

**NORWOOD
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

STRATEGIC

GOALS

REPORT

August 28, 2013



Norwood is a community that is committed to its children and values and respects its educational system. We currently have one early education center, five elementary schools, one middle school, one new high school, and an administrative office building. Enrollment in our Pre-K to Grade 12 school population is over 3,500.

A six member School Committee, which values input and participation from parents and community members, sets policy and oversees the school budget.

Because the Norwood Schools are committed to providing every student the opportunity to be successful, there is a rich tradition of academic excellence, outstanding achievement in the Arts and Athletics, and a strong extra-curricular program.

Our Mission

The mission of the Norwood Public Schools is to seek academic excellence for all children in an environment which is safe, nurturing, and supportive, to inspire in them an enduring love for learning, and prepare them to contribute as citizens of a diverse community.

Beliefs

- Every child can learn.
- Academics is the primary focus of education. In addition to Academics, Athletics, and Activities are essential for a complete education.
- Each child is unique and has special abilities and interests that must be recognized, encouraged, and developed.
- The home, school, and community are responsible for the education of all children
- Teachers must engage every student in learning..
- Students are responsible for their own learning and for their personal conduct.
- Parents are responsible for setting values and expectations that support the learning process.
- Lifelong learning is essential for productive and responsible participation in a diverse and changing world.
- Teachers have the right to teach and students have the right to learn in a safe and nurturing environment.
- A community thrives when individuals contribute to the well being of others.
- Integrity, respect, and cooperation are essential in building trusting relationships.
- Our community is strengthened and enriched through diversity.

Strategic Goals 2012-2015

Instructional planning is an ongoing process that involves matching our students' educational needs with the demands of an evolving curriculum driven by ever changing federal and state standards. The administrative leadership team composed of building principals and program directors examined student data for the past school year to determine the progress our students have made toward academic proficiency in their major subjects. As a result of these discussions the following improvement initiatives will be focused on during the 2012-2013 school year.

I. Prepare all students to be college or career ready

Literacy – Improve reading, writing, comprehension, and global competency skills for all students.

- Align and review curriculum & materials based on Common Core with a focus on Power Standards. **Status: Met** – Curriculum committees have met by subject area to align lesson objectives and materials to the Common Core & PAARC. Continued work is needed in aligned material selections.
- Increase reading & writing across all grade levels. **Status: Ongoing** – Kindergarten students are provided many opportunities to experience reading and writing activities at their developmental level through the revised curriculum maps and model center activity guides developed by the staff. The elementary balanced literacy curriculum emphasizes increased use of guided reading groups using informational texts and an increase of student writing for informational and persuasive pieces thereby increasing stamina from grade to grade. The Middle School assesses the reading proficiency of each student providing additional instruction through special education assistance, remedial reading instruction and Title I assistance with quarterly progress monitoring. The school-wide QAR question-answer-relationship strategy helps students recognize in each subject that some answers to questions are “Right There” and other questions require the student to “Think and Search” while others must be answered “On My Own”. These comprehension strategies are emphasized and reinforced in all classes. The ELA classes also teach the students to apply a color-coded organizational skills strategy for answering open response questions across the curriculum while increasing the difficulty of the material as students progress. The High School English classes have increased the amount of in-depth reading and focused writing in their courses using targeted 150 words essays with concise teacher feedback to students. Honors English students read a book of their choosing per term with a written review to share with the class. English classes spend time rewriting essays and papers, examining model essays, and participating in guided discussions using targeted text-based analytical questions. Health classes write a reflection on an ethical issue at the beginning of each class and Visual Arts classes require a research paper for most courses. High School Science class teachers model reading

comprehension strategies for their students with an emphasis on common reading and writing assessments in each course from grades 6-12.

- Focus on strategies for effective reading of nonfiction and informational texts.

Status: Ongoing – Literacy closets and libraries in the elementary schools increased their collections of nonfiction and informational texts for students at various grade levels when textbook and supply monies were restored last Fall as a result of improved State revenue support. The Reading teachers at each school met to revise the district's reading map with an emphasis on nonfiction text structures and resources for elementary teachers. The use of nonfiction materials has increase as part of students' independent reading selections as noted by teachers and librarians. Middle School teachers collaborate to use cross-curricula projects that associate close textual reading with a student's life experience to draw comparisons and contrasts using Bloom's levels of questioning with the students' work. Written assignments are monitored to note content knowledge and the students' ability to apply what they have learned.

High School English classes use nonfiction and informational texts as related readings during the study of primary texts. Social Studies classes use the APPARTS charts to analyze primary source documents.

Questions review the Author, Place, Prior knowledge, Audience, Reason and The Main Idea of the document.

- Implement new State regulations for English Language Learners (ELL).

Status: Ongoing – All staff members have been notified of their cohort and requirements for enrollment in the State-wide Professional Development courses over the next three years.

- Provide students with the opportunity to converse proficiently in at least one foreign language. **Status: Ongoing** – Foreign Language teachers participated in Keys to Literacy and Maintaining the Target Language in the Classroom trainings this fall. Students worked to improve listening, speaking, reading, and writing with the goal of 90% target language conversation in class with teacher. Participation rubrics and Frayer Model vocabulary building exercises were used and evaluated using the language labs at both the Middle and High School.

- Train teachers on key comprehension routines for all grade 6-12 students.

Status: Met – Dr Wyeth organized workshops for Middle and High School teachers during in-service days to learn key comprehension strategies for all students in grades 6-12. Coaches were also trained to further the work and insure implementation of these concepts across subjects and grade levels.

Use common assessments, PSAT & SAT's to monitor curriculum rigor & make modifications as needed. **Status: Ongoing** – Dr. Wyeth has

organized a review of our current common assessments which are administered at various grade levels. These instruments are currently informing instruction and are used to adjust our curriculum to the Common Core and students changing educational needs. In keeping

with the DESE regulations we are working together with teachers to provide two measures of student growth for each subject area.

- Examine student work to guide & modify instructional practices.
Status: Ongoing – Kindergarten teachers evaluate students using DRA’s Marie Clay and Eckwall Schanker scores to monitor progress as the students build their foundation skills. Elementary teachers review DRA’s, unit and benchmark tests in reading and math along with writing samples to determine student progress and any need for a Response to Intervention strategy for individual students. Middle school teachers meet as teams to examine how their students respond to test design, accommodations and modifications to unit tests in various subjects. Changes were made for either groups or individuals to improve the student’s ability to access and recall subject matter information. Adjustments were made using RtI, focused extra help sessions and peer tutoring. The ELA teachers use a blind scoring system on the mid-term five paragraph essay so they can gauge student progress toward proficiency.

The High School English Department evaluates the Midyear Writing Assessment together to examine students’ strengths and weaknesses with plans for improvement and curriculum adjustment where needed. This year the summer and Midyear assessment will be used to measure growth in students writing. All departmental exams in each subject area are analyzed for patterns of weakness with the goal of improving student mastery of each subject’s learning objectives. The Science Department uses common pre-tests and post-tests for students in grades 6-8 to inform teachers’ instruction.

- Find ways to create time for professional learning teams to meet weekly,
Status: Ongoing – This goal at the elementary level is still a work in progress based on specialist schedules, the number of paraprofessionals in a building and the number of teachers at each grade level. Schools like the Cleveland and Callahan have been able to allow their teachers at least a twice monthly meeting for common planning time. Two half days were added to the elementary school calendar to help provide some time for these staff members to meet. In future budgets, staffing needs will be examined to address this goal of finding consistent meeting times while continuing student instruction. Middle School teachers are able to meet twice every 6 day cycle to review student needs and plan team strategies. One meeting combines grade level teams with guidance and housemasters to help specific students and the second meeting examines curriculum issues. The High School added seven 1:00 student dismissal days to their calendar along with MCAS delayed openings to allow teachers to meet in common planning groups based on grade level and department needs. The master schedule has also been adjusted to allow some teachers especially the co-teaching Inclusion teachers at each level to meet for planning purposes.

S.T.E.A.M. – Strengthen science, technology, engineering, art & math instruction at all levels.

- Align and review math curriculum based on Common Core with a focus on Power Standards.
Status: Met – Curriculum committees have met by subject area to align lesson objectives and materials to the Common Core & PAARC. Continued work is needed in aligned material selections especially for our math courses.
- Provide science professional development to all elementary teachers.
Status: Met & Ongoing – A series of courses were provided by Charlie Haffey and Erica Lockwood to provide teachers with content training and methods for sound science instruction.
- Conduct elementary math program review based on Common Core analysis.
Status: Met – Jill Milton, Elementary Math Coordinator met with each grade level team to align Common Core Standards to current and projected curriculum objectives and materials. Curriculum maps were updated for each grade level with resource materials and lessons uploaded to the district website. This work will continue next year in preparation for a math program adoption.
- Continue special education inclusion strategies math workshop in grades 6-8.
Status: Ongoing – This year some middle school staff received professional training on math common core alignment which allowed common lesson plan development with math inclusion teachers.
- Use common assessments, PSAT & SAT's to monitor curriculum rigor & make modifications as needed.
Status: Ongoing – Dr. Wyeth has organized a review of our current common assessments which are administered at various grade levels. These instruments are currently informing instruction and are used to adjust our curriculum to the Common Core and students changing educational needs. In keeping with the DESE regulations we are working together with teachers to provide two measures of student growth for each subject area.
- Examine student work to guide & modify instructional practices.
Status: Ongoing – Our work on this objective models what took place with our literacy objective.
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Differentiated Instruction – strengthen ways to meet all students academic needs.

- Refine the use of RtI in each school utilizing progress monitoring tools.
Status: Ongoing – The Kindergarten utilizes DRA's, running records and End of Unit Assessments to identify students who have not met key benchmarks during the year. Those students are referred for RtI assistance and monitored for progress. This coming September, all staff will use iPad driven Teaching Strategies Gold to assess all students. Elementary students follow a similar pattern of assessment and

assistance based on each child's progress with intervention strategies. Their teams work effectively through school-wide schedule modifications and flexible grouping to meet the needs of their learners. Middle School RtI referrals and the application of intervention strategies needs revision based on restrictions in students' schedules that do not allow for flexible time to use tiered instructional strategies. Grade level teams do meet to plan classroom accommodations for their students. During the next school year plans will be put in place to allow for increased tiered interventions. The High School begins with Student Success Plans initiated by teachers, students or their parents based on a student's academic or emotional progress. A Student Support Team monitors a student's progress and adds additional supports where needed such as peer tutors, directed studies and after school teacher directed lessons. As with the Middle School plans will be examined to find ways to provide increased tiered interventions with flexible scheduling.

- Expand and support Special Education Inclusion practices.

Status: Ongoing – Common strategies were used in grades 6-12 with Keys to Literacy training in those grade levels with all teachers and students. Inclusion is fully implemented at all grade levels with consistent common planning activities for Middle and High School teachers. Elementary grades need additional assistance with more common planning time.

- Extend learning for students who have mastered the grade level curriculum.

Status: Ongoing – Balanced Literacy allows for higher achieving students to read more complex text through literacy closet selections and student learning centers requiring higher order thinking skills to complete activity based projects. Jill Milton, the district's elementary math coordinator has provided a shared drive with extension activities for accelerated learners. Middle School students are involved in Search afterschool programming, in-school project based learning, advanced math classes and a National History Day project for each 8th grade student. High School students participate in Honors, Advance and AP classes in the subjects they enroll.

II. Technology Integration

- Renew five year technology plan with an emphasis on teacher training.
- Initiate system-wide technology curriculum committee.
- Prepare for PARCC.

Status: Ongoing – Under the direction of Joe Kidd, Director of Technology a committee of stakeholders have met to formulate an instructional technology plan which will meet the needs of the students with emerging technologies while preparing the way for the national standards based assessment called PARCC. We were successful in convincing the Capital Outlay and Finance Committees this year that our Strategic Plan for Improved Technology Access was worthy of funding at \$444,000. This infusion of capital will allow our Technology Department to improve speed and reliability of our network infrastructure

including increased wireless access to the elementary schools. The goal of the plan is to provide interactive access to all our students allowing them the use of technology tools that will enhance their learning. This year with the help of a \$50,000 donation from Norwood Bank, PTA, Meditech donations and the use of local funds we have approximately 40% of our classrooms with interactive Smartboards, Internet access and documents cameras for teacher use. We are gearing up to begin one to one initiatives in curriculum areas that will assist students to be better learners and competitive consumers of information.

III. Social/Emotional Needs of Students

- Review health and wellness curriculum for all levels.
- Enhance and maintain program initiatives fostering healthy choices around drugs, bullying, sports, exercise and extracurricular activities.
- Support the elementary Open Circle programming.

Status: Ongoing – The 6-12 Health Curriculum was reviewed at the department level during department meetings and formal PD times. The review consisted of improvement of certain topics: bullying, substance abuse and the sexuality education. Summer workshops are working to review the K-3 Health and Wellness activities. Sharing of the NHS YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) data publically was a tool that fostered conversation around prevention and ultimately ways to reduce risky behaviors with our students. Student assemblies were on the topics of cyberbullying, media literacy and teen dating violence. All were connected to the curriculum and enriched these topics for our students. Parent programming was offered and well-attended on the topics of bullying/cyberbullying and substance use/abuse prevention. This fall a program around bullying will be scheduled along with Middle School Outreach activities conducted by interested students who were trained by MARC. Our elementary Open Circle program for students allows students to share day to day concerns at an appropriate developmental level based on the needs of the day. Training and support continues with staff.

IV. Maximize parent and community relationships to support student learning.

- Strengthen and expand methods for informing and communicating with parents about student schedules, attendance and grades.
- Publicize school events to a variety of media outlets.
- Update community groups on NPS strategic plan.
- Initiate business partnerships, community internships and service opportunities.

Status: Ongoing – Our strategic plan has been featured at Town-wide presentations, on TV at our School Committee meetings and on our website. This guiding document allows the community to see our needs and accomplishments and has been reported in the local papers and on NPSTV to the community. This newly designed website presents a more polished image of the Norwood Public Schools giving Middle and High School parents access to their students grades, assignments and teachers e-mails. The new website can

be shared with multiple devices and with a variety of social media options thereby improving parents access to just in time information. With the help of the Better Business Bureau's Education Subcommittee we have hosted career days and internship activities that have helped our students gain insight into the options available to them in the world of work. We will be sharing our Strategic Plan and Technology Plan with additional businesses during the next year.

V. Facility Improvements & Upgrades

- Repair & maintain buildings as outlined in the 10 year capital improvement plan.
- Examine school facilities in relation to future needs.

Status: Ongoing – Over the course of this year Paul Riccardi, Director of Buildings and Grounds has assembled a team of custodians and craftsmen that have completed various maintenance projects that have improved the learning climate of our schools with the most notable being the corridors at the Oldham School. Using existing resources, the Maintenance Team replaced all corridor lighting and ceiling tiles brightening up hallways and giving areas a thorough cleaning and painting. This summer as a result of sound capital planning requests and the ability to use money that was saved from other capital projects the Oldham cafeteria and adjoining hallway will be retiled with a new floor. This year the bulk of the Capital Improvement funds appropriated through Town Meeting will be spent to improve school security with upgrade door access systems at five schools and a security system at the Savage Center which houses three programs for students alongside the current renters such as the Unemployment Agency. Early this fall we will begin our study of future building needs based on enrollment, projected real estate developments and school infrastructure.

