



Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

Pinecrest Academy of Nevada: Horizon Campus

Site Evaluation Report: March 12, 2025

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Links to Resources:

- [Nevada School Performance Framework \(NSPF\)](#)
- [SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Results](#)
- [SPCSA Organizational Performance Framework Results](#)
- [SPCSA Financial Performance Framework Results](#)
- [Best Practices](#)

Executive Summary

This Site Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school evaluation. Pursuant to [NRS 388A.223](#), the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all charters within the portfolio during the first, third, and fifth years of operation. This comprehensive analysis addresses the school's academic and organizational effectiveness.

An analysis of the school's academic and operational success is undertaken by reviewing the most current versions of the Nevada State Performance Framework (NSPF), the SPCSA Academic Performance Framework, and the SPCSA Organizational Performance Framework.

In addition, the Site Evaluation Team conducts classroom observations to assess both the classroom environment and the instructional techniques on the day of the evaluation. The purpose of these observations is to collect evidence using a rubric based on the [Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching](#). All classroom rating outcomes are displayed within this report. The overall numbers provide information about the general nature of instruction at a given school during the day of the site evaluation.

SPCSA staff conducts focus group interviews by speaking with school leaders, governing board members, family members, those employed as staff, and most importantly, students enrolled at the school. The information gained during these focus groups is summarized and included in this report.

The site evaluation is designed to focus on teaching and learning (e.g. curriculum, instruction, assessment, and services for at-risk students) as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The SPCSA uses the established criteria to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations during each year of their charter. Final Site Evaluation Reports are published to the SPCSA website and used in conjunction with other performance information to determine renewal decisions.

Site Evaluation Findings: Strengths

A summary of strengths as observed through academic achievement indicators, classroom observations, focus group feedback, and portions of the Organizational Performance Framework.

High star rankings

Pinecrest Academy Horizon boasts a four-star rating for its elementary school, missing a five-star rating by only one-half point. Academic performance is strong, with an English language arts (ELA) proficiency rate of 63.3% and a math proficiency rate of 74%, well above the district averages of 54.6% and 51.2%, respectively. Pinecrest Academy Horizon also earned 33 out of 35 points on the Nevada School Performance Framework¹ (NSPF) in the Growth Indicator section for the 2023-24 school year, indicating they are making great academic gains with their students and have quality tier-one² instruction in place.

Positive staff and school culture

Another strength of Pinecrest Academy Horizon is the positive staff and school culture, which fosters a supportive and uplifting environment for teachers and students. As leaders stated and staff members echoed, “Happiness is a key factor in our school, and we ensure that every educator is not only passionate about teaching but also enjoys being part of our team.” When hired, staff members become part of a culture that values mentorship, teamwork, and administrative support, as noted by the leadership and staff focus groups. According to leadership, any challenges or “off” days are quickly addressed with constructive conversation because Pinecrest Academy Horizon believes its students deserve educators who are at their best every day. SPCSA staff members noted that this strong, collaborative culture keeps teachers at the school, creating a stable and thriving learning environment for all.

Teacher clarity

Teachers at Pinecrest Academy Horizon demonstrated a high level of teacher clarity³ ensuring that students can effectively engage with and understand the material, as observed by SPCSA staff members. “Organizing and presenting lessons in a structured and intentional manner helps manage cognitive load, allowing students to absorb information more efficiently” (Paas, 2020). Educators were observed explaining course material clearly and concisely, making complex concepts more accessible. They encouraged critical thinking by guiding students to discover answers independently, fostering learning independence, as noted on page 21 under the indicator “engaging students in learning.” Teachers were observed showing how each topic fits into the broader curriculum, giving students a clear sense of direction and purpose in their learning journey.

¹ The Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) is Nevada’s public-school rating system designed by Nevadans for Nevada public schools and developed in accordance with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

² Tier 1 instruction is the anchor of all tiered instruction. It is provided to all students every day. During Tier 1 instruction, teachers use scientifically researched programs and evidence-based practices, curricula, and strategies that have been proven effective for most students.

³ Teacher clarity is a strategy that focuses on creating explicit learning intentions and success criteria. According to research, it has an effect size of 0.75, making it a highly effective teacher practice.

Strong individualized incentive systems for students

Another key strength of Pinecrest Academy Horizon is its individualized incentive system designed to motivate and reward students. The school encourages strong attendance and academic achievement through a variety of engaging incentives. Students can earn attendance bracelets, enjoy extra recess, and participate in special events to maintain excellent attendance. According to leadership and other focus groups, those who achieve an "A" in attendance on their report card are celebrated with a catered event featuring food, balloons, photo opportunities, and an orchestra performance. Furthermore, a school-wide carnival is held to recognize students who excel in blended learning, which is Pinecrest Horizons' version of online lessons, creating a fun and rewarding atmosphere that reinforces positive habits and academic success.

Strong special education program

Pinecrest Academy Horizon has established a strong special education program supported by a well-trained and adaptable staff. According to leadership, this dedicated team employed an organized and individualized approach to craft educational strategies that address each student's unique academic and behavioral needs and goals. SPCSA staff observed well-organized special education classrooms where timers were used for tasks and students received individualized instruction, which fostered an environment conducive to learning for students with special needs. Although meeting these diverse requirements presents challenges, the school tackles them head-on through a commitment to personalized learning and targeted support. This approach creates an inclusive environment where every student is empowered to thrive and reach their full potential.

Site Evaluation Findings: Challenges

A summary of challenges as observed through academic achievement indicators, classroom observations, focus group feedback, and portions of the Organizational Performance Framework.

Chronic absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism continues to be a challenge for Pinecrest Academy Horizon, with 19.4% of students classified as chronically absent, according to the 2023-24 NSPF. Missed instruction impacts student learning, engagement, and overall academic progress. The school is actively addressing this issue through targeted interventions, including increased family communication, education, and attendance incentives. Strengthening partnerships with families and the community remains a key strategy in improving student attendance and ensuring academic success.

Specialized populations

Pinecrest Academy Horizon faces challenges in serving specialized groups, especially with the increasing enrollment of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) and English language learners (EL). The 2023-24 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework⁴ revealed that the elementary school received only two out of five points for the school progress indicator related to EL enrollment. Similarly, the score for the enrollment measure of students on free and reduced lunch was also just two out of five points.

Increased student needs in special education

Pinecrest Academy Horizon faces challenges with rising special education enrollment and a limited pool of qualified teachers, as noted in their leadership site evaluation presentation. The school is actively addressing the issue by “growing its own” staff population with substitute teachers and instructional aides who have acquired special education teaching credentials.

⁴ The Academic Performance Framework incorporates corresponding school year NSPF school ratings under the NSPF Index Score indicator. The NSPF includes key performance measures such as academic achievement and proficiency, academic growth, English Learner (EL) growth, opportunity gaps, graduation rates, and chronic absenteeism, which address the requirements of NRS 388A.273.

Site Evaluation Findings: Recommendations

Recommended items are provided so charter schools may increase their school-wide performance and overall success. The Site Evaluation Team will follow up on these recommendations in preparation for the subsequent site evaluation.

Decrease chronic absenteeism rates

SPCSA staff recommend that Pinecrest Academy Horizon continue strategizing ways to address chronic absenteeism. “Chronic absenteeism significantly impacts a variety of student outcomes including mathematics and reading achievement, social-emotional development, grade retention and dropout, and student discipline” (e.g. Balfanz & Byrnes, 2018; Gottfried, 2017). As indicated in Pinecrest Academy Horizon’s challenges on page six of this report, 19.4% of students were considered chronically absent for the 2023-24 school year. The absenteeism rate has a direct impact on the NSPF index score for Pinecrest Academy Horizon. The Nevada State Point Attribution Table (PAT) for chronic absenteeism rates has been provided below. The school index ratings could have been up to seven and a half points higher if absenteeism rates were improved.

Rate	Points	Rate	Points	Rate	Points
<5	10	≥ 11 and < 12	6.5	≥ 18 and < 19	3
≥ 5 and < 6	9.5	≥ 12 and < 13	6	≥ 19 and < 20	2.5
≥ 6 and < 7	9	≥ 13 and < 14	5.5	≥ 20 and < 21	2
≥ 7 and < 8	8.5	≥ 14 and < 15	5	≥ 21 and < 22	1.5
≥ 8 and < 9	8	≥ 15 and < 16	4.5	≥ 22 and < 23	1
≥ 9 and < 10	7.5	≥ 16 and < 17	4	≥ 23 and < 24	0.5
≥ 10 and < 11	7	≥ 17 and < 18	3.5	≥ 24	

Prioritize improving student enrollment to be more representative of the local district

The SPCSA staff recommend that Pinecrest Academy Horizon continue to monitor and improve overall diversity to be more representative of the local district and the SPCSA. Pinecrest Academy Horizon has <5% of EL and 31% of FRL students enrolled, while district rates are 19% and >95%, respectively. Some suggestions are revisiting the school's weighted lottery system and working with the Pinecrest Academy school board.

Continue to increase student engagement and student-led learning opportunities

Another recommendation for Pinecrest Academy Horizon is to continue increasing student engagement and adding more student-led learning opportunities. One potential strategy to increase student engagement is the implementation of extended discourse. This approach encourages students to take a more active role in their learning, which is closely tied to promoting deeper student discussions. Effective student discourse involves interactive dialogue that externalizes thinking and focuses on making meaning from the learning experience. Student discourse can include making arguments, explaining concepts, critiquing ideas, and using logic and evidence to support or challenge claims. Possible strategies for supporting this shift include ongoing coaching, master teacher modeling of best practices, and continued professional development.

Site Evaluation Findings: Strong Recommendations

Strong recommendations identified during this site evaluation are listed here, if applicable.

There were no strong recommendations for Pinecrest Academy Horizon during this site evaluation.

Site Evaluation Findings: Deficiencies

Deficiencies identified during this site evaluation are listed here, if applicable.

There were no deficiencies for Pinecrest Academy Horizon during this site evaluation.

Focus Group Participation Data

Focus groups are conducted on the day of the site evaluation and last for 45 minutes. During an abbreviated site evaluation, focus groups are not conducted.

Name of Focus Group	Number of Participants
Governing Board ⁵	2
Family Members, Parents, and Guardians	4
Faculty and Staff	10
School Leadership	4
Students	8

⁵ Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

Focus Group Summary: Governing Board

Two Pinecrest Academy of Nevada Board members participated in the focus group. The board comprises six members, and the group is looking to add another member soon. The board has members with backgrounds that include a retired educator, counselor, school administrator, chancellor for higher education, real estate, finance, and a parent representative. The participants shared that all members had completed the required board training requirements. The board has two subcommittees: the athletics committee, which oversees the sports programs and facilities; and the app and vendor review committee, which evaluates and recommends educational apps and vendors for the schools. The board meets every six weeks, and some members visit the schools regularly.

The members emphasized their support and trust for the leaders of every campus under the Pinecrest Academy of Nevada network, which includes six brick-and-mortar campuses and one virtual program. One member stated, "School leaders work together and embody the mission and vision of the schools," elaborating that one school leader who worked for a Pinecrest Network School in Florida moved to Nevada, worked as an assistant principal under the supervision of a Pinecrest Academy of Nevada Leader, earned a promotion, and currently serves as the principal for one of their schools. A member highlighted the board's commitment to fostering a deep sense of community, attributing that much of the student success at the Pinecrest Academy Network of schools in Southern Nevada is due to the collaborative approach of all stakeholders, which the building leaders guide with a high sense of trust and responsibility. The member shared, "We are proud of our families, scholars, staff, and leaders." The group highlighted that the Pinecrest network of schools recently completed a fundraising event that raised over a hundred thousand dollars earmarked for special projects and to foster dual enrollment programs, a testament to the community's support and involvement.

A portion of the focus group delved into the board's proactive approach to managing challenges, including the need to address teacher salaries, and some discrepancies were precisely noted compared to the local school district. A member emphasized the board's proactive strategy to provide holiday bonuses and stipends for staff to promote teacher retention within the Pinecrest network of schools. However, the board member elaborated that these bonuses and stipends are budget-dependent, citing another challenge of adjusting to the uncertainty of the future of federal grant funding opportunities or lack thereof. The members also shared the challenge of finding a location for the Pinecrest Academy of Nevada Springs campus and their action steps to secure a more permanent location or purchase and redevelop the current site, demonstrating the board's proactive and strategic approach to challenges. The board evaluates the school leaders annually and participates in their self-evaluation. This process involves a comprehensive review of the leader's performance, including their ability to meet academic goals, manage the school's budget, and foster a positive school culture. The members also shared that they work closely with their Educational Management Organization⁶ (EMO) to ensure the schools operate efficiently to serve their stakeholders.

⁶ An Education Management Organization (EMO) is a for-profit entity that manages schools by centralizing support, operations, and oversight.

Focus Group Summary: Family Members, Parents, and Guardians

There were four family members who shared their input about Pinecrest Academy Horizon on the day of the site evaluation. When asked whether their child has an adult at school they can confide in, parents shared an impressive testament to the school's nurturing environment. One parent stated, "I see a continual flow of students who feel comfortable approaching any teacher with their thoughts and concerns—even when the teacher isn't their regular instructor." Another parent shared, "The teachers build strong relationships and hold high, yet realistic, student standards." They know each child individually and have specific goals for every student." Other parents indicated they feel the same, reiterating that past experiences with teachers have built a strong foundation of trust, ensuring that both students and parents know that genuine care is always at the heart of the school's community.

Parents at Pinecrest Academy Horizon indicated that they appreciate the diverse volunteer opportunities that foster strong community engagement. There are numerous ways for parents to get involved, from serving as parent substitutes and classroom helpers to organizing events across every grade, according to parents. Parents shared that they actively manage the lunchroom, help coordinate movie and camping nights, and assist in hosting literacy nights, carnivals, family picnics, and even the annual art festival. One parent said, "The school also hosts SBAC⁷ prep nights with detailed walkthroughs of testing procedures and provides at-home practice packets, along with a weekly newspaper and online link to keep everyone connected." Special Saturday events celebrate students with perfect attendance, and fifth graders can join another campus, Pinecrest Academy Cadence, for a day to see what is expected of them in middle school, further illustrating Pinecrest Academy Horizon's commitment to nurturing a vibrant, engaged community.

At Pinecrest Academy Horizon, parents spoke about how the positive school climate is reflected in its innovative teaching approaches and its celebration of individual strengths. One parent spoke of a teacher known for her no-nonsense style, ensuring her son never takes shortcuts by pulling him aside for extra support and reminding him of his unique capabilities beyond traditional academics. This supportive atmosphere is also evident in the success of a second-language learner, who benefits from robust language acquisition programs and a system that rewards progress. One parent stated, "The first-grade team embraces friendly competition through goal setting, with even the youngest students achieving impressive milestones." Parents said there are daily five-minute video announcements to keep students informed and motivated. At the same time, special initiatives like National Down Syndrome Day underscore the school's commitment to recognizing and celebrating every child's unique gifts.

⁷ SBAC standards for Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, Nevada's criterion-referenced test, designed to measure student performance against a fixed set of predetermined criteria or learning standards.

When asked for suggestions for improvement at Pinecrest Academy Horizon, parents recommended enhancing staff diversity so that students can see themselves reflected in their teachers, increasing the number of breaks for students by extending the practice of having two recesses for second grade to other grade levels and expanding holiday celebrations to include opportunities for all children to dress up, not just the primary-aged children.

Focus Group Summary: Faculty and Staff

During the site evaluation, ten staff members from Pinecrest Academy Horizon shared their positive views on staff morale. They noted that the school's warm and supportive environment has even encouraged former parent volunteers and substitutes to become teachers at the school. The exceptional front desk service and the dedication of grade-level teams that work together like a family were also highlighted as key strengths among the staff. While the positive atmosphere naturally ebbs and flows, especially during the heightened pressures of standardized testing season, one staff member shared, “Strong teacher relationships, often evolving into lifelong friendships, help everyone navigate the challenging times.” Moreover, intentional leadership fosters an open environment where team leaders are approachable, and every staff member collaborates to promote empathy and effective problem-solving, all under the unwavering support of the administration.

Staff members at Pinecrest Academy Horizon reported that collaborative grade band and vertical alignment planning is an integral part of their approach to enhancing student outcomes. They reported regularly engaging in discussions during professional development days and planning sessions, focusing on what students need to know as they transition from one grade level to the next. Several teachers reported using looping strategies with students to maintain continuity in learning. A staff member said, “In these collaborative meetings, we share insights on subject-specific strategies, ensuring that each new grade begins with the concepts mastered in the previous year.”

Staff members relayed that small groups are formed based on student performance data, ensuring targeted instruction to meet individual learning needs. Pinecrest Academy Horizon utilizes Study Island⁸, administering pretests for each standard on a weekly basis and grouping students based on their formative assessment results. Professional development sessions provide guidance on analyzing student data, including metrics such as stretch growth and typical growth in i-Ready⁹. Teachers have the flexibility to adjust groups as needed, allowing for responsive, real-time, and effective support tailored to each student's progress.

Pinecrest Academy Horizon staff members had a few ideas for improvement at the school, including increasing the number of special education staff to meet the growing needs of the student population and installing a shade structure over the play area to provide students with a more comfortable outdoor environment.

⁸ Study Island is a K-12 practice, assessment, and test preparation platform in math, English language arts, and social studies.

⁹ i-Ready is a computer-adaptive program for English language arts and math with personalized learning pathways.

Focus Group Summary: School Leadership

Leadership stated that a strong school culture and positive climate are central to Pinecrest Academy Horizon's success. The leadership focus group, comprising four leaders, emphasized the importance of fostering a supportive and uplifting environment, referring to it as the “happiness factor” of Pinecrest Horizon. They reported that addressing challenges quickly is a priority, ensuring that staff feel supported and can focus on student learning. Through the school’s mentorship program, administrative support, and team leadership, Pinecrest Academy Horizon cultivates a culture that promotes high achievement while retaining dedicated educators who are motivated by professional growth and a deep sense of community. This commitment is evident in the many parents and instructional aides who have transitioned into licensed teaching roles at the school, as well as the five staff members currently pursuing master’s degrees in educational leadership.

Leadership reported that one of the challenges the school has faced is the declining Read by Grade 3 (RBG3) proficiency. Once at 74% in the 2018-19 school year, proficiency rates have experienced a downward trend, currently holding at 50%, which was influenced by both pandemic-related learning loss and shifts in student demographics. Leadership mentioned addressing the dip in scores by increasing the rigor and sense of urgency of tier-one reading instruction offered to third graders.

Leaders also reported that changes within the Pinecrest network have led to staff turnover, as some original staff members have transitioned to other Pinecrest campuses, leaving the Horizon campus in a state of rebuilding. To address this, the school has focused on training new staff in the "Pinecrest way" while maintaining strong connections with leadership across the entire Pinecrest network. Despite these challenges, the school has experienced significant growth, increasing enrollment from 680 students in 2018 to approximately 900 in 2025. The addition of a new class further contributed to changes in both the student population and staff composition, reinforcing the need for continued adaptation and development.

Leadership informed SPCSA staff that professional development at Pinecrest Academy Horizon is structured to meet the specific needs of teachers and is continuously adapted based on emerging trends and observations. Professional development sessions are differentiated, with a data specialist working separately with kindergarten through second grade and third through fifth-grade teachers to analyze i-Ready and MAP¹⁰ assessment data and provide targeted resources. Mid-year data checks and programs such as Raise the Barr¹¹ and the summer New Teacher Academy¹² help ensure that instruction is driven by data. One leader stated, “Administrators serve as instructional coaches, while team leads in each grade level provide additional support based on classroom observations.” Leaders shared that current professional development focuses on increasing student engagement strategies and improving Small-group instruction and differentiation, which have been identified as areas for growth. To support this, one strategist has modeled small-group instruction for teachers. Additionally, staff have recently

¹⁰ MAP stands for Measures of Academic Progress which is a diagnostic assessment measuring reading and math skills.

¹¹ Raise the Barr is a local education company that deeply analyzes student data to help leaders make informed decisions.

¹² The New Teacher Academy is a company that offers comprehensive training and support programs designed to enhance classroom success.

begun implementing Study Island to drive real-time changes in instruction. School leadership also made a strategic teacher change to improve classroom management and instructional effectiveness.

Leadership reported a significant increase in the special education population at Pinecrest Academy Horizon, with students presenting a wide range of diverse needs. They have observed a growing number of students who communicate differently, including those using communication devices, as well as students with hearing and visual impairments, autism, Down syndrome, and behavioral challenges. To support these needs, the school participates in the Exceptional Needs Program¹³, which helps offset costs, and has applied for additional support staff. The school also provides intensive Applied Behavior Analysis¹⁴ (ABA) services and has expanded its resource rooms based on student needs and required service minutes. “Initially, a single full-day resource room was used, but due to increasing demand, it has now been expanded to two rooms,” the leadership said. There is also one staff member with a Registered Behavior Technician¹⁵ (RBT) certification who is currently pursuing a special education degree. Leaders reported that their EMO¹⁶ continues to provide special education training to ensure that staff are well-equipped to meet the needs of all students.

¹³ The Exceptional Needs Today community promotes awareness, acceptance, and inclusiveness for all people. They aim to provide support and free resources for families, educators, professionals, and self-advocates.

¹⁴ Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a type of therapy that focuses on imparting skills in specific domains of functioning, such as social skills, communication, academic and learning skills, motor dexterity, hygiene and grooming, and other skills.

¹⁵ A Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) is a paraprofessional certification in behavior analysis for students.

¹⁶ An education management organization (EMO) is a term of art describing a for-profit entity that manages schools.

Focus Group Summary: Students

Students at Pinecrest Academy Horizon shared their favorite learning experiences from this year, highlighting a variety of engaging subjects. Many expressed a love for science, including an experiment testing which liquids could make dull pennies shine and a hands-on activity where they created clay models of the brain to learn about its different parts. Others enjoyed math, particularly learning about line plots and simplifying fractions, appreciating the problem-solving and critical-thinking aspects of the subject. Reading and writing were also students' favorites, with some students excited about using story starters to develop creative stories. Others enjoyed researching and writing informational pieces, such as a report on Ella Fitzgerald, using multiple sources and citing evidence.

Students at Pinecrest Academy Horizon shared that they have multiple opportunities to explain content to their peers, reinforcing their understanding through collaboration. They reported frequently using shoulder partners and "turn and talk" strategies to discuss concepts with classmates. Students spoke about "bell ringers" in math, encouraging them to explain their problem-solving processes to the whole class and fostering deeper comprehension. Partner activities in social studies allow students to discuss and explain content to each other. One student said, "During Mad Math Minute challenges, we work together and offer support when a peer needs help." Students also indicated rewards for high grades serve as motivation for active participation and peer-assisted learning.

Pinecrest Academy Horizon students said they feel supported by the adults at their school and know they have someone to turn to when facing challenges. Many shared that they can confide in their teachers, with one student recalling how a teacher provided comfort when a friend was hurt. Another student described working with the school counselor, saying, "She helped me manage anger issues and taught me helpful strategies in a trusting and supportive environment. We played games, and she told me anything I tell her will stay between us." Several students expressed that they have multiple trusted adults who help them navigate feelings of sadness or frustration, encouraging them to see the bright side of difficult situations. One student appreciates having the option to take a break in another teacher's classroom when needed. Another student shared an experience of receiving a low grade on a test and turning to a teacher for guidance, who provided strategies for improvement.

Students at Pinecrest Academy Horizon said they actively set learning goals for themselves and are motivated by a variety of incentives. They work toward academic milestones in programs like Study Island and strive for high scores on the SBAC¹⁷ assessment. Teachers provide engaging rewards to encourage progress, such as a carnival with games and prizes for students who meet their blended learning goals. A student reported, "When we meet our weekly goals in i-Ready and ST Math¹⁸, we are recognized with a wheel spin for additional rewards, and when I complete blended learning assignments,

¹⁷ The Smarter Balanced assessments (SBAC) measure student progress in grades three through eight towards college and career success and are aligned with the Nevada Academic Content Standards in English language arts and mathematics. Results from the SBAC are included on the Nevada Report Card.

¹⁸ ST Math is a K-8 visual instructional program that leverages the brain's innate spatial-temporal reasoning ability to solve mathematical problems. It is also Common Core and state standards aligned.

I can earn an extra recess.” Students also track their own progress using MyEducationData¹⁹, aiming to improve each time. Teachers further support goal-setting through incentives, such as a weekly raffle for good behavior, where winners receive a prize. Perfect attendance is celebrated with bracelets, extra recess, or a turn at the book vending machine. Additionally, students who demonstrate strong character traits can be named an "Extraordinary Patriot," earning a photo with the principal and a reward.

¹⁹ MyEducationData is a website with detailed information for families and students about student data.

Classroom Environment and Instruction

Observation Rubric

A total of 19 elementary classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation.

Classroom Environment					
	Distinguished	Highly Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Classroom Learning Environment is Conducive to Learning	<p>The teacher demonstrates knowledge and caring about individual students' lives beyond the class and school.</p> <p>When necessary, students respectfully correct one another.</p> <p>Students participate without fear of put-downs or ridicule from either the teacher or other students.</p> <p>The teacher respects and encourages students' efforts.</p>	<p>Talk between the teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful.</p> <p>The teacher successfully responds to disrespectful behavior among students.</p> <p>Students participate willingly but may be somewhat hesitant to offer their ideas in front of classmates.</p> <p>The teacher makes general connections with individual students.</p>	<p>The quality of interactions between teachers and students, or among students, is uneven, with occasional disrespect or insensitivity.</p> <p>The teacher attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior among students with uneven results.</p> <p>The teacher attempts to make connections with individual students, but student reactions indicate that these attempts are not entirely successful.</p>	<p>The teacher is disrespectful toward or insensitive to students' ages, cultural backgrounds, and developmental levels.</p> <p>Students' body language indicates feelings of hurt, discomfort, or insecurity.</p> <p>The teacher displays no familiarity with, or care about, individual students.</p>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 3	TOTAL: 16	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0
Establishing a Culture for Learning	<p>The teacher communicates passion for the subject.</p> <p>Students indicate through their questions and comments a desire to understand content.</p> <p>Students assist their classmates in understanding the content.</p>	<p>The teacher communicates the importance of the content and the conviction that with hard work all students can master the material.</p> <p>The teacher conveys an expectation of high levels of student effort.</p> <p>Students expend good effort to complete work of high quality.</p>	<p>The teachers' energy for the work is neutral.</p> <p>The teacher conveys high expectations for only some students.</p> <p>Students exhibit a limited commitment to completing the work on their own.</p> <p>The teacher's primary concern appears to be to complete the task at hand.</p>	<p>The teacher conveys that there is little or no purpose for the work, or that the reasons for doing it are due to external factors.</p> <p>The teacher conveys to at least some students that the work is too challenging for them.</p> <p>Students exhibit little or no pride in their work.</p>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 4	TOTAL: 14	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0

Classroom Environment and Instruction

Observation Rubric

A total of 19 elementary classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation.

Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Highly Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Communicating with Students	<p>If asked, students can explain what they are learning and where it fits into the larger curriculum context.</p> <p>The teacher explains content clearly and imaginatively.</p> <p>The teacher invites students to explain the content to their classmates.</p> <p>Students use academic language correctly.</p>	<p>The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students will be learning.</p> <p>The teacher's explanation of content is clear and invites student participation and thinking.</p> <p>The teacher makes no content errors.</p> <p>Students engage with the learning task, indicating that they understand what they are to do.</p>	<p>The teacher provides little elaboration or explanation about what students will be learning.</p> <p>The teacher's explanation of the content consists of a monologue, with minimal participation or intellectual engagement by students.</p> <p>The teacher may make minor content errors.</p> <p>The teacher must clarify the learning task.</p>	<p>At no time during the lesson does the teacher convey to students what they will be learning.</p> <p>Students indicate through body language or questions that they don't understand the content being presented.</p> <p>Students indicate through their questions that they are confused about the learning task.</p>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 17	TOTAL: 2	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0
Using Questioning and Discussion Strategies	<p>Students initiate higher-order questions.</p> <p>The teacher builds on and uses student responses to questions to deepen student understanding.</p> <p>Students extend the discussion, enriching it.</p> <p>Virtually all students are engaged.</p>	<p>The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers.</p> <p>Discussions enable students to talk to one another without ongoing mediation by the teacher.</p> <p>Many students actively engage in the discussion.</p>	<p>The teacher frames some questions designed to promote student thinking, but many have a single correct answer.</p> <p>The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students respond.</p> <p>The teacher calls on many students, but only a small number participate.</p>	<p>Questions are rapid-fire and convergent with a single correct answer.</p> <p>The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking.</p> <p>Only a few students dominate the discussion.</p>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 16	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 1

Classroom Environment and Instruction

Observation Rubric

A total of 19 elementary classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation.

Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Highly Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Engaging Students in Learning	<p>Virtually all students are engaged in the lesson.</p> <p>Lesson activities require high-level student thinking and explanations of their thinking.</p> <p>Students have an opportunity for reflection and closure on the lesson to consolidate their understanding.</p>	<p>Most students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.</p> <p>Most learning tasks have multiple correct responses or approaches and/or encourage higher-order thinking.</p> <p>Students are invited to explain their thinking as part of completing tasks.</p> <p>The pacing of the lesson provides students with the time needed to be intellectually engaged.</p>	<p>Some students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.</p> <p>Learning tasks are a mix of those requiring thinking and those requiring recall.</p> <p>Student engagement with the content is largely passive.</p> <p>The pacing of the lesson is uneven—suitable in parts but rushed or dragging in others.</p>	<p>Few students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.</p> <p>Learning tasks, activities, and materials require only recall or have a single correct response.</p> <p>The lesson drags on or is rushed.</p>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 2	TOTAL: 16	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>Students indicate they clearly understand the characteristics of high-quality work.</p> <p>The teacher uses multiple strategies to monitor student understanding.</p> <p>Students monitor their own understanding.</p> <p>Feedback comes from many sources.</p>	<p>The teacher makes the standards of high-quality work clear to students.</p> <p>The teacher elicits evidence of student understanding.</p> <p>Students are invited to assess their own work and make improvements.</p> <p>Feedback includes specific and timely guidance.</p>	<p>There is little evidence that the students understand how the work is evaluated.</p> <p>The teacher monitors understanding through a single method, without eliciting evidence of understanding from students.</p> <p>Feedback to students is vague.</p>	<p>The teacher does not indicate what quality work looks like.</p> <p>The teacher makes no effort to determine whether students understand the lesson.</p> <p>Students receive no feedback, or feedback is global or directed to one student.</p>	
	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 16	TOTAL: 2	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0

Classroom Observations and Additional Comments

In a primary classroom, students were writing an informational text. The teacher reviewed the essential components of their writing, including the topic sentence, body, and conclusion. Students quickly recalled facts they had read about their chosen animals. Maintaining a calm demeanor, the teacher asked guiding questions such as, "Where do camels live?" However, the lesson was primarily whole-group instruction, with the teacher calling on one student at a time, missing an opportunity for students to engage in discussions and share facts with one another.

The class was preparing for an upcoming field trip to The Paradox Museum²⁰; however, students remained focused on their learning. They played various educational computer games, creating a quiet and productive work environment.

Students were examining words to identify their syllable types, such as open or closed. The teacher guided the discussion with questions like, "Does 'table' contain an 'le'?" and "Where did you place the dividing line to segment this word?" With a strong sense of urgency, the teacher kept students highly engaged and focused. The phonics instruction was clear and intentional, equipping students with essential decoding skills for future reading success.

Students were reading a grade-level text about building bridges and collaboratively responding to text-dependent questions. The teacher called on students individually to share their answers. While the lesson maintained strong pacing and rigor, there was an opportunity to enhance student interaction. Additionally, the teacher did not encourage students to revisit the text to support their responses and did not require them to write in complete sentences.

Students watched a video demonstrating how to create paper flowers, which involved multiple steps and careful planning. The teacher paused the video to draw a comparison between this process and the engineering principles used in bridge construction, emphasizing the importance of planning and design. Working in teams, students collaborated to create their flowers. The teacher highlighted the importance of teamwork, reminding them that no single student was responsible for all the work. As they worked together, students discussed paper color choices, assigned tasks for different flower parts, and had 45 minutes to complete their bouquets, which the art teacher would judge.

The teacher introduced the lesson by explaining that students would choose two animals to compare. She connected the new activity to previous research they had done on animals. As part of the lesson, different students took turns reading an informational text about two types of foxes aloud to the class. Students actively participated by identifying the text as nonfiction. When asked to name the three types of informational text, primary-aged students successfully recalled scientific, technical, and historical. The level of rigor and recall was high, and the teacher reinforced engagement by awarding red tickets to students who contributed and shared their knowledge.

²⁰ The Paradox Museum is a museum with interactive optical illusion exhibits.

Students were reading and writing about camels while completing their packets. The teacher had them revisit their initial questions—something they had wondered about the animal. One by one, students read their questions aloud to the class. Initially, the teacher answered the questions by referring to the text but then shifted the activity to partner work, where students asked and answered questions with each other. However, there was a missed opportunity for the teacher to actively engage in the partner discussions with one or two groups.

Learning about the author's purpose was the focus in an upper elementary-grade classroom. The students worked with a partner, reviewing a worksheet about the author's purpose and cause and effect. All students were actively engaged in the activity, as evidenced by active discussion and referencing to the worksheet. The teacher monitored the discussions, walking around the room. The activity ended when the students transitioned to recess.

In a special education resource room, five staff members led small group instruction. One group was led by an adult who supported two students' reading comprehension skills by reviewing text, specifically rereading the text and reviewing essential vocabulary words. Another small group was led by a teacher who worked with four students on writing closing sentences. The two other small groups were led by an adult and focused on reading comprehension skills. The classroom was very conducive to supporting all students' individualized needs. The students were very engaged and committed to their tasks.

The teacher read a grade-appropriate passage to students about the Eastern influence on the United States. She paused to ask what text feature was on the page, and the students responded correctly. She then prompted them to turn and discuss with their partners why gold might be more difficult to find. Students actively engaged in the discussion. The teacher posed higher-level questions about the text, fostering deep thinking. The classroom maintained a strong sense of urgency and rigor, with all students remaining focused and engaged throughout the lesson.

Measures of Progress from Previous Site Evaluation

The extent to which the school has been successful in maintaining areas of strength, removing challenges, and acting upon the recommended items made by the SPCSA Site Evaluation Team during the school's previous site evaluation.

Prior Recommendation by Site Evaluation Team	School Assessment of Progress	SPCSA Staff Assessment of Progress
Decrease chronic absenteeism rates.	Pinecrest Academy Horizon continues its current work to increase the daily attendance rate among students through goal setting, data monitoring, outreach, transportation support, and education for families on the importance of school attendance.	During the 2022-23 site evaluation, chronic absenteeism was 20.9%. For the 2023-24 academic year, the chronic absenteeism rate was 19.4%. Chronic absenteeism is a concern and challenge. It directly impacts the school's star rating. The recommendation has not been met.
Increase student voice in classrooms and increase student-led instruction.	Based on the Classroom Observation rubric on page 21 of this report, 18 out of 19 classrooms were rated as distinguished or highly proficient on the indicator "engaging students in learning."	SPCSA staff members recommend that Pinecrest Academy Horizon continue to work on more student-led classrooms by increasing their ratings on the classroom observation rubric to be distinguished.
Improve student diversity in FRL and EL populations.	Pinecrest Academy Horizon has various marketing strategies to address increasing FRL and EL populations. They also address the concerns for those low populations with a weighted lottery system.	The enrollment diversity indicator for the 2022-23 school year was nine out of 15 points, with two out of five points for the FRL indicator and two out of five for the EL indicator. For the 2023-24 school year, Pinecrest Academy Horizon earned eight out of 15 points, with two out of five points for the FRL indicator and two out of five for the EL indicator. The recommendation has not been met.
Increase family participation in day-to-day activities at the school.	Based on data from the leadership, parent, and staff focus groups, parents have ample opportunities to volunteer and work daily at Pinecrest Academy Horizon.	SPCSA staff find that Pinecrest Academy Horizon has met this recommendation with satisfactory progress.

Operational Compliance Checks

Fire Extinguisher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Nurse's Station	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Evacuation Plan in Classrooms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Food Permit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Elevator Permit	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A

Appendix A

The school may choose to submit a response to the SPCSA Site Evaluation Team's findings. This response will be included with the report in the public domain. The final report is submitted to the school's leadership and governing board, the SPCSA board, and into the public record via the SPCSA's website.