

GEORGIA LIGHTHOUSE SCHOOLS TO WATCH PICKENS COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL—VISITOR'S GUIDE

Pickens County Middle School



Designated in 2009;

Pickens County Middle School • District – Pickens County Schools • County – Pickens County • State – Georgia • Principal Chris LeMieux • School Address – 1802 Refuge Road • Phone - (706) 253-1830 Fax – (706) 253-1835 E-mail – chrismieux@pickens.k12.ga.us

2009-2010 School Statistics

Community: Rural North Georgia Mountains
Enrollment: 518

Grade Levels: 6-8

School Schedule: 4 core academic periods (75 minutes), 2 connection periods (45 minutes) and a remediation/enrichment period (25 minutes)

Student Demographics

2%	Hispanic
95%	White
1%	African American
1%	Multiracial
1%	Asian
41%	Free/Reduced Lunch
<1%	English Learners
15%	Gifted Education Participants
12%	Special Education Participants

2006 AYP: Met/Distinguished Title I School

2007 AYP: Met/Distinguished Title I School

2008 AYP: Did Not Meet (Made 5 out of 6 categories except SWD Math)

2009 AYP: Met AYP

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

Narrative – Academic Excellence

Pickens County Middle School (PCMS) has demonstrated tremendous academic improvement over the past five years. In the first school year (2002-2003) that the Georgia Department of Education posted Academic Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) data, only 77 percent of the PCMS student body met or exceeded the standards for CRCT Reading/Language Arts sections. The 2007-2008 CRCT Reading/Language Arts results indicated that 92.5 percent of PCMS students met or exceeded standards (15.5 point gain). Likewise, PCMS students demonstrated significant gains in the area of mathematics. In 2002-2003, only 65 percent of the PCMS student body met or exceeded standards on the CRCT math section. However, 86 percent (90.5 percent after 8th grade retest) of the PCMS student body met or exceeded standards on the 2009 CRCT math section (31 point gain) that contained the more rigorous Georgia Performance Standards in all three grade levels.

PCMS takes great pride in its recent Title I Distinguished School status as a result of making adequate yearly progress (AYP) for five consecutive years (2002 - 2007.) Less than twenty percent of all Georgia public middle schools can claim five consecutive years of AYP during that time period. For the 2007-2008 school year PCMS

outperformed the state in all state academic areas, including the eighth grade writing test. Some of the most recent academic accomplishments at PCMS include:

- Selected by the Georgia Partnership in Excellence in Education (GPEE) as the North Georgia middle school to be visited by the 16th Annual GPEE Bus Trip Across Georgia (2008)
- Awarded by the Georgia Middle School Association (GMSA) the 2008 Georgia Beacon School To Watch
- 2008 Fall Berry College Math Contest (6th grade team champions)
- 2008 First Lego League Robotics Team region champion and 3rd place at state championship held at Georgia Tech
- 2007 and 2009 Spring Berry College Math Contest (6th grade team champions)
- 2007 7th Grade Georgia Mathematics League (third place in region)
- Past history of Sassafras student winners (local writing competition)
- 2007 Lions Club state writing competition winners (1st and 2nd place)
- PCMS Author's Tea (annual school recognition for exemplary writing)
- 2007 Title I Distinguished School status for five consecutive years of Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP)
- Past state and region champions for the Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl
- Annual school-wide literary and fine arts fair entitled Festival of Arts occurs in the spring

Developmental Responsiveness

Narrative – Developmental Responsiveness

Students at Pickens County Middle School have equal access to key knowledge and activities. Every effort is made to avoid any discrimination. Listed below are a few examples of developmental responsiveness:

- Students are heterogeneously grouped in all content areas and Connection classes (except for those students identified as gifted and talented.) This type of grouping is based on the latest effective schools research with regard to academic grouping that promotes the best student achievement and behavior.
- Unless outlined in an individualized educational plan (IEP), all students are taught at their respective grade-level state standards.
- All students are eligible for school-wide Good Behavior and Attendance Field Days, Renaissance Academics Celebrations, Honors Day, Dragon Scales for EBIS rewards store, and Dragon Bucks for the PTO Dragon Store, which are all student rewards for good student behavior, attendance, and academics.
- PCMS has an abundance of athletic activities with which students can become involved in during the school year. Sport activities such as football, cross-country, cheerleading, dance team, softball, basketball, wrestling, soccer, golf, and tennis exist at PCMS for the students.
- Many clubs are also offered to the students during the morning and afternoon hours. These clubs are listed in the *Student Code of Conduct* book and include Youth Action Council or YouthAct, Leo Club, Art Club, Future Farmers of America (FFA), Yearbook staff, Dragon News Network of DNN (student news team), Dragon Ledger (student newspaper), Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl, Math Dragons (math competition teams), First Lego League Robotics Team, Chess Club, Drama Club, School Safety Patrol, Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), Boys and Girls Club, and Dance team.
- PCMS provides free After School Tutoring to all interested students, along with free bus transportation home from school on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the school year.
- The PCMS band is a dynamic and year-long activity for the students. The PCMS band is consistently recognized as one of the best middle school band programs in Georgia. All 6th graders are introduced to instrumental and vocal music during their first nine weeks at PCMS.

- Eligible students are also encouraged to attend overnight field trips such as the 4-H Jekyll Island center in seventh grade and Washington, D.C. in eighth grade. No student is denied these field trips due to a lack of personal funding.

Social Equity

Narrative – Social Equity

Pickens County Middle School (PCMS) administration and faculty has a firm belief in the importance of shared leadership and social equity to govern the daily operations of the school and also to develop the long term strategic planning for the school. Examples of social equity at PCMS include:

- Students are allowed to provide school improvement input and feedback bi-monthly to the school administration through their participation in the Youth Action Council (YouthAct) meeting.
- The school has an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) Executive Council and School Advisory Council that meets once a month after school with the principal to discuss school initiatives.
- PCMS has adopted the Pickens County Board of Education’s vision statement - “Graduation for All.” The PCMS faculty and staff make every effort to help all PCMS students, regardless of their ability or background to accomplish the goal of a high school diploma. The middle school graduation coach is currently working closely with the director of Pickens County’s Family Connections to determine the needs of the families and students currently residing in Pickens County.
- Parent and teacher involvement activities such as orientation meetings, open houses, PTO functions, school advisory council meetings, Annual Title I Parent meetings, Pickens County Reading Council functions, sporting events, band/chorus concerts, and booster club meetings allow the faculty, support staff, and community/business partners to communicate with each other information regarding the needs of the students.
- The PCMS faculty and staff will continue its professional learning with regard to differentiation of instruction for all students.

Organizational Supports

Narrative – Organizational Structures and Processes

The current principal, Dr. Chris LeMieux, has been serving as the principal at Pickens County Middle School for the past nine school years. The school administration has expanded the capacity for school governance beyond the principal’s office to several teacher, staff, student, parent, and community leadership groups. PCMS has the following stakeholder leadership groups that help the school administration supervise the daily operations, long term strategic planning, and school improvement plan:

- School Improvement Leadership Team – This leadership team is comprised of the school administration, grade-level chairs, curriculum chairs, graduation coach, special education lead teacher, gifted education lead teacher, counselor, and media specialist. The team meets several times during the school year to discuss the school improvement plan.
- Grade-level Chairs – Each grade level is lead by a teacher who conducts weekly meetings to discuss grade-level concerns and ideas for improvement.
- Curriculum Chairs - Each curriculum area (language arts/reading, math, science, and social studies) is lead by a teacher who conducts monthly or quarterly meetings to discuss curriculum concerns and ideas for improvement in a vertical and horizontal format.

- School Advisory Council (SAC) – This group is comprised of two parent representatives, two business representatives, two teacher representatives, and one administrative representative. The SAC meets once a month during the school year to discuss school improvement issues.
- Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) – This group is comprised of a representative from special education, Connections, 6th grade, 7th grade, 8th grade and the school administration. The FAC meets every month with the principal to discuss faculty morale concerns and ideas for improvement.
- Better Seeker (or Graduation for All) Teams – This special team created by the FAC is organized to solve a specific problem that the school needs to be addressed in order to improve student achievement or staff morale.
- Youth Action Council (YouthAct) – This student leadership group is made up of student representatives from each advocacy groups (i.e. homeroom). The YouthAct meets on a bi-monthly basis to discuss student ideas for school improvement and community service projects.
- School Safety Patrol – This student organization works closely with the school administration on a daily basis to help supervise student safety at school. The safety patrol is lead by a captain and lieutenant jointly appointed by the previous captain and approved by the principal.
- Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) – The PTO executive council is made up of parent and teacher members that meet monthly with the school administration to discuss ways to support school initiatives.
- Booster Clubs – The school administration meets on a regular basis with the officers of the different booster clubs to discuss ways to support the school. Boosters at PCMS include band, academic competition teams, and the different sports programs.
- Family Connections – The Family Connections director meets with the graduation coach, school nurse, and principal to discuss ways to improve the Boys and Girls Club and Life Skills classes.
- Mountain Mentors – The Mountain Mentors director meets with the school administration and school counselor to discuss the mentoring program at PCMS.
- Attendance Protocol Support Team – This leadership team is made up of school administrators, local court judges, local support agencies, graduation coach, and parents and meets on a regular basis to discuss ways to improve student attendance at the schools.

Other organizational structures and processes in place at PCMS to support and enhance student learning are listed below:

- PCMS incorporates a research-based and systematic discipline approach entitled Effective Behavior and Instruction Support (EBIS) team to supervise the school-wide discipline plan. The EBIS team has been in placed at PCMS for the past seven years, and a team of teachers and support staff meet bi-monthly to monitor the school's overall discipline data. The EBIS team helps the school administration to make decisions relating to school improvement with regard to school morale and safety concerns. This school year (2008-09), the EBIS team will supervise the school's character education program entitled CARES (Character Education/Advocacy/Remediation/Enrichment/ and School Spirit) and the Olweus's Anti-Bullying training with the faculty and student body.
- PCMS students have been divided into gender-based advocacy groups that will meet at least once a week for twenty-five minutes to discuss character education topics and individual student concerns with their teacher advocates. Student representatives for each advocacy group will meet with the principal each week to discuss student concerns and ideas for school improvement.
- Local businesses and service organizations such as the Jasper Lions Club, Rotary Club of Jasper, and the Jasper Optimist Club provide monetary and human resources for the Youth Enrichment Activity Fund to support students who cannot afford school field trips and cultural events at the school.