

Norwalk City School District Learning Recovery Plan



District Name:	Norwalk City School District
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Identifying Academic Needs

Identifying academic and curricular gaps

The identification of academic and curricular gaps created by Governor DeWine's closure of schools in the spring of 2020 was a primary focus of the 2020-2021 school year in the Norwalk City School District.

Spring 2020

The Norwalk City School District (NCSD) began preparing for the possibility of a prolonged school closure several weeks prior to Governor DeWine's decision in the spring of 2020. Given the unique and unforeseen circumstances, staff had as much time as possible to plan for a switch to online learning. While not a direct substitute for face-to-face instruction, the students, staff and parents of the Norwalk City School District made admirable achievements in the transition to online education and were able to maintain academic progress to the best of their collective ability.

When Governor DeWine chose to close schools for the remainder of the school year, teachers began communicating across and within grade levels and content areas about the progress students had made through the general curriculum during the 2019-2020 school year. The staff was well aware gaps would exist between individual students and within the class as a whole. Teachers began making plans to adjust the content and pacing of their classes for the upcoming

	<p>school year in order to compensate for any anticipated areas of need.</p> <p>Before the close of the 2019-2020 school year, the NCSD established three teams to begin preparation for the start of school in the fall: operations, academics and student wellness. The purpose of the academic team was to develop a plan to assess and mitigate any lasting impacts to student learning that resulted from Governor DeWine’s decision to close schools.</p> <p>Because of the move to online instruction for the fourth quarter, the end of the school year in the spring of 2020 created a new level of importance for the assessment and identification of academic needs when students returned in the fall. Fortunately, consistent and ongoing assessment of student learning has been a part of the Norwalk City School District’s educational approach for years. The closure itself did not change the district’s assessment practices, it did, however, reinforce the importance of tracking progress for each student.</p>
Summer 2020	<p>During the summer of 2020, the Norwalk City School District’s academic team conducted ongoing discussions about the chance of continued virtual instruction as well as the opportunity of returning to face-to-face instruction. The guiding focus, regardless of instructional format, was to assess the current academic level of students when they began school in the fall and to take steps to provide remediation for deficiencies.</p> <p>The academic team began making plans for the significant likelihood of shifting to virtual instruction at any time during the 2020-2021 school year if the community’s viral load and spread of the COVID-19 virus dictated. Many of the plans involved new instructional strategies that could improve virtual education and make it a better simulation of face to face instruction. In addition to examining new teaching and assessment strategies and protocols, the team also explored and suggested the purchase of additional technology resources to support virtual education. Items added to the district’s online support included high definition webcams and lavalier microphones for all teaching staff. These items were in addition to a substantial acquisition of new Chromebooks for student use.</p>
2020 - 2021	<p>The Norwalk City School District has been hosting students 5 days a week since the second week of the school year. Full time face to face instruction has given our students more opportunities for assessment, remediation and growth than the majority of their peers across the state.</p> <p>When students arrived in the fall, they were assessed to determine their current needs and performance levels. These assessments took many different forms depending on the age and grade level of the student. Some of the assessments used throughout the district included:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renaissance STAR Testing in reading and math • Early Learning Assessment • Lexia Core 5 Reading • IOWA Achievement Tests • Kindergarten Readiness Assessment • Fall End of Course Exams for high school students • Fall Ohio State Testing for third grade English Language Arts • Screening for sight words, phonics and fluency in the primary grades • Teacher-created Benchmark Testing (formerly SLO's) in all grades • Formative classroom assessments conducted throughout the school year in all grades • Vendor assessments from the district adopted instructional materials.
2021 - 2022	<p>After spending the 2020-2021 school year in person, students made significant progress closing gaps remaining from Governor DeWine's closure of schools in the spring of 2020. Students will again be assessed when they return to school in the fall of 2021 using many of the tools listed above. Some vendor assessments may change.</p> <p>As the Norwalk City School District adopts the new OTES 2.0 system from the Ohio Department of Education, the use of student formative assessment data will be a focus for the district staff. The district has started exploring new assessment tools to meet both the needs of students and the new evaluation system.</p>

Approaches to Addressing Academic Gaps	
Closing the gap	<p><i>By offering in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year, the Norwalk City School District was able to significantly mitigate lingering impacts from the closure in the Spring of 2020. Various tools and approaches were used to identify and address academic needs.</i></p>
Spring 2020	<p>When Governor DeWine closed schools, district staff quickly transitioned to online instruction. As the change came suddenly, online instruction was done to the greatest extent practicable.</p> <p>The first step to closing academic gaps in the spring of 2020 was to ensure all students had basic access to the internet and an internet capable device. Because of wide discrepancies in student and family access, online instruction was tailored to be possible using the most basic and commonly available devices (Chromebooks and cell phones). The district distributed</p>

	<p>hundreds of Chromebooks to families to be used during the closure. The Norwalk City School District also assisted in locating free wifi access for families in need of additional online capacity.</p> <p>The second step to addressing achievement gaps was attempting to prevent gaps from forming in the first place. Teachers, counselors, aides and administrators used Google classroom, Zooms, emails and phone calls to reachout to students that were struggling to engage in instruction. The diligence with which the staff approached this task greatly reduced the number of students not engaging in school work.</p>
Summer 2020	<p>During the summer of 2020, teachers began planning extensively to address curricular gaps that would impact their incoming students. Through communication with their peers and reviews of Ohio's Learning Standards, teachers were able to identify content students may have missed during the spring. Many teachers began to plan a modified curriculum that combined materials traditionally taught in the spring with materials normally taught in the fall. By identifying and prioritizing the most important learning standards, teachers were able integrate and address identified curricular gaps with their normal academic standards.</p>
2020 - 2021	<p>By the time students arrived in the fall of 2020, teachers were able to adjust their plans for the new school year to incorporate standards and content that would need to be introduced or reinforced from the closure in the spring of 2020. Most courses and classes adjusted the pace of instruction to focus on eliminating holes in the curriculum. Being able to spread the modified curriculum over the course of an entire school year of face to face instruction was incredibly beneficial when compared to the possibility of having to close gaps in an online or hybrid environment.</p> <p>After identifying gaps in the general curriculum, teachers began using various tools and strategies to identify students that needed additional support. Once identified, the following supports were available and used throughout the district (dependent on grade/building):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small group instruction for enrichment and remediation with teachers and aides ● Title 1 intervention services to help students struggling to make progress in the curriculum ● RTI interventions and progress monitoring to provide specifically targeted support ● Tutoring for End of Course Exams and ACT testing ● After school study tables and extra support before or after school ● Class size reduction for Algebra 1 and English 2 classes at Norwalk High School

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new course to support Industry Credentialing as an alternative graduation pathway for Norwalk High School students • Online programs to support enrichment and remediation (Lexia Core 5, Khan Academy, vendor supplied programs through district adoptions...). <p>The Norwalk City School District added multiple academic support positions for the 2020-2021 school year to serve struggling students regardless of whether the student attended school in person or fully online. These positions were added for the purpose of providing targeted assistance and interventions. Although there was considerable expense in the new positions, they were essential to support the needs of students attending school online and in person.</p> <p>The Norwalk City School District added monthly two-hour delays to allow staff the opportunity to collaboratively plan throughout the year. Because of the operational changes brought on by the COVID-19 virus, teachers invested a significant amount of time before and after the school day following safety protocols to slow the viral spread. The addition of monthly delays allowed teachers to recoup a small portion of that time and continue to plan strategies to mitigate achievement gaps.</p> <p>Secondary students in need of credit recovery will have the opportunity to participate in summer coursework to provide the opportunity to get back on track for graduation or promotion.</p> <p>Throughout the school year, the Norwalk City School District's technology department worked to expand wifi access to the exterior of some school properties. Although students were in school during the day, the expanded wifi access provided free internet service after school hours.</p> <p>The fact that students have attended school five days a week for the entire 2020-2021 school year has had a far greater impact on closing academic and curricular gaps than could ever be attained by extending the school year or offering summer school. Extending the school year, as Governor DeWine has suggested as a possibility, may certainly benefit districts who have only recently returned to in-person instruction. However, a limited duration summer school or extension of the school year would have very little impact on student growth and achievement compared to the progress made over an entire school year of face to face instruction.</p>
2021 - 2022	<p>In the 2021-2022 school year, student academic support will continue to be available to address student learning needs.</p>

Approaches to Identify Social & Emotional Needs

Identifying Impacted Students:	<i>Identifying students in need of additional social and emotional support was made easier by maintaining a high degree of accessibility.</i>
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Spring 2020	<p>One of the challenges presented when Governor DeWine closed schools was maintaining personal contact with and between students. Teachers posted lessons and held Zooms with their classes, but some students did not or were not able to attend on a regular basis. When students had been missing from Zooms or had numerous missing assignments, teachers would attempt to contact the student or the family. If contact could not be established or if issues became apparent, a referral would be made to a school counselor or administrator for additional support. By making repeated attempts with students and families, the Norwalk City School District was able to maintain a high level of student engagement.</p>
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Summer 2020	<p>In the spring of 2020, the Norwalk City School District established a team to examine ways to help students with any lingering social and emotional needs when they returned for the start of the 2020-2021 school year. This team was composed of the superintendent, school counselors and school psychologists. The team met throughout the summer of 2020 to make preparations for any issues that may need to be addressed in the fall.</p> <p>The greatest concern for the Social and Emotional Support team was the possibility of returning to online instruction in the fall. Not having students in school in the fall could dramatically impact the traditional supports upon which students rely. The team began planning for ways students could stay connected to their peers and their teachers in the event school could not return to in-person learning in the fall.</p>
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2020 - 2021	<p>Identification of social and emotional needs during the 2020-2021 school year occurred in the same manner as it would in a normal school year since students were in school five days a week. Students and staff were able to interact on a daily basis and this allowed staff members to better identify students that needed additional support.</p> <p>Students that selected to participate in virtual instruction had access to school personnel through Zoom meetings, Google classroom, emails and phone calls. In the event students were not attending or participating in their online work, referrals for support were made to appropriate school personnel; often counselors, a social worker or the appropriate school administrator.</p>
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2021 - 2022	Students will continue to receive the same access identification and support they had during the 2020-2021 school year. Unless a dramatic change takes place, schools will be open five days a week.
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Approaches to Address Social and Emotional Needs

Removing Barriers	<i>The Norwalk City School District planned for a variety of operational formats that could impact barriers to social and emotional wellness. Being open five days a week for the 2020-2021 school year was the most effective way to monitor and address social and emotional barriers to learning.</i>
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Spring 2020	When school staff identified students that were not actively participating in online learning, special effort was made to contact students and families individually. Staff emailed, called and scheduled individual or small group Zoom meetings in hopes of maintaining connectedness to students. In some circumstances, referrals were made with counselors or school principals in order to better address student needs.
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2020-2021	<p>The Norwalk City School District has been in session five days a week for all but the first week of the 2020-2021 school year. Even though COVID precautions were established and closely followed, students have been able to attend school and participate in extracurricular activities to an extent that very closely mirrors a “normal” school year. This carries with it numerous social and emotional benefits compared to students attending schools that spent the majority of their school year in an online or hybrid model. Students in the NCSD have had access to friends, teammates, school staff, coaches and numerous activities to support social and emotional growth and wellbeing.</p> <p>In addition to remaining open full time, The Norwalk City School District supported its students socially and emotionally by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adding a new student and family support specialist ● Providing a coordinator to support families and students that are not native speakers of English ● Adding a school nurse ● Developing individual student success plans ● Implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) systems and programs
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting guest speakers covering drug abuse, domestic disruptions, dating violence, suicide prevention • Implementing a new ROX (Ruling Our Experience) program • Providing guidance counselling services • Implementing “Bucket Filler” programs and activities to promote a positive climate • Reading and discussing social stories in classrooms as a basis of discussions for social and emotional support • Supporting Teen Leadership peer mentoring programs • Providing access to dozens of extracurricular and cocurricular opportunities
<p>2021-2022</p>	<p>A new, and significant, addition for the 2021-2022 school year will be the implementation of the Leader in Me Program in grades K-6. Leader in Me is a transformational program designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach leadership to every student • create a school culture that promotes student empowerment • align systems to drive results in academics. <p>The Leader in Me program includes a significant social-emotional learning component that mirrors the Social and Emotional Learning Standards adopted by The Ohio State Board of Education. The strategies implemented in the program will help students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and manage emotions • Set and achieve positive goals • Feel and show empathy for others • Establish and maintain positive relationships.

