



Norfolk Public Schools

Overview of the District

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size):	142
Number of Schools:	58
Number of Students:	36,724
Number of Teachers:	2,956
Annual Budget:	\$283.4 million

Superintendent: Dr. Stephen C. Jones, of Syracuse, New York was recently appointed by the school board as the new superintendent. Dr. Denise K. Schnitzer, interim superintendent from July 2004 to July 2005, replaced Dr. John O. Simpson, who served from 1998 through July 2004.

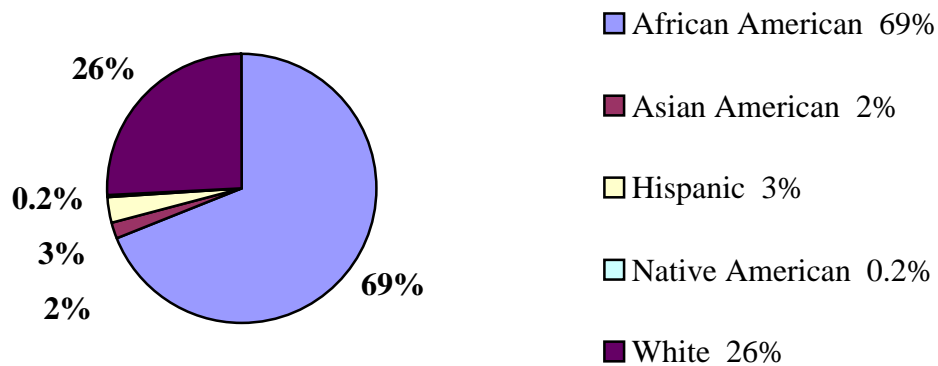
Governance: Appointed Board. Seven members selected by the Norfolk City Council for two-year terms. Twelve hours of education training for each Board member required by Virginia law.

Teacher Unions: Virginia is a right-to-work state. Norfolk teachers are affiliated with the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers.

Student Characteristics

Percent of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced School Lunch:	58%
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners:	0.5%
Graduation Rate (using Manhattan Institute methodology):	62%

Student Demographics



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Meeting Federal No Child Left Behind Requirements

- ✓ In 2004, 76% of Norfolk's schools met their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets as identified by the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, which requires that schools meet performance targets for students in all significant subgroups (e.g. ethnicity, income, language, and disability).

Consistent High Performance in Reading and Math while Reducing Achievement Gaps across Ethnic and Income Groups

- ✓ Norfolk is a consistent high performer (2001-2004) among demographically similar districts in Virginia. Using The Broad Prize methodology, Norfolk outperformed similar districts in Virginia in six of six areas (elementary, middle and high school; reading and math), and also demonstrated greater improvement in those same six areas. This is Norfolk's third year as a Broad Prize finalist.
- ✓ Reading: The percentage of elementary students who reached proficiency in reading increased by 14 percentage points in the past four years, while middle school reading improved by 12 percentage points.
- ✓ Mathematics: The percentage of elementary students who reached proficiency in math increased by 14 percentage points in the past four years, while middle school math improved by 23 percentage points.
- ✓ Norfolk showed reductions in ethnic achievement gaps in the following categories: elementary reading for Hispanic students (11 percentage points) and middle school math for African-American students (10 percentage points) when compared to their White counterparts.

Graduation Rates

- ✓ Norfolk's current graduation rate is 62% (based on the Manhattan Institute methodology), which has improved 8 percentage points over the past four years.

RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES

Curriculum and Academic Goals

- ✓ Virginia standards provide the foundation or the "floor" for the district curriculum. Teachers are given specific learning objectives, curriculum maps, quarterly pacing calendars, monitoring rubrics, and multi-task performance assessments. This year, the district provided teachers with CDs that contained pacing guides and hyperlinks to specific activities for teaching each learning objective.
- ✓ State standards are broken down into specific skills in literacy, math, and other core content areas. This year the district began pushing math skills down to lower grades: algebra courses are taught in grade 8, with algebraic concepts coordinated from pre-K through grade 7.

- ✓ The district has assigned core-content teachers, department chairs, and grade-level leaders to help teachers fully align the curriculum. District instructional support specialists spend 70% of their time in classrooms helping teachers implement the curriculum.
- ✓ District-wide quarterly assessments (and monthly assessments in some schools) are administered, and extensive walk-through observations are provided to struggling schools to ensure that the curriculum is being consistently implemented.

Staff Selection and Capacity Building

- ✓ Norfolk increasingly relies on hiring principals from within the district's ranks. An academy coordinated with a local business consortium aims to develop leadership skills of potential principals. New and existing principals who participate in the Leadership Academy attend a training session with the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, N.C. for three days prior to school opening and then meet monthly with local business leaders during the year.
- ✓ Norfolk focuses on recruiting minority teachers to reflect its student demographics. A citywide job fair allows the district to recruit and pre-screen hundreds of potential certified teacher applicants. An ethnic minority teacher network encourages discussion, provides role models, and offers tutorial input.
- ✓ The district has a formal three-tiered induction program designed to support teachers their first three years. The program is research-based and includes monthly activities for teachers, as well as a strong mentoring program.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

- ✓ Norfolk has a well-established process to choose academic programs that will be used in the district. The district evaluates its needs by looking at data and then implements pilot programs before conducting a final evaluation of a program's effectiveness based on student achievement.
- ✓ The district has recentralized its academic programs in recent years. It now mandates two-and-a-half hours of daily language arts instruction and one hour of mathematics instruction at all elementary schools. Sixth graders attend a year-long reading class, in addition to English.
- ✓ Focusing on the five dimensions of reading defined by the U.S. Department of Education, Norfolk has developed and implemented a web-based primary literacy program. The assessments allow the district to track the performance and reading deficiencies of every student in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2. The district is planning to extend the program to grades 3, 4 and 5, and eventually through high school.

Use of Data

- ✓ The district's three-tiered Comprehensive Accountability System (CAS) is a tool used to hold all levels of the district accountable, from schools to departments to the School Board. Data is compared longitudinally over five years to monitor improvement. Tier I includes state and district-level data, tier II focuses on school-or department- level data, and tier III provides a narrative of qualitative data that describe the context of each school's or department's accountability results.
- ✓ The district requires quarterly benchmark assessments in all grades. Ninety percent of Norfolk's schools have developed common assessments that teachers give monthly. Some schools are able to score their test sheets electronically on site so teachers and administrators can receive immediate feedback on student achievement.
- ✓ Schools act quickly in response to monthly common assessments. Teachers meet in "data teams" to review the data, develop common plans and adjust instruction.

Interventions and Adjustments

- ✓ Schools that do not meet benchmark requirements receive immediate attention. In addition to increased financial and staff support, these schools receive help from an outside expert who aids in interpreting data and advises schools on instructional decisions.
- ✓ A professional review board consisting of district staff provides support to struggling teachers. This support has helped teachers develop management and organizational skills and effective classroom techniques, which has reduced the number of teachers leaving the system.
- ✓ The district mandates an in-school remediation program for those students who do not meet the state standards. Because the district administers frequent assessments, schools are able to start the program at the beginning of the school year rather than wait until the end of the school year.
- ✓ The district is focusing on pre-school education and has piloted 18 Title I Jump Start programs.

Stability of Leadership

- ✓ Norfolk has had a continuity of leadership focused on a quality education for all children. John O. Simpson, who instituted the district's "All means all" motto, served as superintendent from July 1998 until he retired in July 2004 when he handed the reins over to Denise K. Schnitzer, a 32-year veteran of the district. Schnitzer served as interim superintendent for one year, and in July 2005, Stephen C. Jones was appointed superintendent of Norfolk Public Schools.

Other Factors

- ✓ Virginia is a non-bargaining state, but the teacher associations in Norfolk operate under a memorandum of understanding with the district. The relationships among the board, labor associations, and the superintendent are harmonious and unified by a focus on student achievement.

- ✓ The Guiding Coalition, a committee comprised of parents, community members, school board members, employee organizations, teachers and administrators, is actively involved in many aspects of an ongoing critical review of district processes.

- ✓ The school board created a task force charged with making recommendations on how to make inroads with traditionally reticent parents and students. As a result, the district has reached out to faith-based communities and has established a pilot mentoring program for students.