

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Pioneer School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3686 Street Highway 92  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Chickasha State OK Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 73018-7014

County Grady

Telephone (405) 224-2700 Fax (405) 224-2755

Web site/URL https://www.pioneerk8.k12.ok.us E-mail tharrison@pioneerk8.k12.ok.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\* Mr. Tod Harrison E-mail tharrison@pioneerk8.k12.ok.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Pioneer Public School District Tel. (405) 224-2700

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. Seth DeHart  
(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**

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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

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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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 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
<b>PreK</b>	22	22	44
<b>K</b>	24	17	41
<b>1</b>	19	23	42
<b>2</b>	23	23	46
<b>3</b>	21	24	45
<b>4</b>	17	14	31
<b>5</b>	26	22	48
<b>6</b>	22	16	38
<b>7</b>	18	21	39
<b>8</b>	20	8	28
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	212	190	402

\*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):
- 8 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0.1 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 74.9 % White
  - 6 % 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: 3%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	391
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

Spanish, Gujarati

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 43 %

Total number students who qualify: 171

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %

52 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>1</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>1</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>4</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>23</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</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: 5

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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 17:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	97%	93%	93%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

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

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

Pioneer School is committed to the belief that every child deserves a quality education in a changing society.

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.

Pioneer offered a virtual option for families as well as in person learning. Students that chose the virtual model were given reentry points throughout the school year to reenter the in person learning model. We had 8% of our total population choose virtual. Ninety two percent of our students are in person five days per week.

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**

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Pioneer School is a rural community school. The school itself is not associated with a town. The school sits outside of Chickasha, OK about 7 miles. The student body is comprised of the local school district that is all rural, country, and high poverty rate. The other half of the school is comprised of families who live in Chickasha and choose to transfer their children to a small school setting. The Chickasha School District has an enrollment of approximately 2200 students in PK -12. Pioneer School District has an enrollment of 390 PK - 8th grade. The overall Free and Reduced rate at the school stays consistently around 46%.

Pioneer School places an emphasis on Student Growth. The teachers, students, families, and administration work together to monitor student growth on the Oklahoma Academic Standards. The school benchmark tests three times per year. Each benchmark test is a replica of the OK State Testing System. Teachers and administrators use data from formative assessments and district created benchmarks to monitor progress and provide interventions in areas where students need support. Support is provided in the classroom by the homeroom teacher, resource room teacher, Title 1, counseling office. The Title 1 and Resource teacher have administrative rights to the student data collection to create an all hands-on approach to remediate for students identified as needing assistance. Benchmark data is collected using Mastery Connect and students are tested in October, December and March. All staff use the Oklahoma Framework for pacing and curriculum guidance. The Oklahoma Frameworks were created by OK Teachers for the OK through the OK State Department of Education.

Prior to COVID, students in our 8th grade were given opportunities to be involved in leadership and community service activities. The school created Leadership classes in which students enrolled with the understanding they were volunteering to listen to young readers read, help teachers in PK and KG pack at the end of the day and support young students in ending the school day. Students also raised and lower the flag of the United States of America and the flag of the State of Oklahoma. Students have donated their time to serve at the Oklahoma Food Bank, Pioneer Community Food Drive and Thanksgiving meal, and helped to decorate for the Christmas celebration of the Festival of Lights in Chickasha. Students are recognized and encouraged to make daily decisions that impact the life of someone around them. We call it "What You Do Matters" Students are recognized by teachers, their peers and secretaries for opening the door, turning in a lost item, sitting with a new student or being kind. Students that turn in found money or lost items are allowed to pick their favorite kind of sucker from the sucker jar in the principal's office. We returned over \$350 last year to kids who chose to turn in money found on the ground. Our kids have bought into the decisions they make, matters for others. Teachers are recognized as well.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

The core curriculum used at Pioneer School utilizes the Oklahoma State Department of Education Oklahoma Curriculum Frameworks for Mathematics, English Language Arts, Sciences and Social Studies. The curriculum frameworks provide resources and pacing guides for implementing the Oklahoma Academic Standards and to support student learning. Pioneer School relies on teacher created lessons and online curriculum to support the frameworks for each subject area. Teachers and students utilize online curriculum such as Acellus, Teacher Pay Teacher, Mastery Connect and Boardworks. Teachers follow the progression and skills outlined in each of the subject area frameworks. Through collaboration, teachers design instruction to ensure the skills outlined are taught for each of the core areas. The teachers at Pioneer have the freedom to teach the standards based on the curriculum of their choosing. The curriculum is dictated by student needs and framework expectations. The teacher and the data for each student is the curriculum. Pioneer School builds the curriculum around the scope and sequence outlined in the Oklahoma Frameworks for Mathematics, English Language Arts, Sciences, and Social Studies.

When COVID first shut our school down, we were not prepared to move to online instruction. We did not have an online curriculum, we did have online support with IXL, and keyboarding. Teachers level of comfort with the use of zoom and other internet-based meetings was novice at best. We made mistakes and allowed teachers to use too many different platforms, Facebook live, google classroom, remind and text. Parents with multiple students in multiple grade levels were frustrated. Also, many families were sharing one device for multiple students and their own work from home for their career. When August came around Pioneer School returned to in person learning model five days per week with CDC guidance and modifications to our daily schedules. We also offered a virtual option that was based on a single platform for all PK-8th grade students, Acellus. The district was also able to purchase chrome books to create a 1:1 model for all KG -8th grade students. In the beginning of the school year we had 51 of our 392 students choose virtual online school. Acellus was the primary delivery for all learning models for those students. However, students were also included in our Mastery Connect Benchmark data collection. Acellus aligned with our data driven approach. Acellus does not allow students to progress through a lesson without reaching a minimum baseline score. The program allows for real time monitoring and assigns extra support when a student is struggling or guessing. Pioneer School has incorporated Acellus into our in person learning model as well for enrichment as well as intervention as it can be customized for individual needs.

For our in person learning model - Pioneer made the jump four years ago to benchmark model of data driven instruction and assessment. Oklahoma was transitioning to new State of Oklahoma Standards, OAS, and new testing platform. To meet the new rigor, Pioneer wanted to meet the challenge by having a system in place that allowed the school to meet the needs of all students based on student mastery of the new OAS. The school utilizes the Oklahoma Framework established with teacher input and the Oklahoma State Department of Education, for pacing and curriculum alignment. Formative assessments are created by teachers and student mastery is measured in real time by online assessment based on OAS. When students fail to reach mastery on a particular standard, interventions range from small group in the classroom, to Title I, and or resource room. Students are re accessed following interventions to determine growth and effectiveness of the interventions. Acellus and IXL have also been used for intervention pieces. The most effective intervention for us is our small size. Teachers are able to intentionally work on interventions during small group rotations based on data collected through formative and benchmark assessments.

One of the things that has been a real benefit is our procedures for benchmark testing. When conducting the benchmarks, we really try to mimic the procedures used for Oklahoma State Testing. The benchmarks are created by the counselor and principal for all grades with teacher input. The administration team follows the blueprint set forth by the State of Oklahoma concerning depth of knowledge, number of questions, and rigor. We have collected enough data now that our benchmarks have become very accurate predictors of outcomes on the OAS tests. Students have responded that the OAS test was easier than the benchmark 3 test. I believe that our students are just very well prepared to be assessed on the skills that the State of Oklahoma believes they should be taught.

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

Pioneer School offers middle school Spanish and Algebra I to 8th grade students to help support college and career readiness. Advanced classes working in conjunction with mastery-based learning models. Pioneer students upon graduation, attend various high schools across Grady County. Pioneer year after year represent the valedictorians of the high schools they attend. Students that graduate from Pioneer report each year on how well they are prepared for the next level of education.

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

Preschool follows the curriculum outlined by the Oklahoma Math Framework and the Oklahoma English Framework. A focus is placed on basic counting, spatial awareness, beginning reading with phonics and site words. Students learn procedures, social skills such as sharing, cooperation, and civil responsibility. Students are provided with daily exercise through physical education and recess time. Students success and readiness for KG is based on mastering the alphabet, numbers, basic counting and independence.

### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Pioneer School offers daily physical education for all grades PK-8. This is in addition to athletics. A group of teachers started a Marathon Kids Club at the school in 2019. Students in grades 2-8 meet three days a week after school with sponsors to walk, run and jog. The club has grown to include additional teachers that exercise with the students as well as parents. The club consistently has 40 plus kids involved each year. Students are recognized for compiling miles equal to completing a marathon. Another program we offer is Honor Choir. Students meet with the director before and after school to practice / rehearse and belong to the choir. Honor Choir is open for grades 3-8. Prior to COVID the group performed at Veterans Day, Christmas Concert, and end of the year show in Dallas TX. Students of the Honor Choir also traveled to a local nursing home and performed Christmas Carols for residents. This was in conjunction with the SADD Club warm sock drive for the residents. Over 70 kids participated prior to COVID and the principal would volunteer to drive the bus. Two years ago, to offer more fine arts choices, the school started an acoustic guitar class open for 8th grade students. This is the second year for the program and students leave the class with the ability to read music and accompany the Honor Choir during Christmas Concerts.

With COVID limiting some of the activities this year and forcing some virtual learning, the school purchased technology-based curriculum that created an opportunity for students to take MS Spanish I. Students are gaining some basics for Spanish that will benefit them in high school.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

Pioneer School uses Mastery Connect to monitor and track student mastery of the Oklahoma Academic Standards. STAR Reading instrument is used to monitor reading levels. Teacher created formative assessments are utilized to create baselines and predictors for Administrative created Benchmarks in October, December and March. Students are offered remediation in the classroom, small groups with time intentionally devoted through teacher planning. Students are also offered support with IXL, pull out with Title I and teacher assistants with lessons designed by teachers. Pioneer School teamed up with other schools in Grady County to hire Dr. Marcia Tate for professional development. Dr. Tate, author of “Brain Compatible Lesson Planning” has worked with our faculty for two years to ensure brain compatible lesson planning.

Special Education students - IEP goals are written based on grade level Oklahoma Academic Standards. Progress is monitored by utilizing student data from Mastery Connect Benchmark scores. Interventions for Special Education include 1:1 interventions, small group, and paraprofessional support. Reading interventions for SPED population makes use of Ascend Learning Intervention and Alpha Phonics. Both programs have created growth for students with difficulties in reading. This is our first year with the Ascend program, but our SPED teacher is seeing very encouraging results early on with this program. Alpha Phonics seems to better serve

older students with gaps in reading levels and Ascend for students with more severe needs. This is still a work in progress as far as if one tool outperforms the other. Our ELL population is very small, and we have been able to serve those students with additional support with Alpha Phonics, in class modifications, and Title I support. Our current performance level for our SPED population has met all growth goals as set forth by the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Pioneer Students that are performing above grade level receive additional support through hands on academic quiz bowl teams, field trips to art museums, Wichita Wildlife Refuge, and appropriate field trips to support advanced learning.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

Pioneer School places an emphasis on recognizing students. We have monthly recognition awards given by the classroom teacher for hard work, being responsible, helping others, or learning math facts. These awards are presented to the students by the principal during Monday Morning Wake Up. Prior to COVID, Monday Morning Wake Up was done in our gym in a pep assembly style meeting. With COVID we have continued to have Monday Morning Wake Up through virtual meetings using Moxtra. Every teacher has a web cam in their classroom, and we have conducted our wake up this way. The administrator runs the wake up and uses music and pans through the different classrooms to share with the kids the awards and faces of every classroom. One of the neat things, that we do doing our morning wake up is that we also recognize birthdays of the students. Prior to COVID, the guitar teacher, would play his guitar and lead the school body in singing Happy Birthday to each student and faculty member that had a birthday during that month. We continue to recognize birthdays and the singing has been led by the Beatles and Spotify.

Another aspect of keeping our students engaged and supporting social, emotional learning is the use of videos. The school counselor makes Bucket Filler Videos every year showing our students doing good deeds or community service projects. The videos started after the principal had read a book to first and second grade classrooms about doing for others "Have You Filled a Bucket Today?" This led to a challenge to all students and staff to be bucket fillers. The counselor continued her video series during the shutdown by challenging students in weekly bucket filler videos to clean their room, take out the trash, help mom with dishes. The kids would video their deeds and send back to the counselor to be shared. The administrator principal did a video called Where in Pioneer School is Mr. Principal? The idea was to let the kids see their classrooms and the school and guess where he was at. The video was then put out to all students with a quiz to see how many places they could guess.

We have used videos for the past 5 years to promote, reinforce, celebrate, and challenge our students and staff.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Pioneer School uses several communication devices to reach families. E Notes are used by all classroom teachers to connect with all students and families in their classroom. The district uses this technology to communicate district news, athletics, and counseling news. Families and community are also engaged through the use of videos and flyers for such events as Thanksgiving Food Drive, Bucket Filler Challenges, Marathon Kids, and Veterans Day Programs. With the onset of COVID, the school continued to host these events and share the events with our community by presenting the events online live. This has not been as personable with our families; however, it has provided the families a means to stay engaged with our students and their activities and gives families a means of staying connected with the school even through COVID. We are such a small school that families and teachers are on a first name basis. We certainly have an advantage over larger districts when it comes to engaging with families.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Pioneer School places an emphasis on personal choices! What You Do Matters! The teaching staff at Pioneer believes that all students can grow! Each teacher has accepted the mission of this school that we will openly share growth and question when growth is not occurring. In Oklahoma, we are a small state. Each teacher at Pioneer could easily choose to go and work at any of the seven surrounding districts that DO NOT place an emphasis on student data and growth. They would make the same salary regardless of the district based on the Oklahoma State Teacher Pay-scale. Each one of the teachers at Pioneer believes in the idea that every child deserves a quality education and that can only come from dedicated professional teachers. The staff here receives financial support for classroom supplies from the district as well as the Pioneer PTO. Teachers and student growth are celebrated by the administration and the local BOE. A competitive bond exists within the faculty to support student growth. All student outcomes are made public

by teacher and by grade level. This is not a judgement for termination or bonus, but a recognition of the work and product created. We value growth! The growth mindset has led to our students passing Oklahoma State Testing at a high level. The goal was always student growth, all kids can grow. When dedicated teachers are intentional about each child and their growth, great things happen for kids.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

Our school is somewhat unique in that the Superintendent and Principal are one and the same. During this time of COVID the administrator has worked to keep the school open and safe by organizing CDC guidance to incorporate social distancing in our cafeteria, classrooms, and non-homeroom classes. Protocol was put in place to track spread by seating charts in the classrooms, route bus, activity bus trips, and special education resource room. Students were scheduled for the library and resource room by grade and homeroom as to not mix different homerooms. The administrator was in charge of quarantine and contact tracing, working with Grady County Health Department to identify exposure and confirm quarantine. The administration worked with the teaching staff and cafeteria staff to limit the number of students in the cafeteria at a given time. Cafeteria staff, administration, and teachers took turns delivering meals to classrooms. Seating was spaced out in the cafeteria and sanitizing of the lunch tables took place between each of the three settings. With only one administrator for the school, it has been a blessing that prior to COVID the staff and administration had worked so hard to create a culture of student growth and placed emphasis on recognizing students. COVID most certainly created additional duties for the administration and staff. Even with COVID, Pioneer School has continued to have in person learning, and collected student growth data. Our early indicators show that our students have made significant gains from the beginning of the year to now. When comparing prior years data points, this year's students are on track to demonstrate mastery on the Oklahoma Academic Standards at a very comparable rate to previous years. This again is a testament to the administration and staff working together to create a system that values student growth.

#### **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Pioneer School places an emphasis on student recognition for proper behavior such as, holding the door open for others, saying please, and thank you. Staff model for students by thanking them for putting up their chair, holding a door, or helping their classmates. COVID has been very divisive at our school. The decision to close schools was made by the Oklahoma State Department of Education during the 2019-2020 school year. When it came time to open the school up for 2020-2021 our local board was very split on adopting a mask policy. The State of Oklahoma never did mandate masks for all citizens. Some local cities did, but as a state, we did not. The closest community to our school, Chickasha, did not adopt a mask policy. As a district, the Pioneer Board of Education believed that it was more important to be open for in person learning and that virtual was not a good option for kids. With that mindset, Pioneer adopted a mask mandated policy for grades 2-8. Many of our patrons threatened to pull children out of the school if we made them wear masks. The administration and teachers went to work connecting with families to express this mandate was about being open and having our students back in class. The school team laid out our reopening plans to include "mask breaks" - times when students could get outside and take off their masks. Lessons that could be taught outside on nice weather days were encouraged. Our school was very split, and because of the respect we showed to both sides of the issue, mask wearing vs. the never maskers, not one of our students left our school for home school. Students went home and reported to their parents that school was really normal and that wearing a mask was not that big of a deal. When the year started we had eight percent of our student population at home in virtual school. By October that number decreased to less than three percent. The way this little school handled COVID, remained open, and gave kids some form of normalcy is a perfect example of how this little school is dedicated to ALL KIDS - and that ALL KIDS are served at Pioneer School in Chickasha, OK.

All of the teachers at Pioneer School are Great Expectations certified. In addition, Pioneer has worked with Dr. Marcia Tate and “Brain Compatible Lesson Planning. The administration has also used “Driven by Data: A Practical Guide to Improve Instruction” by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo. Pioneer School has a very low turnover rate and is able to provide consistency in teacher instruction.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The ONE practice that we hang our hat on is,” Every teacher and staff member has made a commitment to the fact that every child can grow, no excuses.” All teachers have found ways to partner with their students to establish growth goals. Student data is transparent and shared throughout the district. When growth is not achieved, as a school, we want to know why. Again, no excuses. Teachers and administration have developed a relationship of trust that is focused on what is best for students and being dedicated to being professional educators. Teachers that do not want to be dedicated to data driven instruction, are free to seek employment elsewhere. We seek and hire only teachers that are dedicated to data driven student growth. We have identified the type of teacher that fits into our culture. We pay the same as our neighbors in other districts, so this is not accomplished because we pay more. We simply have clearly identified what we believe and hire people that share in the dedication to students and the profession.