2005-2006 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

U.S. Department	of Education	
Type of School:	Middle (6 – 8)	
Name of Principal:	Mr. Ray Honeycutt	
Official School Name:	Pocahontas Middle School	
School Mailing Address:	12000 Three Chopt Road Richmond, Virginia 23233-1134	
School Code Number:	043	
Telephone:	(804) 364-0830	Fax: (804) 364-0848
Website/URL:	http://henrico.k12.va.us	E-mail rehoneyc@henrico.k12.va.us
	mation in this application, including the my knowledge all information is accura	e eligibility requirements on page 2, and ate.
		Date
(Principal's Signature)		
Name of Superintendent:	Mr. Frederick S. Morton IV	
District Name:	Henrico County	Telephone: (804) 652-3720
	mation in this application, including the my knowledge it is accurate.	e eligibility requirements on page 2, and
		Date
(Superintendent's Signatu	re)	
Name of School Board Cl	nairperson: Mr. Stuart P. Myers	
	mation in this package, including the el my knowledge it is accurate.	ligibility requirements on page 2, and
		_ Date
(School Board Chairperso	on's Signature)	

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

[Include this page in the school's application as page 2.]

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

- 1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
- 2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2005-2006 school year.
- 3. If the school includes grade 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.
- 4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2000 and has not received the 2003, 2004, or 2005 *No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools Award*.
- 5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
- 6. 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 the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
- 7. 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.
- 8. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

Rural

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1.	Number of schools in the district:	
2.	District Per Pupil Expenditure:	<u>\$7,105</u>
	Average State Per Pupil Expenditure:	<u>\$8,552</u>
SCI	HOOL (To be completed by all schools)	
3.	Category that best describes the area w	where the school is located:
	 Urban or large central city Suburban school with characte Suburban Small city or town in a rural ar 	eristics typical of an urban area

4. 3 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

N/A If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of	# of	Grade		Grade	# of	# of	Grade
	Males	Female	es Total			Males	Females	Total
PreK					7	158	142	300
K					8	155	144	299
1					9			
2					10			
3					11			
4					12			
5					Other			
6	132	118	250					
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL \rightarrow						849		

 7. 	Use only t	rnover, or mobility rate, d	88	tino slander an/Alaskan Native nic composition of t%	
		(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the	14	
		(2)	end of the year. Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	16	
		(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	30	
		(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	849	
		(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.0353356	
		(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4	
8.	Number of	f languages represented: _		al Number Limited luese, Arabic, Russi	
9.	Students e	ligible for free/reduced-pr	riced meals: 2_%		
	Tot	al number students who q	ualify:17		

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10.	Students receiving special education service		umber of Students Served			
	Indicate below the number of students with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.	-	-			
		2_Visual Impairment Including Blindness				
11.	Indicate number of full-time and part-time s	taff members in each Number of	-			
		Full-time	Part-Time			
	Administrator(s)	3				
	Classroom teachers	43	4			
	Special resource teachers/specialists	17				
	Paraprofessionals Support staff	<u>5</u> 12	<u>7</u> <u>1</u>			
	Total number	80				
12.	Average school student-"classroom teacher' students in the school divided by the FTE of					
13.	Show the attendance patterns of teachers and defined by the state. The student drop-off rastudents and the number of exiting students the number of exiting students from the numnumber of entering students; multiply by 10 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy by middle and high schools need to supply drop rates.	ate is the difference before the same cohorn the same cohorn ber of entering stude to get the percentage between the dropout	between the number of entering rt. (From the same cohort, subtract ents; divide that number by the ge drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in rate and the drop-off rate. Only			

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	95%	92%	94%	94%	94%
Teacher turnover rate	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Student dropout rate (middle/high)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Student drop-off rate (high school)	%	%	%	%	%

PART III - SUMMARY

Pocahontas Middle School is located in suburban Henrico County, just west of Richmond, the capital of Virginia. In a relatively short period of time, the school has developed a proud tradition for excellence. Opened in February 2000 with 600 students, the school today has approximately 850 students and 75 staff members. The students represent varied cultures and bring unique backgrounds to the classrooms. With a highly trained and energetic teaching staff, Pocahontas offers an exciting and enriched learning environment. The students routinely score high marks in all areas of assessment. The reason for this success is not a secret; hard work, dedication, and a strong desire for excellence combine to make this vision happen. Inclusion, enjoyment of learning, and exploration are reflected throughout the school.

Pocahontas Middle School is devoted to the development of the whole child. Respect, Integrity, Commitment, and Community represent the cornerstone principles of this school's philosophy. The uniqueness and dedication of the faculty, staff, and students characterize the fundamental strength of this learning environment.

The school believes that successful students are the shared responsibility of the school, the families, the community, and the children themselves. The Pocahontas learning experience will prepare students for living successfully and responsibly in the 21st century.

Pocahontas Middle actively pursues its mission to help each child:

- Experience a varied, engaging, and challenging course of study;
- Receive instruction in an environment fostering individual learning styles that promote achievement and success;
- Utilize state of the art technology tools and software;
- Engage in meaningful research, thus developing strong investigative skills;
- Think critically and apply problem-solving strategies;
- Learn to appreciate individual talents and abilities;
- Receive experiences designed to foster respect, dignity, and a sense of fairness for all;
- Develop a sense of balance within the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual self; and
- Learn in a safe environment characterized by a commitment from all participants to respect individual differences, act with integrity, and care for and support their community with honor and service.

In addition to excellent teachers, dedicated student learners, and supportive parents and community, Pocahontas enjoys a first-rate facility that supports all aspects of development for students in the middle years. Students enjoy varied offerings in the areas of fine and technical arts, music, sports, intramural, and club activities.

Decision making is a shared responsibility at the school. The Leadership Team is made up of teachers and administrators who regularly meet and discuss school practices and policies. From these discussions plans are developed and implemented. School goals and issues are routinely discussed with the representatives from the student government council and the school's PTA Executive Board. The goal is shared ownership of decisions; when this goal is accomplished the school experiences success.

Although the majority of students score significantly above state averages, the school is very cognizant of students who may struggle. An individual plan for improvement is written for any student who is performing below average; the plan evaluates current and past methodologies, student strengths, instructional strategies, and multiple sources of data. The school, parents, and students are partners in this process.

Part IV Indicators of Academic Success

1. School Assessment Results

Pocahontas Middle School participates fully in the Commonwealth of Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment program. Additionally, the school benefits from assessment data collected through the administration of the Henrico Assessment (HA) tests. Students not tested through SOL are administered the HA. Eighth-grade students take SOL tests in English, mathematics, science and civics. Students taking high school credit courses in algebra, geometry, world history and/or Earth science also take an end-of-course test in each class completed. SOL scores are reported on a scale from 0-600. Proficiency is demonstrated by a score of 400 plus. Scores of 500 or above represent advanced proficiency.

The school has each year met the state's criteria for full accreditation and the provisions for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as established by the standards of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). The 2005 mean pass rates for Grade 8 ranged from 94% to 99% in the four core subject areas. One hundred percent of all students taking end-of-course and alternative assessments were successful. Data analyzed over the past five years indicate that all mean pass rates fell between 94% and 100%. No subject area experienced a statistically significant change over the five-year period.

Pocahontas Middle School enjoys the benefits of a stable learning environment. Based on data provided by the Henrico County Public Schools department of research and planning, 94% of the students live in two-parent families; 87% of the eighth graders completing the 2004-2005 school year attended Pocahontas Middle for all three years; and the attendance rate for each of the past two years has been 97%. The data also indicate that the correlation between the sixth grade ability scores (Otis-Lennon) and achievement scores (Stanford 9) continues to show a positive gain. There was an 11-point positive difference between ability (73) and achievement (84) percentiles in 2003-2004 and a 24-point positive difference in 2004-2005 (percentile scores of 61 and 85, respectively).

The state Web site used to complete this document is www.pen.k12.va.us/. Additional data are from the HCPS department of research and planning.

2. Use of Assessment Data to Improve Student and School Performance

An equally important component of Pocahontas Middle School's assessment program is the use of data derived from the results. The school's leadership team has a priority of making data-driven decisions. Teacher-constructed tests, curriculum-based assessments, online quizzes and student-produced portfolios supplement the performance data available to evaluate progress. Each year this collection of data is used to develop the school's Continuous Improvement Plan. Teams of teachers and other professional staff analyze each subject area and the performance of student subgroups in the area. Categories of strength and need are identified and a plan is developed. Traditionally the school scores above the 90th percentile in all tested areas. Two challenges exist within this area of strength. The first is identifying and planning remediation for students who are not successful. The second is stretching the performance of successful students to increase the number who achieve advanced proficiency on the SOL tests.

To promote success with the curriculum, teachers continually evaluate student performance as measured against the stated curriculum and SOL objectives. A Plan of Action is developed for any student who is performing in the D or F range at the end of any marking period. The classroom teacher, counselor, and an administrator jointly develop these plans. The plan is a working document that becomes the compass for improvement and success. Parents and students are essential partners; their involvement is key to the plan's success.

Increasing the number of students earning advanced scores on the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests is a yearly goal for all teachers. With a focus on curriculum extension, utilizing pre- and post-tests, teachers offer instruction that is application driven. Extending the curriculum in this manner emphasizes the students' higher level thinking capabilities, ultimately increasing the number of advanced scorers.

3. Communication of Student Performance

Pocahontas Middle School utilizes a variety of means to communicate student performance and weekly progress. Every student is provided with an "agenda," or assignment book, and is instructed on the importance of using this tool not only to record assignments but also to share important information about daily learning activities and requirements with parents/guardians. The agenda book is an excellent tool for teachers and parents to communicate important points of interest with regard to a student's assignments and performance. Teachers also update students' grades on a weekly basis and post them through an online system that allows parents/guardians to analyze their students' performance on each assignment for every class. This online system provides a means for parents and children to communicate about classroom performance and to communicate with teachers through email addresses that are linked to each class. Teachers also regularly provide performance feedback to students through the use of teacher-created quizzes and tests (designed to measure a student's understanding of material being presented for each SOL), which help prepare students for state-wide testing in the spring. Teachers and school counselors work together to prepare students for state-wide tests (as well as standardized tests) and regularly send communications home regarding test preparation and tips available on web pages.

Student progress is disseminated and highlighted through quarterly interim reports and report cards, monthly PTA newsletters, a quarterly student-produced newspaper, parent-teacher conferences, weekly announcements and the school web site. Samples of student work are displayed proudly throughout the building, highlighting the various talents and successes. Events at Pocahontas Middle School have been spotlighted on the county's television channel, including highlights of special visitors to the school as well as special projects in which the student body has been involved.

Results of state assessments are communicated to students and parents through individual score reports, PTA meetings and newsletters, the Virginia School Report Card, and the Henrico County Public Schools website (http://henrico.k12.va.us/).

4. Sharing School Successes

As a relatively new school, Pocahontas Middle has always operated with an open-door policy. The school has hosted numerous visitors, ranging from local to nationally recognized personalities with a myriad of personal and professional backgrounds. The summative effect of each visit is an opportunity to share the school's successes and to enhance the school's reputation as an open venue for learning. Recent visitors include Paul Galanti, former Vietnam POW; Paul Fayerman, Holocaust survivor and founder of Baldwin Brass Company; Allen and Helena Zimm, Holocaust survivors; Rodman Philbrick, young adult writer; and, Dut Yai, one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan." Executives from Apple Computer routinely visit the school to observe and showcase the Henrico County Public Schools' Teaching and Learning Initiative. The feedback from these events is always positive and supports the school's mission statement.

From the standpoint of educational outreach, the staff is actively involved in sharing best practices. A sampling of the staff's recent participation includes presentations to the Virginia Association of Teachers of English, Virginia State Board of Education SOL Content Review Committee, Virginia Art Educators Association, Fourteenth Annual Symposium on Professional Collaboration and Inclusion Education, All-County and All-District Chorus Directorships as well as regional technology conferences and numerous in-service Summer and Winter Institute workshops and classes.

Part V - Curriculum and Instruction

1. Outline of Curriculum

The social studies curriculum includes United States and world history, geography, civics, and economics. Utilizing school and community resources, students in each grade level experience "history alive." SOL-centered lessons incorporate technology, research, interdisciplinary activities, and cooperative and interactive learning. For further enrichment, guest speakers include experts from the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, government officials, service men and women, Holocaust survivors, and the school resource officer. Although many field trips provide experiential learning outside the classroom, students also utilize technology in the classroom to participate in online field trips and Web quests.

The English curriculum guides students through the process of writing and reading in a variety of genres and on a variety of themes relevant to middle schoolers. Students learn to recognize and express distinctive voices as writers, readers, speakers, and listeners. In order to develop these skills, students are engaged in a variety of projects utilizing multimedia and technology, research methods, library skills, and daily journal writing and writers' workshops. The goal is for students to learn how to communicate effectively and to gain an appreciation and enjoyment of language.

The mathematics curriculum provides a progression of the six content strands for middle schools. Through ongoing assessment and teacher input, the students are grouped by learning capability and interest in order to maximize learning and provide differentiation of instruction. Various learning styles are addressed through the use of concrete and virtual materials. Calculators, short videos, computer software, and multimedia presentations are used for concept introduction, tutorials, and review. The curriculum is further enriched by Mathematics & Science Center lessons and participation in Math Field Day and Pi Day activities and events.

The science curriculum emphasizes both hands-on lessons and technology in the form of virtual labs, research, review, and assessments for student mastery of goals and objectives. Teachers relate the SOL to everyday life. Students enjoy on-site lessons from the Virginia Science Museum, Mathematics & Science Center of Richmond, and Henricopolis Soil and Water Conservation. A yearly field trip to the Henrico Reclamation Center gives students the opportunity to see science in action.

A wide variety of electives is offered to help develop a well-rounded middle school child. In addition to health and physical education classes, the school offers art, language, drama, journalism, yearbook, band, chorus, strings, technology, business, family and consumer science, and library and office aide classes.

The foreign language curriculum provides a variety of opportunities for students. Sixth-grade exploratory classes, ESL, and both Foundations and the first level of French, Spanish, and Latin are included in the foreign language program. Each language focuses on the acquisition of language skills with an emphasis on communication, as well as the exploration of geography, customs, art, music, and literature.

The Art Department encourages visual communication. Art is explored through the study of art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and art production based on the Standards of Learning and designed with a cross-curricular approach. The art program offers year-long and exploratory classes at each grade level as well as Art I, an advanced high school credit class offered in eighth grade. In each class, the core of the art curriculum is based on hands-on exploration of various art media and techniques resulting in a variety of school and community art exhibitions.

2b. English

The English language curriculum at Pocahontas Middle School consists of grammar, vocabulary, writing, literature, and oral communication.

The grammar component of the English curriculum at Pocahontas Middle School includes instruction in parts of speech, phrases, clauses, mechanics, and usage. Rather than teaching grammar in isolation, teachers use the text, *Elements of Writing*, as well as literature, United Streaming video, and writing to strengthen students' grammar skills. Vocabulary is not explicitly taught through the use of a vocabulary workbook but also through literature, common study novels, research, and educational software programs. Writing is a year-round focus for students. Written communication skills are taught through daily journal writing and writer's workshops where students compose formal essays of persuasion, exposition, narration, comparison, and imagination. Literature instruction includes reading short stories, poetry, drama, novels, and nonfiction. The use of Reader's Theater helps students effectively analyze and understand the literature they read. In all English and reading classes, students complete research projects culminating in a variety of products, including oral presentations where they demonstrate their learning of both literature and oral communication skills.

The reading program emphasizes reading fluency and comprehension. Through systematic instruction and teacher modeling, students learn strategies to help them become independent readers. Teachers partner with the library staff to help students become effective library users. Students identify and read works from different literary genres and utilize the online catalog and databases for research and study.

3. Science

The science curriculum is organized around the Virginia Standards of Learning. Students' logic and reasoning skills are developed in physical, life, and Earth sciences with hands-on labs that are simultaneously fun and challenging.

Invigorating laboratory activities reinforce the curriculum and the students' higher-level thinking skills. Students are guided on methods of scientific investigation through conducting laboratory activities, participating in science fair opportunities, and utilizing state of the art technology. Collaborations with speakers and centers, including field trips to local museums and county facilities such as the Henrico County's Wastewater Treatment Plant, provide real-world applications of science. Programs from the Virginia Science Museum involve both parents and teachers while students engage actively in a variety of scientific investigations that extend learning. At the Henrico Reclamation Center, students observe the purification of water before it reenters the James River.

Technology plays an integral role in the science classrooms. Students use *United Streaming; Quia*, for assessment and review; *Inspiration*, a concept mapping tool; and *Brainpop*, a science- related tutorial. Using spreadsheets to report and analyze data, students document and draw conclusions. Online textbooks and specialized search engines such as *Netrekker* are used to document conclusions.

K12 Planet, an online grading program, and teacher Web pages are used to document student progress and facilitate parent-teacher communication. Web pages include daily agendas, homework assignments, helpful science links, and teacher e-mail contact information.

4. Instructional Methods to Improve Student Achievement

Pocahontas Middle School is rich in varied instructional methods. Teachers are trained in leading strategies and techniques in integrating technology, differentiating instruction, and keeping students

actively engaged. Methods include hands-on explorations to activate learning for the kinesthetic/tactile learners while utilizing diverse visual methodologies such as streaming videos for visual learners. Students have ample opportunities to showcase their talents and knowledge through projects that match their learning styles. Teachers craft lessons that include differentiated instruction techniques like tiered assignments, flexible grouping, and curriculum compacting. Students learn new material by analyzing real-world, non-routine problems, simulations, labs, learning centers, work stations and higher-level thinking activities. Students often work together as a team to solve problems and overcome challenges. Every student participates in ACE (Academics, Clubs, and Enrichment) a class that provides time for studying, enrichment, and remediation.

Pocahontas has embraced Henrico County's iBook initiative and incorporates the curricula with technology skills for success both in and outside school. Teachers constantly take advantage of the wireless connections by challenging students with Cyberhunts, Webquests, and research projects. Instruction includes varied sources including, but not limited to, streaming video from *UnitedStreaming*, *Quia*, *Brainpop*, and *Explore Learning*. For student research, the library media center offers wonderful opportunities to learn the intricate components of the research process including The Big 6 research model. Technology also enhances communication efforts by providing immediate feedback through email, posting grades weekly via K12 Planet, and maintaining a personalized Web page for homework and announcements. The combination of enthusiastic teachers' creating curriculum abundant with technology, differentiation, and hands-on learning makes Pocahontas Middle School a unique and model school for the 21st century.

5. Professional Development

As a learning community, Pocahontas Middle School is dedicated to the professional development of all members of its faculty. Opportunities for the improvement of teaching strategies allow faculty members of varying levels of experience to hone their expertise and delivery of instruction. Teachers take advantage of a variety of onsite classes, county institutes, and professional seminars at the state and national levels; they continually take the initiative to share learning with colleagues. The professional development activities within Pocahontas Middle allow teachers choices tailored to their individual needs and experience levels. The Pocahontas Mentoring Program, for example, ensures time for collaboration between new and veteran teachers, including peer observations. The benefits of such specialized instruction directly enhance each teacher's ability to support the school's improvement plan.

Pocahontas Middle also meets the challenge of Henrico County's technology initiative through purposeful and meaningful professional development. A full-time Technology Integration Instructor team teaches and provides both group and individual teacher instruction for technology integration. In planned and impromptu learning sessions, teachers work together to incorporate computer resources and tools such as United Streaming and other curricular software in order to create interesting, real-world classroom experiences. Training also includes instruction on the use of computer equipment and management tools such as K12 Planet, eClass, and web page development, thereby enhancing teacher, student, and parent relationships. The impact on student achievement results from exposure to expert knowledge, an increase in student interest, and an ability to differentiate lessons. The support system created through professional development at Pocahontas Middle nurtures teachers to become masters in their profession and provides them with the tools and resources to ensure success for all students.

Virginia's Report Form for NCLB Blue Ribbon Data English 8th Grade Pocahontas Middle School Harcourt 2002 - 2005

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003
Testing month			
SCHOOL SCORES*			
% At or Above Meets State Standards*	95	93	90
% At Exceeds State Standards*	43	50	38
Number of students tested	277	284	272
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed			
Percent of students alternatively assessed			
•			
SUBGROUP SCORES*			
1. White			
% At or Above Meets State Standards	95	94	89
% At Exceeds State Standards	45	50	39
Number of students tested	251	258	244
2. Disabled			
% At or Above Meets State Standards	74	71	64
% At Exceeds State Standards	12	2	10
Number of students tested	42	41	42
* The school has two subgroups with sufficient			
numbers to report.			

www.pen.k12.va.us/

Virginia's Report Form for NCLB Blue Ribbon Data Mathematics 8th Grade Pocahontas Middle School Harcourt 2002 - 2005

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003
Testing month			
SCHOOL SCORES*			
% At or Above Meets State Standards*	95	94	93
% At Exceeds State Standards*	51	39	48
Number of students tested	287	277	287
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed			
Percent of students alternatively assessed			
SUBGROUP SCORES*			
1. White			
% At or Above Meets State Standards	96	94	93
% At Exceeds State Standards	52	38	47
Number of students tested	264	252	255
2. Disabled			
% At or Above Meets State Standards	76	68	69
% At Exceeds State Standards	19	17	17
Number of students tested	42	41	42
* The school has two subgroups with sufficient			
numbers to report.			

www.pen.k12.va.us/