

SCHOOL BOARD

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Mark Leonard



DIVISION SUPERINTENDENT
Dr. Gina J. Wohlford
gwohlford@nortoncityschools.org
Phone 276.679.2330
Fax 276.679.4315

**Virginia Preschool Initiative
Norton City Schools
2020-21 Local Plan**

- **Provision of a quality preschool education that helps prepare children for school:**
 - Norton City Schools Pre-k programs will utilize the Big Day for Pre-k Curriculum which is evidence-based comprehensive curriculum that is aligned with state standards. This curriculum is inclusive of engaging activities, high-quality literature, activities for development of critical early literacy skills: Oral Language (vocabulary, expressive language, listening comprehension); phonological awareness; print awareness; and alphabet knowledge. The curriculum is a structured, yet flexible, child-centered program that is reflective of the VA Foundation Blocks for Early Learning. In addition, the program develops early mathematical skills on a daily basis. Activities for group times and learning centers complete the program's comprehensive approach and address social and emotional development, science, social studies, music, art, motor skills, and technology.
 - The PALS assessment for reading and assessments provided within the curriculum as well as local checklists will be used to determine how to individualize instruction to meet the needs of the pre-k students.
 - The CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) will be used at a minimum, each semester to provide essential feedback to teachers and principals on the quality of the teacher-child interactions taking place within a classroom. These observations will guide the administration in developing professional development plans. Norton City Schools will use local CLASS observations conducted by certified CLASS observers/personnel in the school division. Currently, Dr. Gina Wohlford, Superintendent of Schools is a certified observer.
 - All observations will include feedback and debriefing for the teachers based on their scores and areas of improvement. All completed local CLASS observations will be kept on file at the School Board Office.
 - Professional Development opportunities will be provided and teachers will be expected to participate based upon the individualized CLASS data received.
 - Professional Development may focus on standards, the adopted curriculum, and/or improving teacher/child interactions.
 - Teachers and Instructional Assistants must attend at least 15 clock hours per year of professional development that supports their knowledge, skills, and practice to facilitate effective teacher-child interactions and instruction that promotes children's learning and development towards kindergarten readiness.
 - Professional Development will be delivered with fidelity by Early Childhood professionals and/or leaders in the Division and/or by utilizing outside partnerships/resources. United Way of Southwest Virginia is a valuable resource for Norton City Schools with many Professional Development opportunities and our participation in the Preschool Development Grant birth-5 activities.

- Teachers receive training from Houghton-Mifflin-Harcourt on the Big Day for Pre-k curriculum as requested and receive training updates.
 - Through the Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction (AEII) initiative, professional development, and consultation to our division will be provided.
 - Meetings with VPI Teacher & Paraprofessional, school administrator, and CLASS Certified Observers will be initiated to discuss the self-assessment results, observation results, and areas of improvement as indicated. The CLASS dimension guide will be referenced to suggest ways to improve on determined areas of need. Comparison of CLASS observation reports from the previous year and throughout the 2020-21 school year will be reviewed.
 - Foundation Blocks for Learning will serve as guidance for our programs when determining a measurable range of skills and knowledge that is essential for 4-year-olds to be successful upon entering kindergarten.
- **Working with community to provide health services and facilitate comprehensive services:**
 - Health Services and Facilitation of Comprehensive Services:
 - It is required that all students have a physical and current immunizations to be enrolled in the VPI Pre-k programs. Norton City Schools provides a hearing and vision screening for the students within the first six weeks of school starting.
 - Behavioral and mental health screenings are coordinated with Family Preservation Services or Health Connect America as needed.
 - A Local VPI steering committee will be established for the 2020-21 school year to ensure:
 - Broad stakeholder support for implementation of the VPI program
 - Coordination of services and resources to provide available comprehensive services to children and families
 - Federal and state funds are maximized to preserve existing slots for 4-year-olds already being implemented in the community (increase access for more at-risk students).
 - This committee will consist of:
 - Superintendent of NCS - Gina Wohlford
 - Administrator(s) of Norton Elementary & Middle School - Melissa Kiser
 - Children's Inc. Representative- Amy Baker
 - Norton City Social Services- Abe Rutherford
 - Wise County/City of Norton Health Department Representative - Michelle McPheron
 - Kids Central Head Start Director - Tammy Mullins
 - Parent within school community - Aundrea Kiser
 - Southwest VA United Way Representative - Cathy Crowgey
 - The VPI Steering committee will meet quarterly, and the minutes of the meetings will be kept on file.
 - One of the primary focuses of the committee will be to review implementation, successes, and challenges for the VPI program and to problem solve for solutions. Federal funding for this program will be reviewed and the committee will develop recruiting strategies for students that might benefit from the VPI services.

- **Family engagement:**

- Teachers of VPI programs will be responsible for developing open communication and family engagement activities throughout the school year. The focus of the family engagement should be:
 - Building a community of respect that considers the various cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds of parents and caregivers
 - Promoting parenting skills and coaching parents as their child's first teachers- daily communication between the teacher and parent will be organized by using student folders. Developmentally appropriate activities are shared with families to encourage learning beyond the school day.
 - Listening to parents' feedback and building partnerships with them.
- Teachers will be required to document family engagement activities and keep on file.
- Norton City Schools will schedule parent-teacher conferences at least twice a year and provide routine communication such as newsletters, School Messenger announcements, and family-school activities. Teachers or families may request additional conferences as needed.
- Transition strategies will be determined in collaboration with the kindergarten teachers and administrators of the school.
 - Meetings to discuss standards will be held
 - Visits to kindergarten classrooms
 - Parent meetings to communicate kindergarten expectations
 - Transitioning to kindergarten toolkits for parents in home language will be available
 - Registration/orientation for kindergarten students will be held in an engaging manner to include parents and students while taking into consideration their cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds
- ****COVID-19 Phase 3 Guidance and Norton City Schools Reopening Plan** - could alter how family engagement can take place based on mitigation strategies and other factors.

- **Equity for all children:**

- Norton City Schools will accept children with disabilities into the VPI classroom.
 - Children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) may be eligible for the VPI program in one of the following ways:
 - The child with the IEP meets the regular eligibility requirements.
 - Family income is at or below 350 percent of federal poverty guidelines
 - Up to 15 percent of the division's slots may be filled based on locally established criteria to meet the unique needs of the at-risk children in the community and having a disability is considered a locally established criteria.
 - As determined, the Director of Special Education, VPI teacher, special education teacher, and assistant will plan individualized instruction beginning at the IEP meeting and continuing throughout the school year.
- Support for Dual Language Learners

- Although formal assessments of Dual Language Learner qualification are not currently in place for Pre-k in Norton City Schools, the division will provide support to students who demonstrate a need for additional EL support.
- Services for Homeless Pre-k students:
 - NCS works with families, and outside agencies to identify children experiencing homelessness.
 - Guidance for providing required services to homeless students is provided by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act and the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program as part of Title IX and Title IX Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- Exclusionary Discipline/Suspension/Expulsion
 - Norton City Schools will make every effort to follow guidance regarding best practices in implementing developmentally appropriate experiences for children in Pre-k that can prevent suspension and expulsion.
 - Collaboration between families and professionals will be a focus as well as a focus on effective classroom management and social-emotional skill development to support healthy development of the child.
- **Program operations and transportation:**
 - Student Eligibility:
 - Guidelines from the VDOE- Using Family Income Criteria in Determining Student Eligibility for the State-funded VPI and Best Practices of Implementing a Local Eligibility Process is utilized for determining income-based and locally established criteria for eligibility into the VPI program.
 - All VDOE guidance is referenced when determining eligibility, program operations, and designing an effective program.
 - Staffing Ratios 1:10
 - If the average class size is greater than 10 students (but does not exceed 20) there must be one full-time teacher's aide assigned to the classroom.
 - No class size can exceed 20 students.
 - Instruction Time and Unstructured Recreational Time
 - The 2020 Appropriations Acts bill states that VPI programs may include unstructured recreational time that is intended to develop teamwork, social skills, and overall physical fitness in any calculation of total instructional time, provided that such unstructured recreational time does not exceed 15 percent of the instruction time or teaching hours.
 - Norton City Schools will provide a full-day program. During the 2020-21 school year, due to COVID-19, 60 percent of the program time will be provided by a virtual/remote academy and 40 percent will be provided by in-person learning in order to follow the mitigation strategies as required by the 2020-21 NCS Reopening Plan.
 - Student attendance will be monitored utilizing the NCS Student Information System, PowerSchool. All VPI students will be assigned a State Testing Identification number.
 - Transportation

- Families will be made aware of school bus transportation available for Norton City Schools students. Families will be notified of the “drop off and pick up procedures” for Norton Elementary and Middle School children.
- All Pre-k students are offered morning and afternoon bus transportation. While we have some students whose parents opt to bring their child before school and pick them up in the afternoon, buses are available to all students. School buses are utilized for field trips.

*** This plan will be re-evaluated as Phase Guidance during COVID-19 changes. ***