

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



Office of Charter Schools
NC ACCESS PROGRAM
NC Department of Public Instruction

School Culture

Academic Support

Tackling Academic Loss

Implementation Description

Ridgeview Charter School (RCS) offers a learning environment where children develop a passion for learning, discover new interests, and unlock hidden talents. The school opened its doors to students for the 2019-20 school year and soon found themselves pivoting to changes necessitated by COVID-19's impact on education. With NC ACCESS funding, Ridgeview was able to mitigate academic learning loss for their students through a proactive, multifaceted strategy, which included addressing technology needs, building strong classroom connections, and promoting foreign language education.

While students had an option to attend class in-person throughout the entire 2020-21 academic year, there were a number of families who were uncomfortable with the potential health risks and chose to attend virtually. With the support of NC ACCESS funds, the school provided a device and hotspot to every child in need to ensure they were equipped to learn from home. Ensuring equitable access to technology was especially important given that RCS is a Title 1 school where 95% of the student population is considered to be Educationally Disadvantaged (ED). Studies have shown that students from underprivileged backgrounds have the greatest need for reliable access to technology (Anderson, 2019). Providing technology to students was an essential element in Ridgeview's plan to provide a quality education to all students.

Ridgeview's leadership understood that academics are dependent upon their ability to engage and connect with students. One challenge of the pandemic was the isolation many students felt. In order to maintain strong connections, all Ridgeview students attended live classes each day regardless of whether they were in the classroom or learning remotely. In each class, the

About This School

Ridgeview Charter School

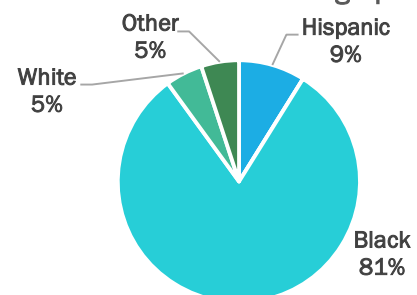
Ridgeview Charter School is a K-8 school with a mission "to provide students with a global perspective. Ridgeview offers an environment that values and appreciates differences and prepares students to participate and thrive in an increasingly integrated world." Ridgeview uses the International Curriculum and supports the mastery of foreign language offering both Japanese and Spanish to all students. With a stellar academic program and research-based psycho-social support, Ridgeview will provide a learning environment conducive to the acquisition of critical thinking skills that will equip students to graduate college.

Year School Opened: 2019-20

Grant Awarded: 2020-21

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-5

2020-21 Student Demographics



% ED Student Population: 95 %

Urbanicity: Rural / Gastonia, NC

Persons in Poverty (Gaston County)⁶: 11.6 %

teacher and in-person students interacted with the remote learners through a television screen. It was important to build healthy relationships between teachers and students, despite the virtual divide, because these bonds have been shown to “*contribute to a welcoming, inclusive school climate that promotes equity, social and emotional learning and improved student outcomes*” (Nishioka, 2019). Teachers and families stayed connected through Google Classroom and student emails, which made for a productive partnership. Learning remotely was challenging for many students throughout the pandemic as they felt distracted or unmotivated to participate in their education at home (Gaeta, 2020). RCS teachers contacted families if students were not visible during virtual learning or if household activities seemed to be distracting their child(ren). The interactions maintained a focus on supporting the student and families and mutual problem solving. The two-way parent-teacher communication and the live class interactions improved student engagement and promoted academic success.

Beyond just surviving academically, RCS staff wanted their students to thrive during this time. The school implemented the International Primary Curriculum and began requiring students to study a foreign language each year. The school currently offers Japanese and Spanish, but plans to add more languages in the future, so that students will graduate with fluency in at least two languages. According to research, learning a foreign language can improve cognitive, verbal, and problem-solving skills as well as help students perform better academically (Loveless, N.d.). The school purchased a virtual curriculum, including some of their foreign language materials, using available NC ACCESS grant funds.

Results

During the 2019-20 school year, end of grade tests were not administered and all students were new to the school so it was difficult to determine each student's academic baseline which made 2020-21 EOG scores difficult to interpret.

Challenges

The challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic caused many students to believe that they did not need to apply themselves in their educational efforts, because there were not any end of grade tests the previous year.

Future Modifications

In order to prevent summer learning loss, school leadership created a 6-week Summer Program, funded by the CARES grant and 21st century. More than 125 students, over 50% of their student population, are scheduled to attend. The program will be curriculum-driven and cover math, science, ELA, health and fitness, and leadership training and will also include field trips and other hands-on activities for participants.

Critical Components

Getting Started

School leadership commented that it was essential to provide laptops and hotspots to students for effective virtual learning to occur.

Ongoing Supports

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Ridgeview staff and families were able to connect and engage in meaningful ways. Teachers provided consistent feedback and updates to parents, which positively impacted student engagement and attendance. RCS wants to build on these connections and proactive communication strategies to continue supporting student success.

Equity Connections

Research has shown that when schools provide economically disadvantaged students with the technology needed for educational success, they are promoting a more equitable academic experience that will benefit them for years to come (National Education Association, 2008). RCS provided their students with laptops, hot spots, and other educational resources to equip them for virtual learning and to foster ongoing academic success.

Research

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