

Polk County Early College 2022-2023 School Improvement Plan

District's Mission Statement:

Students will graduate as responsible citizens prepared to succeed in higher education or the career of their choice.

School's Mission Statement:

The mission of Polk County Early College is to graduate confident, ethically responsible, lifelong learners who are prepared to succeed in higher education and in the changing world beyond.

College's Mission Statement:

As an integral community partner, Isothermal Community College exists to improve life through learning by providing innovative, affordable educational programs and inclusive opportunities for personal, professional, economic, and cultural development.

School Profile

In partnership with Isothermal Community College (ICC), Polk County Early College (PCEC) is among the North Carolina Public Schools' network of Cooperative Innovative High Schools (CIHS). As such, we are a student-centered, public high school in which students engage in an accelerated academic program in technology-integrated classrooms focused on a small, supportive, individualized learning environment. In our four-year program, students typically obtain an associate degree or another college credential-without incurring tuition or textbooks costs to families-along with the high school diploma. The expectation is that every student will graduate ready for college, careers, and life.

Student Performance Data To realize our vision of preparing students for college and careers, we closely monitor and respond to student performance data including, but not limited to, End-of-Course (EOC), Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) data and ACT outcomes. In addition to supporting all of our students in proficiency and performance at or above grade level, we work toward growth over time. Additional indicators of student success include cohort graduation rate, ACT composite scores, and NC School Report Card grade. The 2022-2023 School Improvement Plan (SIP) cycle will continue to focus on data driven performance, but will shift to a different perspective on each to better align with the early college mission. Likewise, we will continue to attend to our students' college performance but with a shift in focus from placement test scores to timely and successful completion of foundational college courses.

Student and Community Characteristics In alignment with our purpose as a Cooperative Innovative High School, the PCEC target population is by majority first-generation college goers and students from socioeconomically challenged backgrounds. This is accomplished by way of the application process used to select students from the district's public, private, charter, and homeschools. We maintain a community and family atmosphere that fosters strong relationships among students, faculty, and staff, and partnerships with parents, and guardians.

School Characteristics Our freshmen enrollment has increased this year, but our overall enrollment suffers. This school year, we are serving 61 students, housed at Polk County Early College, with an additional 23 remote students. We have 3 students participating in fall sports. This number will continue to grow as notice of this opportunity expands. .

The concurrent high school and college programs are enabled by operation on a modified academic calendar that runs more closely to that of our higher education partner, Isothermal Community College. The school day is set up on a modified four-block schedule that allows students the flexibility to attend both their honors-level high school classes and their college classes.

In addition to teaching their high school courses, our instructors have been approved by ICC to teach college level courses. In addition to academic support provided by our school, students have access to resources and services at the ICC campus such as the Writing Center, the Tutoring Center, the Counseling Center, and the library. Instruction and academic support is provided by a faculty of four teachers: one science teacher, one social studies teacher, one math teacher and one English teacher. Additional staff includes a college liaison, and a technology coordinator/instructional liaison.

Desired Outcomes and Results The school's broad vision was developed through collaborative discussions among faculty, staff, and administration in alignment with the vision of Polk County Schools and to meet the needs of our students in their preparation for future roles in the workplace, the family, and the community. Success in these roles demands our attention locally, statewide, and nationally focus on individualized, targeted pathways that correlate with emerging an workforce and current college going trends.

Goals/Expectations

Goal 1: Recruitment and Retention of Students and Staff

Polk County Early College's goal is to have an enrollment of twenty students at each grade level. To succeed will require student visits, articles in polkstudents.org and local newspapers, and word of mouth. We hope to be able to visit the middle schools in our area this spring and improve enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year. Our focus is also on the retention of our current students. During this school year we plan to hold several parent events to promote parental involvement as we have in previous years.

Polk County Early College had a turnover in instructional staff last year, with hiring a new

math and english teacher. Our social studies teacher will be retiring at the end of this school year. PCEC is dedicated to hiring and retaining teachers prepared to teach college curriculum, along with honors high school courses. We are dedicated to providing students with the latest technology and innovative learning resources. This requires our ongoing commitment to up-to-date progressive professional development. To this end, the district and school administration have enabled us to expand professional development service offerings available to PCEC faculty and staff. Specifically, an expanded menu of services offered from the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), a professional development provider for NC's Cooperative and Innovative High Schools, will be accessed by PCEC teachers, instructional liaisons, college liaisons, and administrators. These opportunities are offered through CIHS Leaders Webinars. The local professional development calendar includes district-wide professional development days and school professional development on current technology topics.

PCEC is dedicated to hiring and retaining teachers prepared to teach college curriculum, along with honors high school courses. The school administration working in conjunction with the Personnel Department of Polk County Schools will contact colleges and universities, and attend job fairs across North Carolina.

Goal 2: Encouraging completion of additional Certificates with their Associate's Degree
Polk County Early College students working toward an Associates degree will have to take six credits in the Universal General Education Transfer Component (UGETC) and maintain a C or better during their Freshman year. This is required in order to advance in a timely manner to the gateway English courses (i.e. ENG 111, ENG 112) and access the remaining course requirements and electives within the Associates Degree. The completion of the six credits with at least a 2.8 College GPA replaces the need for an English placement test for our students to take college courses, and allows our students to take ENG 111 and ENG 112 their sophomore year.

The courses we recommend for our students are ART 111- Art Appreciation and MUS 110- Music Appreciation, both of which are 3 credits each, thus completing the six UGETC credits requirement. An alternate course is COM 231- Public Speaking.

In order to access the gateway Math courses (i.e. MAT 143, MAT 152), students need to have either completed NC Math 3 with a B or better, or be a Junior or Senior and have an unweighted high school GPA greater than 2.8. This enables our students to begin completing their math requirements (ideally) in their Junior year, after completing their required high school math courses.

In addition, students who take the ACT or PreACT and score the following scores are able to place directly into the gateway English and Math courses:

English: 18 or greater

Reading: 22 or greater

Math: 22 or greater

When enrolled in a Cooperative Innovative High School (CIHS), students work to complete either an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science. As they are completing their Associates, students also have the opportunity to work towards (and in most cases) and complete an additional certificate in a specific program. For example, students can work towards a Business Administration certificate, a Business Economics certificate, an Information Technology Python Programming certificate, or a Medical Office Administration certificate (these are a few examples). These certificates are generally 12-18 credits. Some of the requirements within these certificates are fulfilled by courses from their Associates, but will require additional courses, thus increasing the amount of credits a student takes in a semester, providing an additional opportunity for students to learn time management and self-discipline. Our goal is to encourage students to add (and in most cases complete) a certificate to their academic plan while at Polk County Early College. Adding these additional certificates will provide more opportunities to explore future academic and career paths as well as adding additional credentials at graduation.

Goal 3: Developing/Improving Opportunities for Student Engagement

Everyone's lives have been changed as a result of the pandemic. Children (and adults) have had very little social interaction or engagement in meaningful relationships. It is more important than ever for students to socially reconnect with their peers and restore our school climate as we navigate this new normal. Polk County Early College faculty and staff have joined with our local Kiwanis Club to create a Key Club, allowing for volunteer activities in our community. The Walk of Remembrance, supporting mental health awareness is another volunteer activity to allow for community involvement. Our science students are collecting data for the Backyard Bird Count in conjunction with Project Explore and the North Carolina Arboretum. Noah Woods, an employee of Polk County Community Foundation, will be a visiting guest to assist students with grant writing. Inviting guest artists will encourage students to write both academically and informally to encourage writing in different genres.

The more that teachers can continue to make connections, to be predictable, to understand what it is that students may need, troubleshoot with them, give them help, and figure out ways to give them support, is going to be important. Our school is set up with structures for actively engaging families, and communicating with families to ensure the success of our students.

PCEC School Improvement Team will be meeting bi-monthly to assess current student, family and teacher needs.

2022-2023 PCEC School Improvement Plan

Approvals

Approved by Staff:

Date of Preliminary Approval by Faculty and Staff: 10/3/22

Date of Final Approval by Faculty and Staff: 10/4/2022

Director's Signature: Mary M. Greene 10/4/2022

School Action Plan Review Date:

December 9, 2022

January 6, 2023

March 10, 2023

May 15, 2023

2021-2022 PCEC School Improvement Plan

The following members collaborated to develop the School Action Plan:

Name	Position or Role	Signature	Date
Mary M. Greene	Director	<i>Mary M. Greene</i>	10/4/2022
Josh Money	Instructional Liaison/ Technology Coordinator	<i>Joshua D. Money</i>	10/4/2022
Kathleen Abraham SIP Team Leader	Science Instructor	<i>Kathleen Abraham</i>	10/4/2022
Vanessa Garcia	Parent Representative	<i>Vanessa Garcia</i>	10/4/2022
Mario Rodriguez	Student Representative	<i>Mario Rodriguez</i>	10/4/2022