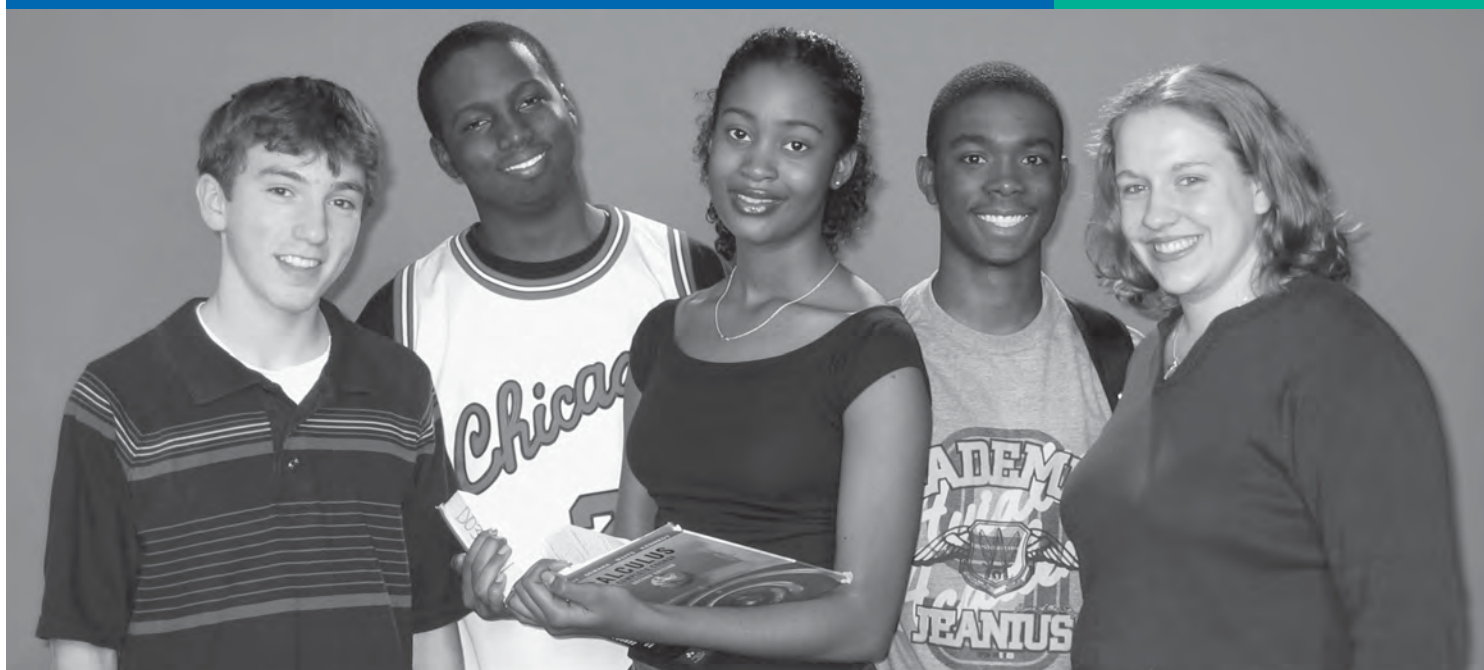




Exploring Continuous High School Improvement

Why are we exploring high school improvement?

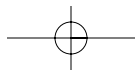
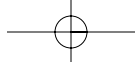
With all of the regular public high schools in Norfolk meeting full accreditation by state standards, the question is an obvious one. Some may echo the old adage: “If it ain’t broke, then why fix it?” The answer is simple: While high schools are meeting the needs of **many** students, they are not places where **all** children can be challenged to learn and where they can succeed. This is underscored by the fact that only one of our regular high schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act in 2003.

Norfolk Public Schools has one goal — improving the quality of teaching and learning for all... *and ALL means ALL*. Three critical areas of inquiry guide our work:

- **Options & Opportunities:** Do students have enough or, perhaps more importantly, the right opportunities available to them so that they can take advantage of a wide of range of options upon graduation?
- **Expectations & Equity:** Does NPŠ hold high expectations so that all students are challenged to achieve to their fullest potential? Does NPŠ provide equitable support to ensure this is possible?
- **Roles & Relationships:** How do students and staff interact in our high schools? Do students feel “connected” to their school?

The anticipated outcome of this multi-year effort is an action plan to improve the delivery of services to students in our high schools. This plan will center on the results of research and discussions involving all stakeholder populations — students, parents, teachers, employee organizations, community members, business leaders, and administrators. The short-term goal is to identify what our “ideal” high schools would look like.

With the help of our stakeholders, Norfolk Public Schools has identified four “**power objectives**” that outline our vision for delivering world-class education to our students.





Power Objective 1:

All students will graduate high school in four years.

Our district is committed to ensuring the success of each and every student we serve. Part of that commitment is ensuring that students are ready at each level of schooling to move on to the next level. Students must be able to read on grade level. They must have access to rigorous courses and be prepared for challenging coursework in a variety of content areas.

We know that all children can be successful... and ALL means ALL. But we also know that some students need some extra support to break through to success. That is why Norfolk Public Schools is working to provide a variety of learning opportunities that allow students and parents to select the options that best meet their needs.



Dr. Denise K. Schnitzer
Interim Superintendent of Schools

The federal No Child Left Behind legislation requires that all students graduate in four years. Recognizing that each student is unique and may require different supports, two strategies were devised to help students graduate on time.

Strategy 1: Prepare all students to enter high school on track to graduate in four years — Ensuring that all students are not behind from the start of high school is an important foundation for success. Support for this foundation might include development and implementation of a “high school readiness” program. The district should also focus on ensuring that all rising ninth grade students complete Algebra I or are proficient in pre-algebra.

Strategy 2: Provide increased time and multiple learning opportunities — Now, all our high schools share a standardized schedule allowing more flexibility in scheduling support classes, dual enrollment courses and distance learning options. The district also is moving to implement specialty programs in all our high schools. Our Continuous High School Improvement efforts also include offering Middle College and revamped summer school options.

Although each power objective has been included, more information is available online at www.ImproveHighSchools.com. It is also important to note that these are preliminary suggestions based on stakeholder input. A formal action plan will be developed at a later date.

Power Objective 2:

All graduates are prepared to enter post-secondary education.



Ms. Toneka Smith

Norview HS, Class of 2000

Kent State student

In college you are on your own. You need to have the ability to study effectively and prioritize. High schools need to help students learn time management and responsibility.

Developing strong reading and writing skills while in high school is critical for succeeding in all your college classes. The stronger your foundation in writing and math, the better prepared you are.

In fact, strong content instruction in all areas is important. My history teacher taught me so well that my college class was a breeze!

Strategy 1: Strengthen teachers' ability to deliver content at the highest levels — Highly qualified, subject-area experts are the key to ensuring students learn. The district should utilize staff to establish rigorous instructional practices and to develop a teacher demonstration center to model appropriate strategies. Development of a district-wide AP program would benefit both teachers and students. Additionally, the district should explore developing an incentive plan to encourage teachers to obtain Masters degrees in their content areas.

Strategy 2: Strengthen academics so that all courses will be rigorous, reflect career needs, and challenge all students — To implement this strategy, the district must utilize vertical teams to review course requirements and assessments for alignment from grade to grade.

Strategy 3: Develop a college-bound culture of high expectations congruent with college performance requirements — Students must be exposed to the college environment early and taught the appropriate goal-setting techniques to assist them in achieving college admission. Teachers must develop consistent high expectations of quality work from all students.





Power Objective 3:

All graduates are prepared to enter a “real-life” field of employment.

In order to remain competitive in today's business environment, The Virginian-Pilot requires more of new employees at every level of the organization. Every work team is asked to improve customer satisfaction using tools like statistics and process analysis. The ability to learn new skills and behaviors is essential for people to grow within the company. We partnered with Norfolk Public Schools because we recognize the need to hire people who are well trained for today's work environment, but more importantly, are prepared for continuous learning to cope with tomorrow's work environment. In an industry where the fundamental rules of the business are changing rapidly, we need people that can analyze the impact on their work group and react in innovative ways to tomorrow's challenges. As a local company, The Virginian-Pilot recognizes that well trained people coming out of local schools are essential to our success.



Mr. D. R. Carpenter, III

President and Publisher

The Virginian-Pilot

We do not see college/career decisions as an “either/or” prospect in Norfolk Public Schools. For our graduates, the reality should be preparedness for post-secondary education and for career opportunities. Many of the skills needed to succeed in college overlap with those needed to succeed in the world of work. Our objective is to ensure that Norfolk Public Schools graduates are competitive in both arenas.

Strategy 1: Develop marketable skills for each student through in-school and real-life experiences — Students must have a better understanding of what is required to enter the world of work. The district should provide career packets that help students understand the prerequisites for various college majors and careers. Additional support might include assisting each student in developing an individualized “Academic and Career Experiences” plan that includes career objectives and measurable goals.

The district also should broaden its discussions with business leaders regarding curriculum and workforce preparation. Norfolk Public Schools must also leverage partnerships with businesses and community agencies to provide job shadowing experiences for students and teachers. Students should be required to complete an internship with an outside employer and an exit project prior to graduation.

Power Objective 4:

All graduates are prepared to become productive citizens.



Dr. Theresa Whibley
School Board Chair

While academic success is a vital focus for our school district, we also know that our students must be prepared to become productive citizens once they graduate. Students who are already connected to the community and who understand the value of active civic engagement enhance not only their neighborhoods but also their work environments. We want to educate our students to have the knowledge, skills and compassion necessary to be true leaders — in their communities, on their college campuses, and in their places of work.

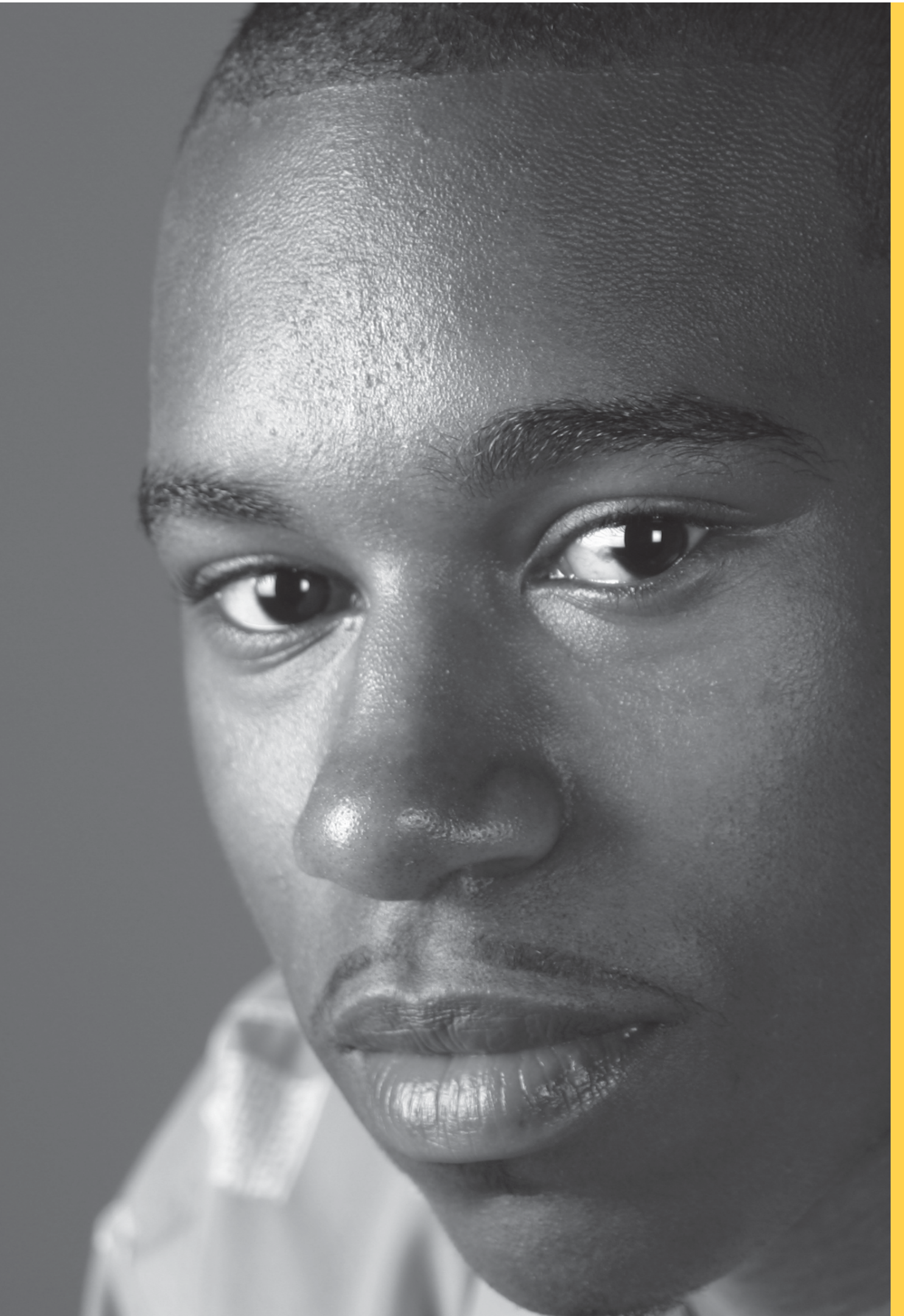
We must expose our students to the community service opportunities now so that they learn the benefits and rewards of civic engagement.

As we delved further into the topic of Continuous High School Improvement, it became clear that we needed to seriously consider a fourth power objective — preparing productive citizens. These “soft skills” will be a key area of discussion in the coming year.

Parents, students and staff all agree that our graduates must have not only the skills to succeed in the worlds of academia and work, but also be willing and have the capacity to be fully engaged members of their communities. Whether it is involvement in their place of worship, their civic league, a local charity or city government, we want our students — and graduates — to be actively involved in making the world in which they live a better place.

As we continue our work in the coming year, we will begin to develop specific power strategies to ensure that the development of citizenship skills is embedded in our instructional practices. For example, community service requirements have been suggested as an appropriate way to expose all high school students to the opportunities for and the benefits of civic engagement.





What have we done so far?

Our Continuous High School Improvement efforts began in Fall 2003 when principals convened groups of teachers at a retreat to examine data about each school's student performance. This laid the foundation for our work and the School Board was asked to endorse the reform exploration.

Throughout the year, central administrators and building principals worked closely with community members, business leaders, representatives from our employee organizations, and parents to examine how our public high schools were currently serving the students of Norfolk.

The district then partnered with the local public broadcasting radio station to convene a Town Hall Meeting. Over 150 stakeholders attended the event allowing administrators and Board members to hear additional student, parent and teacher input. Each high school also conducted its own Town Hall Meeting to discuss community-specific issues.

The result of this research and discussion is a clearer picture of what the community believes our high schools should look like as described by our four power objectives.

What are the next steps?

Exploration of Continuous High School Improvement is just the first step in the process. The district will also be conducting surveys of current students, graduates and businesses who employ our former students to further assess the quality of our educational offerings.

This information, informed by our power objectives, will assist the district in developing an action plan and timeline for implementing change.

But Norfolk Public Schools cannot bring about this change alone...

How can I get involved?

Norfolk Public Schools believes that our efforts to better educate all students can only be successful with the support of all stakeholder groups — parents, students, business leaders, and community members. We want to know what you think about the current state of our high schools. We also want you to help us plan for the future. If you are interested in being a part of our efforts, contact your local principal.

Granby High School

7101 Granby Street

Norfolk, VA 23505

(757) 451-4110 • (757) 451-4118 (fax)

Ted Daughtrey, Principal

Norview High School

6501 Chesapeake Blvd.

Norfolk, VA 23513

(757) 852-4500 • (757) 852-4511 (fax)

Marjorie Stealey, Principal

Lake Taylor High School

1384 Kempsville Road

Norfolk, VA 23502

(757) 892-3200 • (757) 892-3210 (fax)

Noah Rogers, Principal

B.T. Washington High School

1111 Park Avenue

Norfolk, VA 23504

(757) 628-3575 • (757) 628-3566 (fax)

Cynthia Watson, Principal

Maury High School

322 Shirley Avenue

Norfolk, VA 23517

(757) 628-3344 • (757) 628-3359 (fax)

Michael Caprio, Principal

Norfolk Technical Vocational Center

1330 N. Military Hwy

Norfolk, VA 23502

(757) 892-3300 • (757) 892-3305 (fax)

William Davis, Jr., Principal

You also can e-mail **chsi@nps.k12.va.us** or learn more about our efforts online at **www.ImproveHighSchools.com** or **www.nps.k12.va.us**.

Whether you are a student, parent, employee, business leader or member of the community, we want you to be a part of shaping our high schools.

We look forward to your continued participation!



Rodney Jordan

Parent

Kids today are so much wiser and more technologically astute than we were. Schools need to look ahead and ensure that we aren't generations behind.

I think Norfolk Public Schools is on target with its work. That means when my daughters graduate, they will be ready.

Students need to be prepared not only for the higher education environment, but also for the world of work — especially in this time of global competitiveness. Students have to graduate high school with excellent work-force skills.

After high school, I plan to attend a major university. My primary choice is Chapel Hill in North Carolina; however, I am willing to accept any college with a scholarship and the major I will focus on, Computer Software Engineering.

My academic career has prepared me by allowing me to have a choice of classes I enjoy — especially the many computer courses. The honors classes have taught me to think critically and to develop analytical skills that will help me be successful in the future.



Brent Mabry

Granby High School student



Sandra Masterman

2004 Teacher of the Year

Willard Model School

There is nothing more important in life than a strong education; therefore, there is nothing more important in life than strong teachers willing to give everything it takes to make you a strong student — strong in work ethic, strong in character, strong in academics, and strong in pride.

Teachers begin cultivating these traits in students long before they reach high school. Our graduates' success relies on a firm foundation built in pre-kindergarten and elementary school.



Norfolk Public Schools

800 East City Hall Avenue
Norfolk, VA 23510

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 15

Exploring Continuous High School Improvement

www.ImproveHighSchools.com
www.nps.k12.va.us