

Polk County High School



School Improvement Plan – 2026-2027 School Year

School Narrative:

Polk County High School is a comprehensive public high school located in Columbus, North Carolina, serving students from communities throughout Polk County. The school opened in the fall of 1992 following the consolidation of Tryon High School and Polk Central High School, bringing together students from across the county under the Wolverine identity. The first graduating class of Polk County High School completed school in 1993. Since that time, PCHS has developed a strong tradition of academic achievement, athletics, Career and Technical Education, agriculture, fine arts, and extracurricular involvement. As the county's primary traditional high school, PCHS has deep connections to the families and communities it serves.

PCHS is a rural high school serving approximately 580 students in grades 9–12. Most recent data shows a demographic breakdown of approximately, 73% White, 17% Hispanic, 5% Black, and 5% multiracial or other racial/ethnic groups. The school culture reflects the close-knit nature of Polk County, with strong community support and pride in the Wolverine identity. PCHS strives to provide students with a well-rounded high school experience through rigorous academics, CTE programs, college/career pathways, athletics, arts, clubs, and leadership opportunities. The school maintains a student-centered culture built around strong relationships, high expectations, and a shared commitment to doing what is best for students.

2025-2026 Reporting Data:

English II EOC - 66.2% proficient (-1.2 from 2024-2025)

Math I EOC - 47.0% proficient (+11.7 from 2024-2025)

Math III EOC - 75.7% proficient (+5.0 from 2024-2025)

Biology EOC - 50.8% proficient (+2.0 from 2024-2025)

ACT/Work Keys Combined - 57.4% proficient

4 Year Graduation Rate - 91.0%

School Growth Score - 57.9

Goal #1

By the end of the 2026-2027 school year, at least 70% of tested students will be proficient on the English II EOC; at least 53% of tested students will be proficient on the Math I EOC; and at least 60% of tested students will be proficient on the Biology EOC.

Action Steps

- ☐ Maintain a master schedule that protects core instructional time and allows for minimal disruptions
- ☐ Implement department level PLCs with core instructional courses that focus on standards alignment
- ☐ Provide support for core instructional courses during the 30 minute Advocate time on a rotational basis
- ☐ Use NC Check-Ins assessments to check for understanding and guide instruction
- ☐ Use of EVAAS data to examine subgroups to identify potential opportunities for focused interventions and adjustments to instructional practices.
- ☐ Establish strategic Math I & Math III subgroups for targeted support during Advocate time.
- ☐ Work with EC teachers and specialists to ensure that classroom interventions are being implemented and that those students receive additional targeted, evidence-based support if not making progress on their goals.
- ☐ Work with Math PLC and the middle school to ensure vertical alignment of instructional standards allowing for student success and growth.
- ☐ Review of student attendance, behavior, health, grades, and other concerns by our Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) team and implementation of interventions based on their recommendations and review of those concerns.

Goal #2

By the end of the 2026-2027 school year, at least 65% of students will be proficient on the combined ACT/ACT Work Keys exams showing they are prepared to enter the workforce or post-secondary education.

Action Steps

- ☐ Implement ACT prep into core instructional courses
- ☐ Implement ACT prep and Work Keys prep into junior and senior advocate courses
- ☐ Implement Work Keys prep into our CTE courses and programs
- ☐ Ensure CTE programs are aligned with state standards
- ☐ Ensure core instruction is following NC standard course of study through departmental PLCs
- ☐ Utilize PreACT scores to create targeted groups for ACT support
- ☐ Utilize registration and scheduling practices to ensure most students are CTE completers
- ☐ Utilize Counselors and College Advisor to promote additional exposure to PSAT/PreACT/ ACT/SAT before taking the state required ACT
- ☐ Incorporate a test taking strategies crash course into Advocate time

GOAL #3

By the end of the 2026-2027 school year, at least 70% of staff will agree with the statements around Professional Development in a mock internal survey modeled after the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey.

Action Steps

- ☐ Protect teacher planning time by minimizing interruptions and using meetings intentionally to maximize collaboration and professional learning.
- ☐ Encourage informal meetings during lunch for staff as often as possible based scheduling availability.
- ☐ Plan staff led PD for district required workdays.
- ☐ Recognize good instructional practices and encourage peer observations of teachers consistently employing those practices.
- ☐ Required semester informal peer observations by all certified staff to encourage conversations around instructional practices.
- ☐ Provide opportunities for staff members who attend professional learning to share key takeaways and effective practices with colleagues, fostering teacher leadership.
- ☐ Use Advocate time to implement departmental led programs that support teachers and students.
- ☐ Incorporate regular PLCs to encourage relationships, strengthen community, and support staff engagement in whole school and departmental needs.
- ☐ Conduct periodic Teacher Working Conditions (TWC) pulse surveys throughout the school year to monitor staff perceptions, identify areas for growth, and guide continuous improvement efforts.
- ☐ Focus on vertical alignment and support for standards based instruction
- ☐ Provide relevant and timely information concerning district, state, and outside organizations professional development and encourage staff participation
- ☐ Encourage all continuing licensed teachers to take the mentor course to provide relevant and direct support to all BTs no matter the content area

School Improvement Team Meeting Dates
• August 5, 2026 • September 23, 2026 • October 21, 2026 • November 18, 2026 • December 16, 2026 • January 20, 2027 • February 17, 2027 • March 17, 2027 • April 21, 2027 • May 25, 2027

School Improvement Team Members
Team Members/Role
Scott Hopper, Principal
Cody Ezell, Assistant Principal
Amanda Irvin, Assistant Principal
Meghan Mauldin, Counselor
Jennifer Huskey, School Nurse
Caitlin Williams, Math Teacher
Ashley Gilbert, CTE Teacher
Kimberly Benson, Music Teacher
Robert Twiggs, Science Teacher
Angie McCammon, ELA Teacher
Emanuel Medrano, Foreign Language Teacher
Hannah Elwell, Social Studies Teacher
Austin Elwell, EC Teacher