

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2022 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 Mrs. Brigett Stewart  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 504 Hood Street West  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Piedmont State AL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 36272-1530

County Calhoun County

Telephone (256) 447-7483 Fax (256) 447-8130

Web site/URL https://www.piedmontelementary.org/ E-mail bstewart@pcsboe.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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Mike Hayes E-mail mhayes@pcsboe.us

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Piedmont City School District Tel. (256) 447-8831

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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Bruce Adderhold  
(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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

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 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 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 2016 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: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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	23	31	54
K	44	41	85
1	49	36	85
2	35	33	68
3	43	37	80
4	37	37	74
5	46	29	75
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	277	244	521

\*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0.5 % Asian
  - 9 % Black or African American
  - 1.7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 83 % White
  - 4.8 % 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 2020 - 2021 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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	48
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	60
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	523
(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. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Chinese, Spanish, Gujarati

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

1 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 69 %

Total number students who qualify: 362

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 27 %  
140 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 with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>8</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>88</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>6</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>3</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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	31
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	95%	95%	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 2021.

<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.

MISSION Empowering For The Future VISION The vision of the Piedmont City School District is to maximize the potential of all students in becoming productive and responsible citizens through rigorous and engaging instructional practices and effective administrative leadership.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.piedmont.k12.al.us/federalprograms>

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Piedmont Elementary School is located in Piedmont, Alabama. Piedmont is a small, rural community in Northeast Alabama nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountain Range, surrounded by the scenic beauty of mountains and streams. The famous Chief Ladiga Trail, which links Anniston, Alabama, to Atlanta, Georgia, runs through Piedmont. This paved trail stretches over 100 miles, and is a main attraction for our community. With a population of just under 5,000, the school serves as the hub of the town. The community served by Piedmont Elementary School is a low-income area with some small neighborhood businesses. Historically, the jobs in Piedmont have been primarily textile based. However, with the closing of the cotton mill in town, the community has struggled economically. The general social and economic climate of the community exerts a definite influence on the school and its programs. Our school helps to provide needed services to positively impact the lives of our students and their families.

Piedmont Elementary School's foundation is built on its strong vision, mission, and beliefs to ensure a quality education for all students. A system-wide technology initiative, which began in 2009, has placed technology devices in the hands of every Piedmont student, revolutionizing the teaching and learning process. The purpose of this initiative dubbed “MPower Piedmont,” is to strengthen the long-term viability of the Piedmont community by assuring that the young people growing up in the area have the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the 21st century. We aggressively seek out grants as part of our sustainability plan. One grant we are especially proud to have received multiple times is the “21st Century Community Learning Center” grant which funds our after school program, Piedmont Learning Academy. We offer our families economical options for wifi access at home and provide an after school learning academy for students and families to access wifi on campus each evening.

A primary goal of Piedmont Elementary School is to provide our students with a unique, engaging curriculum that can be tailored to address individual learning styles and needs. Personalized instruction at Piedmont Elementary School is delivered by a means of combining traditional methods with technology programs and devices to meet each student’s needs, abilities, and interests.

At Piedmont Elementary School, we embrace the knowledge that every student is unique and we use our technology devices to provide Individualized Learning Paths (ILPs) to close the gaps for those who are struggling and to provide challenging content for those students ready for a faster pace. Students are able to progress through ILPs at a rate that is suitable to their individual needs. This allows more opportunities for exploration in learning, targeted instruction, and mastery of standards. Additionally, we have seen our students’ confidence as a learner grow exponentially.

One way we nurture ownership of learning is to provide an opportunity for students to apply what they've learned in an authentic way. Our students create and produce a digital presentation at the end of each unit to demonstrate mastery of the goals within their individualized learning paths. On any given day, students can be seen and heard in our hallways writing scripts and producing video content to show mastery of standards. This application of learning sparks meaningful conversations between teacher and student which take learning to a deeper level.

We understand the need for students to work independently as well as collaboratively, and we realize that it is our responsibility to teach digital citizenship within the framework of our curriculum. We use a learning management system for grades 3-5, in which students are able to complete online assignments, manage their own content, collaborate with other students, and receive timely feedback from their teachers.

Through our initiative, teachers have made the shift from a traditional classroom setting to a more personalized environment. They are no longer the keeper of the content and are now in a facilitative role as they expertly guide and question students to engage them in learning. Students are able to take their devices home and have 24/7 access. Teachers utilize the learning management system, Schoology, to engage students anytime and anywhere.

We infuse authentic learning experiences into our curriculum so that students connect to the world around



them and value what they are learning in a real and meaningful way. We believe in a balanced approach to learning which includes an instructional design that features both daily technology integration and hands-on learning experiences. In addition to our ILPs, our teachers create interactive lessons that engage the senses whether it be auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile. Students can be seen outside measuring their shadows and graphing the movement of the sun or forming bricks from clay as they learn about solids. We eliminate the boundaries for our students and take learning everywhere we go.

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

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

#### **1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:**

At Piedmont Elementary School (PES), we are a T.E.A.M “Together Everyone Achieves More!” Teachers throughout PES continually have vertical meetings across curriculums to ensure students have high achievement. Teachers use a combination of Alabama Course of Study Standards and data to drive instruction for individualized student achievement. Teaching strategies and data are used to advance students at a developmentally appropriate pace.

At PES, we utilize an evidence-based language arts curriculum. In developing a life long learner, teachers develop purposeful literacy approaches by providing explicit whole group, strategic small groups, and rigorous individualized learning. In a balanced approach to education, classes implement both traditional and digital learning through the use of eSpark, Istation, IXL, McGraw Hill, and Renaissance. These tools provide an opportunity to reach all learners.

Teachers at PES are trained in numerous educationally advanced techniques to improve their instructional approaches. Our teachers have participated in Orton-Gillingham(OG), Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), and monthly data days, that drive the instruction in all classrooms. Additionally, 49% of PES teachers are National Board Certified Teachers.

PES uses the Go Math curriculum to help students develop reasoning strategies, multiple problem solving skills, and strong number sense. In addition to traditional textbooks, we supplement with Splash Learn, Reflex Math, eSpark, and IXL to ensure growth from each child.

Assessments are a necessary part of being a data driven school. PES uses a variety of formative, summative, diagnostic, and informal assessment tools to identify learning needs.

At PES, social studies curriculums are followed utilizing the Alabama Course of Study Standards for Social Studies. Additionally, field trips, special programs and projects are utilized to enhance important events throughout history. PES teachers utilize AMSTI (Alabama Math Science Technology Initiative) which provides hands-on lessons to engage students in inquiry based learning.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

At Piedmont Elementary School, we believe reading is crucial in understanding all other subjects. We strive to develop lifelong learners and readers that can make sense of not only the world around them, but also build social-emotional skills and foster their imagination. We scaffold learning using a gradual release method.

PES uses an evidence-based curriculum (McGraw Hill Wonders) to guide our English Language Arts program. Our program is aligned to the Alabama ELA Course of Study and is taught during a 90 minute protected block. In the lower grades, we supplement this curriculum with multi-sensory strategies to develop decoding and encoding skills. We also use Heggerty to guide students to a solid foundation in phonemic awareness.

Our students participate in whole group instruction and differentiated small group instruction. Some students are given more instructional support within a small group setting. Literacy centers are utilized in our classrooms. Students use programs on iPads to work on their own individual learning paths and targeted areas of weakness. Teachers use formative assessments to assess areas of weakness and adjust their instruction accordingly.

Our teachers regularly participate in professional learning opportunities to further their own education and strengthen their practice. All K-3 teachers are currently enrolled in a two year program called LETRS where they are learning about the science of reading and strategies to implement into their tiered levels of instruction. Fourth and fifth grade ELA teachers are beginning LETRS training this summer. Our school system holds system-wide K-12 vertical ELA team meetings to align standards being taught.

PES uses many forms of data to create individual learning paths for students and to close learning gaps in order to move students to higher achievement levels. We use early screening data to make strategic decisions to help ensure that every child who needs early intervention receives it before they experience failure. Thoughtful reflection of data helps teachers and administrators tell whether approaches are working. Effective instruction can change a child's reading development. PES uses various data resources including STAR, Classworks, Istation, and eSpark to determine students' independent and instructional reading levels. We assess students quarterly using STAR and Scantron and annually, using the state assessment, ACAP. Our school has a literature rich library where students have access to books, magazines, and newspapers that align to students' instructional levels. Students participate in reading challenges, book clubs, and author studies throughout the school year.

Teachers use a combination of guided and shared learning experiences to teach writing and grammar curriculums. They use a variety of texts to explore craft, grammar, and sentence structure. Teachers hold individual writing conferences to help students expand their writing skills. Students write in daily journals to create credibility, readability, communication, and clarity. These journals give students the freedom to make stylistic choices in their writing.

PES parents have open communication with teachers regarding individual learning pathways and expectations. Parents are informed of needed interventions and explanations of how teachers plan to address their child's needs. Additionally, parents are provided resources that can be used at home.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Piedmont Elementary School employs highly skilled professionals who are trained to deliver state-mandated curriculum and instruction to the students of Piedmont City School District. Our teachers use evidence-based learning tools and instructional methods to deliver instruction in mathematics. Meanwhile, teachers encourage students to be thinkers and problem solvers, while building skills within the mathematical instruction. Students are able to obtain necessary scaffolded skills through the use of Number Talks, pencil/paper activities, as well as digital programs aligned to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers are able to differentiate instruction with the use of data-driven instruction for small group learning. Teachers focus on building number sense as well as concept connections through real-world problem solving.

Teachers build classroom discussions based on students' prior knowledge to help facilitate the learning process. PES utilizes the Alabama Course of Study Standards to create a yearlong scope and sequence of topics and lessons. Benchmark testing is utilized three times per year (beginning, middle, and end-of-year) as a summative assessment which allows teachers the opportunity to meet each student at their level of appropriate tiered instruction. Students who place in the "at risk" category receive Tier III instruction.

Alongside our small group instruction, teachers utilize digital programs such as iReady and eSpark to close the learning gaps. These programs use student data to develop an individualized learning path for each student. These groupings are very fluid and are based on summative and formative assessments given within the classroom. By using such assessments, teachers are able to identify misunderstandings, adjust instruction, and offer additional practice or different strategies for those students. Teachers have the capability to assign grade level practice, as well as differentiated practice, to either accelerate or remediate students on all standards.

The teachers at Piedmont Elementary have also been invited to participate in the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) for multiple years. As standards change, or personnel grade levels change, teachers eagerly attend professional development sessions to learn new and improved strategies for teaching mathematics. Providing students with hands-on activities, as well as real-world strategies, has

shown a steady increase in test scores. Teachers also attend sessions during the summer months to increase any deficiencies in their own instruction, while learning to incorporate different aspects of “best mathematical practices” in their own classroom.

Teachers at Piedmont Elementary School also participate in Vertical Team Alignment sessions. Multiple times throughout the school year, teachers of mathematics meet and address critical grade level math standards, mathematical vocabulary, and strategies to improve student achievement. These sessions allow teachers to cooperatively work with other grade levels to identify learning gaps and target specific student needs within their grade levels. Open discussions take place during these sessions to allow teachers of mathematics to identify strengths and weaknesses in mathematics across learning in all grade levels within Piedmont Elementary. Teachers are able to share strategies, resources, and instructional support which contributes to student achievement in our school.

#### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

One hundred percent of our science teachers have been Alabama Mathematics Science Technology Initiative (AMSTI) trained. As an AMSTI school, our students participate in a wide variety of hands-on lessons through experiments, research activities, and projects. Science is also taught across our curriculum. Our reading series has a range of nonfiction and expository texts based on scientific topics. Teachers guide students through lessons on inquiry, problem-solving, and creative thinking. In addition to regular science lessons, students participate in special science units. Teachers collaborate with other science professionals from various organizations to plan engaging activities. Kindergarten teachers team up with the Jacksonville State University College of Education for a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) Christmas unit featuring Polar Express lessons. Second grade teachers partner with a science specialist at JSU to have a Spooky Science Day at Halloween where students engineer pumpkin catapults, investigate the states of matter, and measure different attributes of a pumpkin. Third graders participate in lessons on nutrition with Body Quest in partnership with Alabama A&M and Auburn University. A nutrition teacher visits third graders once a week to bring fruits and vegetables for students to sample. Students participate in interactive iPad lessons and learn the value of eating nutritiously. The fourth grade students participate in 4H projects in areas such as agriculture, civic engagement, healthy living and STEM. Our Piedmont Learning Academy partners with JSU nursing students for enrichment lessons on health and hygiene during after school hours and in the summer. Our Gifted and Talented classes participate in projects with robotics. To deepen the understanding of science all around us, students also attend field trips to the McWane Center, Georgia and Chattanooga Aquariums, Anniston Museum of Natural History, Desoto Caverns, and Bennett Farms Pumpkin Patch.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Piedmont Elementary School immerses students in various forms of social studies experiences enabling them to form global connections and become productive citizens as they grow older. Our younger grades participate in a community helper unit, in which they walk to our local fire station, police department, bank, vet’s office, and grocery store to take tours and listen to community helpers share their jobs with them. The young students then end their study of our local community by developing three-dimensional art representations of our community. Our upper grade students incorporate the arts with social studies. Our third grade presents a living wax museum of important people in history. Our fifth grade presents a Veterans Day musical for our school where local service members are invited to attend. They also perform this musical for our local nursing home and assisted living residents. Our fourth grade students are learning about Alabama history through research projects that have integrated reading and writing embedded within them. Upper grades also take many local field trips to places like Janney Furnace where students learn about the Civil War and Native American history in Alabama. Students visit the Alabama Museum of Natural History where they get to experience not only Alabama history but dinosaurs that once roamed where our state is today. Students in all grade levels participate in an extensive unit during Black History Month focusing on Black history in Alabama and its impact on the history of our nation. The teachers have classroom libraries rich in diverse literature for the students to explore year round. Piedmont Elementary School strives to develop responsible citizens and future leaders.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Piedmont Elementary School offers three Alabama First Class Pre-K Program classrooms. These classrooms utilize the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards. The curriculum utilized is the Creative Curriculum which emphasizes concepts, projects and learning based on the interest and needs of the students. The Creative Curriculum addresses developmentally appropriate goals in four areas: social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and linguistic. Additionally, Teaching Strategies GOLD documentation is utilized to identify a child's developmental strengths and weaknesses. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) evaluation tools are also used on a smaller scale to examine the student's development. The CLASS, used for teacher quality improvement, is used in all pre-k classrooms.

Teaching Strategies GOLD goals match the Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development, which are aligned with the standards for kindergarten through third grade. Developing a solid social and emotional foundation for children begins when they are very young. A range of approaches for applying Conscious Discipline practices are employed on a daily basis in each classroom to teach children the skills and strategies essential for school preparation and achievement. Conscious Discipline is a research-based behavioral intervention approach that has been shown to help them achieve their goals. Teachers are able to broaden and further develop a child's abilities in the particular areas of social interaction, play, and language as well as in emotional development, physical skills, literacy, and fine motor skills. Additionally, The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS ) helps teachers focus on assessing and enhancing classroom relationships. Through all of these programs and skills, our preschool students are prepared educationally and socially to be successful in the kindergarten classroom.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

At PES we believe that fostering creativity through the addition of related arts activities is essential in addressing the needs of the whole student, thereby positively impacting student achievement, fostering independence, and promoting self-esteem. To that end, we have a schedule that provides a daily physical education time and a related arts time to accommodate music, library media, counseling, art, and STEM enrichment activities.

Although we do not have a music teacher assigned to our school, our high school band director provides a monthly music lesson to each elementary class. Our physical education teachers provide a wide variety of activities to focus on positive health goals and healthy nutrition habits. These activities include free play mixed with structured activities. One of these activities includes the use of a climbing wall for which they wrote a "Be Healthy" grant designed to promote wellness through the school and community.

The PES library media program is an integral part of the curriculum. We employ a flexible schedule where students in grades K-3 have a scheduled bi-weekly class time while also maintaining open circulation throughout the day for all students. The media specialist collaborates with teachers to provide resources and enrichment for classroom projects and assignments. She also solicits requests from teachers when ordering new books and resources for the media center collection in order to keep it current and relative to the curriculum.

In addition, we utilize the program Code.org to offer all students the opportunity to learn block coding and practice coding. This program teaches students 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and abstract thinking in an exciting and engaging way while fostering creativity, teamwork, and collaboration among their peers. We also offer robotics units to students in both math and science. During this unit, students utilize the WEDO 2.0 robots. These lessons allow students to learn and apply coding skills to real world experiences.

Our school also provides a comprehensive school counseling program to meet the academic, social/emotional, and career development needs of all students. Students in grades K - 5 receive classroom guidance lessons which are on alternate weeks as the library class time. We use the PATH (Prevention and Awareness for Total Health) curriculum to teach classroom lessons which include self-awareness, relationship skills, coping skills, study skills, and career exploration. They also receive small group and individual counseling sessions. The counseling program sponsors school-wide campaigns to promote drug awareness, bullying prevention, and kindness. Our school has a mentoring program through Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Northeast Alabama. This program matches high school students with elementary students and provides weekly student meetings to help build rapport. Mentors present lessons to motivate students and teach positive behaviors and good decision making. In addition, the counselor works in collaborative partnerships with students, educators, parents, and community members to empower students to meet present and future challenges.

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Piedmont Elementary School strives to meet all of the academic needs of students through evidence-based tiered instruction utilizing various strategies to meet learner needs based on their instructional deficits. Students are assessed yearly with the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP). Additionally, students are assessed three times per year with Scantron, a summative assessment which drives personalized learning as well as measures student growth. Additionally, students are assessed with the STAR Reading and Math assessments as well as one-to-one Curriculum Based Measures that are given on a weekly to monthly basis.

Once student achievement levels have been determined in both reading and mathematics, individualized learning paths are created through computer-based learning programs such as eSpark, Istation, iReady and CLASWORKS. Students spend time daily working on standards based on their level of performance both digitally and face-to-face in small group instruction. Students identified as working below grade level are given explicit instruction through Tier 1 small groups. These students receive more intensive targeted instruction in the classroom through Tier 2 small groups. Students whose data indicates a more significant deficit, receive direct evidence-based intervention through the SPIRE intervention program and Orton-Gillingham Multisensory Instructional Strategies. These students are further screened using the Alabama Guide to Dyslexia Screening Tool. Areas assessed include: written spelling, nonsense word fluency, oral reading accuracy, phoneme segmentation, sight words, letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency, and alphabet arc skills. Additionally, staff members have received certification in LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) and are utilizing strategies such as whole word blending, heart words, and sound walls, daily in their classroom.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Piedmont Elementary strives to empower all students to reach their full learning potential. We are committed to challenging all students and encouraging students to become life-long learners. Once a student has been determined to function above grade level through summative screenings, classroom teaching is adjusted to meet the individual learning needs of the student. Individual learning paths are created from student data and delivered through computer based instructional programs to accelerate student learning. Additionally, small group instruction advances student learning to the student's full academic potential. Second grade students are screened yearly through the Second Grade Child Find process. Students passing the Child Find screener are referred for a Gifted Evaluation. Once determined eligible for services, gifted students are placed and receive direct services in the third through fifth grades.

Our identified gifted and talented students in grades 3-5 are given the opportunity to partake in a weekly pull-out program that focuses on 21st century skills and units that build critical thinking and problem solving skills. Students work on a variety of units including robotics, chess, career explorations, architecture, coding, arts and crafts, STEAM, and creative writing programs that are designed to help the students solve real-life problems utilizing creative thinking, designing and coding. Each unit taught offers challenges

increasing in difficulty to meet learner needs. Additionally, career exploration units provide students with a career aptitude test to identify interests and personality traits for different fields of study. Student learning then expands to research jobs of interest and explore the training and responsibilities that are a part of this career. Piedmont Elementary strives to empower all students to reach their full learning potential. The gifted education teacher collaborates with the classroom teachers on a regular basis on accelerating classroom work when indicated.

### **3c. Special education:**

Piedmont Elementary School strives to meet all the academic needs of students through research based tiered instruction where teachers utilize various strategies to meet learner needs based on their instructional deficits. Students are assessed three times per year with Scantron, a summative assessment which drives personalized learning as well as measures student growth. Additionally, students are assessed with the STAR Reading and Math Assessments as well as CBM's that are given on a weekly to monthly basis.

Small group, tiered instruction is utilized daily to address specific deficits from assessments. Data is collected and analyzed to determine specific needs of students. Remediation is monitored and progress monitoring is completed on a weekly basis to guide instruction. Communication between interventionist and classroom teachers is carried out on a consistent basis during Problem Solving Team Meetings (PST).

Students identified with continuing academic difficulties by our Response to Instruction (RTI) teams are referred to special education. Once a referral is accepted, the student is evaluated using comprehensive assessments in the suspected area of disability. Assessment data is analyzed and if they are determined eligible, there is an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) developed and specialized instructional strategies are determined. Students with an Individualized Education Plan receive resource room or inclusion services based on their individual learning needs in their least restrictive environment. Other modifications on classwork and assessments may be made as an IEP team decision. Our students with orthopedic, visual or sensory problems share the same experiences as their non-disabled peers with minimal accommodations, each according to their individual needs.

Those not eligible for special education services but needing additional support are provided tutoring services through academic tutors as well as classroom supports from paraprofessionals. Students receive tutoring in the classroom or a tutoring lab under the direction of a certified teacher.

### **3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

Piedmont Elementary School implements an approved comprehensive English as a Second Language (ESL) program, consisting of educational theory and goals that eliminate any barriers to ensure an equitable education. Our ESL Program is designed to support language acquisition and eliminate language barriers. Therefore, World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards and strategies and Can Do Descriptors are implemented through a Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) model. Using SDAIE strategies, teachers are able to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of EL students by activating students' background knowledge, presenting material using visuals and graphic organizers, and using simple language. Teachers use strategies like think-pair-share, quick-writes, and previewing text in order to activate knowledge and close achievement gaps. Students have approved accommodations within an Individual English Language Plan (I-ELP) for further language support.

At the time of enrollment, all students are given a Home Language Survey to determine their primary home language and to identify potential EL students. Students indicating a primary home language other than English are assessed with the WIDA Screener, which assesses a student's English proficiency within the four domains of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. To ensure program effectiveness, we participate in our annual district ESL program evaluation. During quarterly advisory meetings we discuss our EL students' data which leads to program adjustments to ensure effectiveness. This also leads to staff specific ESL professional development training to ensure we are meeting each student's language needs during instruction. Our EL parents are provided an interpreter during oral communication. EL parents are

also provided translation of all school documents as well as daily communication. We strive to continually meet the needs of all EL students and provide needed supports to help them to be successful students.

**3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:**

Piedmont Elementary School implements a survey to identify possible homeless children and youth during enrollment each year. The questionnaire ensures there are no barriers set before potential homeless students when enrolling in our school. Once a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth completes our survey we are able to determine homelessness and offer an immediate support system. In accordance with the McKinney Vento Act, students who are in homeless situations may enroll immediately with or without proof of residency, birth certificate, social security number, immunization record, or school records. Our school's homeless liaison, and/or counselor are notified immediately and provide appropriate and effective assistance to meet the needs of each child/family. Our homeless liaison offers resources and support as needed. This includes immediate needs such as housing, food, clothing, tutoring, and after-school enrichment for the child/children. Our homeless children are provided with the same free appropriate public education as their grade level peers, including public preschool education regardless of their residency status. Our school ensures that our homeless children receive equitable access to all academic and extra-curricular activities. During the last year, COVID-19 has created an immediate concern with homelessness within our community. An increasing number of families experienced homelessness or became at-risk of being homeless due to loss of jobs or health issues. Our school partners with the Piedmont Benevolence Center, our community outreach center for families in need. We meet and collaborate during the year to discuss the needs of our homeless children and their families. We further partner each year and have an annual food drive in November to feed our families in need.



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

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

Piedmont Elementary strives to provide a positive and nurturing environment in which all of our students feel safe. This begins before the school year with a back-to-school bus ride to get the students excited about returning for the new year. All faculty and staff decorate the bus and we ride through the neighborhoods playing music, distributing candy, and stopping to talk to students who gather to see us.

We begin each school day with faculty at every drop-off point to greet the students with a smile and a positive word and assist them during inclement weather. We believe that these positive interactions are crucial to fostering relationships between students and faculty that will lead to greater social, emotional, and academic growth.

During school closures due to COVID-19, we worked hard to stay connected with our students. We employ a 1:1 technology initiative providing every student with a device for educational use. This was critical through the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers scheduled virtual meetings with students utilizing Zoom, dropped off art supplies, and had driveway visits. The principal conducted FaceBook Live book readings at night. We provided drive through meals which teachers distributed while enjoying a chance to greet the families as they received their meals.

We use the “Rhithm” app to monitor student and staff emotional wellness. Students take a wellness assessment each day using emojis to identify how they feel. The data from these assessments allows teachers and administrators to monitor the well-being of students and determine the impact on academic performance, attendance, and behavior.

Students are celebrated for meeting academic, behavior, and attendance goals at the end of each grading period. We select a student of the month from each grade level based on character and attendance, for which they receive a visit from the principal and their teacher, a sign for their yard, and pictures posted on social media. We have a Principal’s Club which celebrates good character and academic effort with lunch with the principal. Students who demonstrate leadership, compassion, and commitment are invited to apply to become peer helpers, a diverse group of students selected to assist with mentoring, tutoring, and school awareness and prevention activities.

We provide opportunities beyond the school day to keep our students engaged with our after-school program, the Piedmont Learning Academy. These students receive academic assistance and engage in STEM activities each day. Additionally, they have an opportunity to be involved in a musical play through a partnership with our fine arts program which is presented to our students and community.

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

Involving parent and community stakeholders is a critical component of our school’s mission. One way we involve parents and community members to cultivate support in the district and community is by hosting “Coffee and Conversations”. At these town hall style round table events, both parents and community members are able to ask questions, learn about programs in our school, express concerns, learn strategies to use at home with their children, find out ways to better support our school and partner with us, and finally, visit classrooms to see learning in action. This type of event offers a relaxed atmosphere for parents to communicate with administrators and other leaders in our school while building relationships. Another way we involve parents is by hosting “Parenting Days”. On these days, parents are given the opportunity to discuss their child’s academic progress and social-emotional well-being with teachers and school leaders. Parenting Days are offered each semester and have high attendance. Additionally, we host literacy nights and invite parents to come into classrooms to participate in hands-on learning opportunities which they are able to take home with them. Parents learn strategies for improving literacy, practice the strategy with the assistance of the classroom teacher, and leave with a new game or tool to use at home. Through these opportunities, parents become learning partners and discover additional ways to support their child’s

academic progress at home.

We value community partnerships and believe they strengthen the investment in our school and students' success. We are fortunate to have a four year college, Jacksonville State University (JSU), located just twelve miles from our school. Each semester we host pre-service teachers as practicum students and interns. Together, we developed a program called, "The Piedmont Experience" in which students who are accepted into the elementary education program at JSU are brought into classrooms to observe best practices before beginning their practicum experience. They are able to gain valuable insight from exemplary teachers and watch best practices being modeled in an authentic setting. In return, our teachers receive feedback and are able to reflect on their own instructional practices to improve them.

Another program, Gentleman's Classes, was developed to teach fifth grade boys important life skills such as learning to tie a tie or table etiquette. The classes are taught by men from the community who serve as mentors to the boys long after the program has ended. These partnerships have a lasting impact on our students.

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

Piedmont Elementary School supports and encourages its teachers and staff. A professional culture is created by including teachers and staff in decision-making directives through our school's Continuous Improvement Plan. Each year staff members and other stakeholders gather to review goals and determine ways for our school to improve. Our school community allows teachers to freely voice opinions, concerns, and ideas for professional development, curriculum, and teaching strategies.

One example is our National Board Certification program. Piedmont City School District pays for the initial cost of certification while offering mentoring support through Jacksonville State University. There is also a strong community of our teachers supporting each other through their experiences. As a result, Piedmont Elementary School has the highest percentage of National Board Certified Teachers in the nation.

This team approach is seen again in Vertical Team Meetings, committee assignments, and grade-level meetings. Monthly data meetings examine each student's needs and a team collaborates on strategies to support each student's success. Teachers are continually searching for new learning opportunities such as LETRS training on the science of reading, a two-year professional development opportunity, in which all of our K-3 teachers are currently enrolled. Multi-sensory training was introduced several years ago and then, incorporated into our classroom instruction and curriculum. New teachers are introduced into our professional culture through a support mentor.

Piedmont Elementary School was one of the first elementary schools to embrace technology by utilizing a one to one initiative. All teachers are Apple Certified and PES is an Apple Distinguished School. Early professional development, and our culture of embracing change to support our students, was highlighted during the transitioning to distance learning for all students during the pandemic of 2020. While technology became a major focus, it was an easier transition for our community due to our previous experiences and established procedures with technology for both students and teachers. During the following year, teachers received additional support as students navigated back to the classroom in waves. A contact person was assigned to each grade level to answer parent and student questions of distance learners and handled their testing requirements. This allowed teachers to concentrate on their traditional students while addressing concerns of distance learners during planning and after-school hours. Parents were reassured with this open line of communication. Extra tutors were also hired to provide additional assistance to students and teachers as they filled learning gaps. This team approach creates a unified professional community focused on our students' success while acknowledging the teacher's valued pedagogy, experience, and commitment to success.

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

It is the belief of the principal that a positive school climate is critical for student success, learning, and achievement. Through the development of a building leadership team with representatives from all areas, as

well as, parent and community stakeholders, the principal is able to gain valuable feedback to assist in decision making and to collaborate to solve problems while distributing leadership among a community. These team members are empowered to lead their peers and present strategies and ideas to propel student success.

The principal uses culture and climate surveys as a way to receive candid feedback on what is working and what is not. Feedback from surveys is used to facilitate conversations with teachers and staff and make meaningful changes to improve our school. This establishes shared values and vision for our school. We believe when people feel heard and their concerns are validated, they are more dedicated to the team's mission.

Staff morale is a high priority. The principal and assistant principal do things to boost morale often such as surprising teachers and staff with a "goody wagon" visit to their classrooms where they deliver treats or by providing a duty free lunch to grade level teachers. These small tokens of appreciation help to cultivate a positive environment where people feel appreciated and understood.

Teachers and staff are recognized for increases in student achievement, for their dedication to our school, and for individual professional achievements. Almost 50% of the faculty are National Board Certified Teachers. This represents a remarkable culture of leadership, mentorship, and support.

In an effort to focus on what matters most, the principal walks through the school each morning to greet and check in with students and teachers which leads to invaluable conversations in the hall or classroom. A priority is placed on cultivating relationships with students. Through this practice, the principal is able to see firsthand what is happening in the classrooms and offer feedback to improve student learning.

The principal and assistant principal practice servant leadership. They tackle management duties alongside teachers and staff while modeling best practices. Each morning and afternoon, they can be found in the car line talking with parents and greeting students. During this time, they are able to engage and communicate with families while strengthening relationships. Through these efforts, we have built stronger school-to-home partnerships which directly impact student achievement.

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

Piedmont City School District embodies the model "Empowering for the Future." We strive to prepare our students for a successful school experience by creating a positive learning environment where students feel safe, secure, and eager to learn. With the support of our stakeholders, we have built a school community which highlights the importance of treating others with kindness, respect, equality, and fairness.

PES teachers and staff regularly participate in professional development in order to gain resources and awareness to address the diverse learning of all students. These trainings provide opportunities to share dialogue of cultural differences and strategies to best educate all of our students. Strategies are implemented to best educate students living in poverty as well as inclusion and acceptance of the learning styles from all of the various cultures and academic levels we have in our school. Additionally, teachers and staff attend a "Back To School Bus Ride" each school year where teachers and staff ride a school bus through our community to welcome students back to school. This provides the opportunity for teachers and staff to see firsthand the many challenges our students face due to the level of poverty in which they live. This bus ride is followed up with discussions about the best possible social-emotional teaching strategies to enhance learning for those in need.

Piedmont Elementary School promotes a culturally responsive library through the inclusion of age-appropriate diverse literature in the collection. The media specialist chooses literature that explores the range and diversity of experiences, voices, and perspectives within a culture or group, avoiding literature that stereotypes any group. An example of this is the "This Is My Story" series, a set of books featuring information on several different countries and told from the perspective of a child in that country. Our student from India was excited to read the book and then shared likenesses and differences with his grade level from his personal experience.

Piedmont City School District Leaders and School Administrators provide guidance to teachers for appropriate responses to current trends in the nation. Teachers address current events in the classroom with the support of the counselor and administration. We utilize community resources and mental health counselors to address continuous needs and catastrophic circumstances when necessary.

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

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Improving student learning is a primary driving force behind almost every decision made at Piedmont Elementary School. The principal places a priority on using student data to inform instructional decisions and relies heavily on vetted assessments to provide the necessary information for making those decisions. One of the toughest parts of this process is ensuring that those decisions are made in enough time to truly impact student learning now versus later.

Piedmont Elementary School has implemented a monthly “Data Day” which is built into the district calendar. The monthly data days provide coveted time for teachers to delve into student data and collaborate across grade levels and subject areas. Data Days are led and facilitated by the principal which relays the importance of the principal’s role as an instructional leader of the school. Analyzing student data is no easy task and can feel overwhelming to teachers. To simplify the process, the principal developed a digital data tracking log and a separate graphic organizer called “TIPs” or Targeted Instructional Plans.

The data tracking log is shared with all teachers and administrators at both the school and district levels. It is a collaborative document which everyone can access and edit to keep current. After each school-wide assessment is given, teachers add their individual student data to the document creating one central place to analyze trends in student learning. This document is used as a catalyst for conversations about student learning on data days. Teachers note trends in data across grade levels and across subject areas. They share concerns and strategies to help other teachers identify weak areas where students are struggling with a specific skill or standard.

Using this information, teachers complete their monthly TIPs. These Targeted Instructional Plans include a whole group component in which the teacher has identified a skill or standard that over 50% of the students have not mastered. The plan includes the skill or standard to be retaught, how it will be retaught, and when it will be retaught. The second part of the TIPs is a small group component in which teachers identify a specific skill or standard that certain individual students are struggling to master. This part of the plan names the students to be retaught and the teacher explicitly describes how and when the skill will be retaught over the next month.

Since the implementation of a collaborative digital data tracking log and TIPs, there have been notable gains in student learning and state test scores. Individual student successes and successful teaching strategies are openly shared and celebrated on Data Days each month in reflection of the previous month's TIPs. Additionally, teachers are much more willing to share resources and successful strategies than ever before.