



## Equity and Excellence Learning Centers Overview

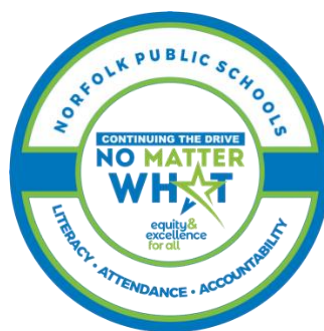
Norfolk Public Schools' Strategic Plan guides the division's work and conveys the hope of meaningful change and the promise of improved, more equitable learning outcomes for each student served. The Equity and Excellence Learning Centers are aligned with four pillars of an effective community school. The four pillars increase the odds that young people in under-resourced and under-served communities will be in inclusive and student-centered educational environments with meaningful learning opportunities, high-quality teaching, evidence-based resources, additional supports, additional technology innovation, and a culture of high expectations, trust, and shared responsibility. According to the research in this review of literature, Community Schools and the Comer School Development Program bring educators and community partners together to create high-quality schools with an integrated approach to academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement. In addition, community schools are grounded in the principle that all students, families, and communities benefit from strong connections between educators and local resources, supports, and people.

Norfolk Public Schools is committed to providing equity and excellence for all, which includes equitable distribution of resources and opportunities to best meet the needs of our diverse student population. Jacox Elementary, PB Young Elementary, Ruffner School, and Booker T. Washington High School will become Equity and Excellence Learning Centers (EELCs) aligned with the four pillars of an effective community school. The selected schools are pathway schools in the Booker T. Washington school zone which will create a sustainable infrastructure. The Four Pillars of Community Connections are Extended and Enrichment Learning Opportunities, Distributed Leadership and Practices, Family and Community Engagement, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. These pillars increase the odds that the students attending these schools will be in inclusive and student-centered educational environments with meaningful learning opportunities, high-quality teaching, evidence-based resources, additional technology innovation, and a culture of high expectations, trust, and shared community responsibility.



A variety of classes and/or workshops will be presented at times convenient to the parents and adult community. Services will be provided according to identified needs, with offerings such as advancing student academic achievement, SOL analysis and strategies, career counseling, parenting skills, health and nutrition, and technology education. The Positive Alternatives to Behavior Systems (PBIS) framework will be a resource to support parents with creating and maintaining a safe, structured, and consistent home environment which strengthens adult-to-child relationships. School based health centers will provide a range of services. These centers will have health professionals who offer basic care and checkups. In addition, the clinics will offer a complete range of services, including mental health support.

District and community agencies will assist in delivering these services. During the initial year of the project, steps will be taken to monitor the needs of the various communities and to involve adult members of the communities in the planning process. The focus during the second and third years of the project will be to increase the offerings and community involvement. After the first year, Norfolk Public Schools and our community partners will evaluate the successes of the project and begin to pursue alternative funding sources aimed at sustainability by either securing additional grant funding or our own organizational funding.



## Four Pillars of Community Connections



### Extended and Enrichment Learning Opportunities

Norfolk Public Schools' robust and evidence-based curriculum ensures students in our Equity and Excellence Learning Centers (EELCs) participate in high-impact learning experiences throughout extended school days. Committed educators design engaging lessons that cover core academic subjects while also emphasizing social-emotional development and topics relevant to Norfolk Public Schools' unique context and student population. This comprehensive approach fosters meaningful educational outcomes and holistic student growth, equipping learners with essential academic knowledge, critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence, and a deep connection to their community, thereby preparing them for future academic success.

### Family and Community Engagement

Strong partnerships with leaders from Norfolk Public Schools and across the region, community and faith partners, physical and mental health services, and most importantly, families and guardians, will be the core of the EELCS. Norfolk Public Schools will continue to engage with diverse and varied partners, including but not limited to, volunteers, families, parents and guardians, cultural institutions, universities, churches, and historic learning sites. EELCs will be hubs for the communities they serve, offering services both during the traditional school and beyond.

### Distributed Leadership and Practices

Teachers assigned to the EELCs will be experienced, inclusive, and culturally relevant educators who understand the importance of professional development. These educators will encourage critical thinking, lesson planning, progress monitoring, and high-quality lessons. Teachers, staff, families, and community stakeholders will be empowered with decision-making roles, fostering collaboration and shared responsibility to enhance overall performance and innovation.

### Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

In alignment with the Virginia Department of Education's Community Schools framework, our EELCs will implement a comprehensive cycle of improvement. This process encompasses needs assessment, action planning, deliver supports, ongoing evaluation, and adjustment of interventions. We will actively recognize and celebrate the contributions and achievements of students, partners, and stakeholders, leveraging these successes to inform and propel subsequent growth initiatives.

*Learning Policy Institute: Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy (2017)*