to inspire a competitive spirit that allows students to grow academically, socially, emotionally, and physically in a safe space surrounded by caring adults. The impact of this nurturing environment is seen in the strong relationships formed throughout the campus and the positive attitude of both students and faculty during the pandemic crisis.

Policies and procedures remain while leaders help teachers and staff adjust the format, delivery, and assessment of student progress used in the traditional schedule. Expectations stay in place while an attitude of compassion is the core of all decisions. The school leaders worked hard to make the transition to a hybrid environment where students come physically to class every other day and in between in-person days, they are challenged with virtual learning days. The transition happened quickly and seamlessly as the administrators and teachers changed their entire delivery and assessment system without extra time for planning. Everyone came together under the guidance of the principal and worked harder than ever to help students make the change after being in a virtual learning environment for months prior to the summer.

In addition to "Expect Excellence," another component of the leadership philosophy focuses on a concept simply called "No Islands." This approach takes into account the development of the whole student rather than a single-focused academic approach. Faculty and staff see the importance of all areas of the school working together to remove barriers to meet all of the needs of the student. This philosophy is pervasive throughout the school and is evident in academic classes, art classes, CTAE classes, the weight room, sports, CTSOs, performing arts, and clubs. All areas of the school are crucial components to the overall success of the school.

Leaders at BCHS are forward-thinking and implement innovative strategies to help students. Students are allowed to attend school on virtual learning days through a scheduling system to allow for additional instruction or a quiet place to work while maintaining social distancing guidelines for all students. Support for all students is available and buses pick students up for these tutoring sessions and take them back home at lunch unless a full day is necessary. Additionally, the leadership team has continued the at-risk program where they track and monitor all students' grades and progress to ensure the students are performing at a high level as well as working with them to ensure the students get the needed resources to be successful. Remote learners will come back to the in-person instruction in the fall of 2021 after taking all coursework online. Administrators want to ensure they get high-quality, focused support in order to catch up in any areas where they have fallen behind. Students who need the extra support will be enrolled in a transition academy to aid them in the transition from remote to in-person learning.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The administrators and teachers have taught in multiple, culturally diverse settings. This experience brings awareness and understanding of the varied backgrounds of students and staff. All decisions are based on the needs of individuals and their continued growth and equality. Administrators invite parents and community members to work collaboratively with the faculty and staff for the benefit of students to provide physical, social, and emotional support systems in different areas of the school. Students are encouraged to reach out to staff to find help for themselves, their peers, and their families. Administrators and teachers know all students by name and maintain a positive relationship with them during their entire high school career and after graduation.

A healthy school culture permeates throughout BCHS is demonstrated by the concern employees have for students' physical, emotional, and social well-being. During the spring shutdown, every

staff member was asked to contact all students so multiple adults were connected and could help them navigate through such an uneasy time. This continues during the hybrid schedule. Administrators and teachers maintain constant contact with parents to ensure student success. Teachers also encourage heartfelt discussions in their classrooms about current events and social movements. Tragic, culturally charged events that occur in the world are recognized and discussed in an inclusive, caring manner in every classroom.

Faculty members connect with their students by going above and beyond to ensure their safety and feelings of belonging regardless of their backgrounds. If a student does not have transportation, clothing, or adequate food, the faculty spend their own time and money to provide for them. This creates a culture of love, family, and cohesion that has a ripple effect throughout the community.

The Communities in Schools program also supports these measures by providing extended academic and behavioral support. This program provides a Behavioral Therapist to address emotional needs at a professional level. The mentoring program allows students to connect with an adult consistently to establish trust and build relationships.

The success of BCHS is developed and cultivated through relationships between the students, teachers, and administrators. We build a community of hard-working individuals who work together to develop the whole student rather than individual parts. The faculty and staff recognize that there is no distinction between academics, arts, and athletics and that each of these areas plays a part in preparing students for success in all areas of life. This is evident through the conversations with the staff and students as well as the results of academics, athletics, CTSOs, and clubs throughout the school.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice that has been most instrumental to the school's continued success has been the constant and consistent building of positive relationships among faculty, students, parents, and the community. By creating a welcoming environment and expecting excellence, the stakeholders are able to address the needs of the whole student. Strong relationships with students allow educators to notice any subtle changes and can help them cope accordingly.

The leaders of the school promote building positive relationships in every aspect of education. Administrators and teachers have monthly meetings to help each other with these complex relationships. Coaches and club sponsors offer ways to motivate and support students academically, physically, socially, and emotionally by communicating with teachers and giving students feedback during sports and club meetings. Coaches and club sponsors also make recommendations for tutoring and remediation. Additionally, the support staff reaches out to students in order to build relationships and learn who they are as individuals. Everyone in the school greets students and offers positive affirmations to cultivate a sense of belonging.

In the classroom, teachers set high expectations and establish open communication with students and parents about their progress or struggles. Parents feel comfortable with the faculty and staff because of this consistent communication. Support services and varied extracurricular organizations are not only available to students but the sponsors reach out and invite students to participate and encourage growth through fun activities. The administrative team makes regular contact with parents and community leaders to keep them aware of both progress and areas that need improvement. This transparency creates a safe, nurturing space for everyone. When students feel safe and loved, they are more likely to perform well in all facets of their lives.

When Georgia shut schools down in the spring, it was imperative that administrators and teachers at BCHS reach out to maintain relationships. The circumstances were unprecedented and leaders had to "think outside the box" at the beginning of the school year to establish new policies and procedures to keep the students at school. They felt the positive relationships everyone worked so hard to establish could not remain as strong without that in-person connection that every child needs.

The transition took a few weeks and everyone worked extremely hard to help students understand the new schedule and adapt to the new delivery of content. Teachers in the school not only created lessons but made videos and uploaded supplemental materials while contacting students and parents to strengthen a feeling of connectedness. The students are more engaged when they are in the classroom and the adaptation has proven to build an even stronger familial bond among staff members. Bleckley County High School educators feel that if they made it through this year together, they can accomplish anything.