

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



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

Family and Community Engagement

Family Support

An Informed Transition

Implementation Description

Wilson Preparatory Academy (WPA)'s mission is to provide every student with a quality and relevant education that will prepare them to progress in a rapidly evolving global society. When faced with the unforeseen global impact of COVID-19, leaders at WPA followed state guidelines and prepared to begin the school year with students engaged in remote learning. As such, they provided training for teachers and improved methods of communication with families in order to prepare everyone for virtual instruction.

After careful consideration of the circumstances, school leadership determined that fully remote learning was the best option for their students; the next step was to prepare teachers for this adjustment. Studies have demonstrated that ongoing training for teachers, including formalized professional development (Robinson, 2019) and professional learning communities (Serviss, 2021), offer a wide range of benefits to individual teachers and the school culture as a whole. Through the use of available NC ACCESS funds, WPA hired a consultant who provided curriculum training and strategies for virtual instruction. Teachers then divided into breakout groups by grade level and subject area to share ideas and strategies for online learning. The staff met a final time with the consultant to devise a cohesive school-wide virtual instruction program based on the professional development and teacher input. School leadership commented that providing teachers with opportunities to contribute ensured the formation of one concise plan to communicate to families and increased

About This School

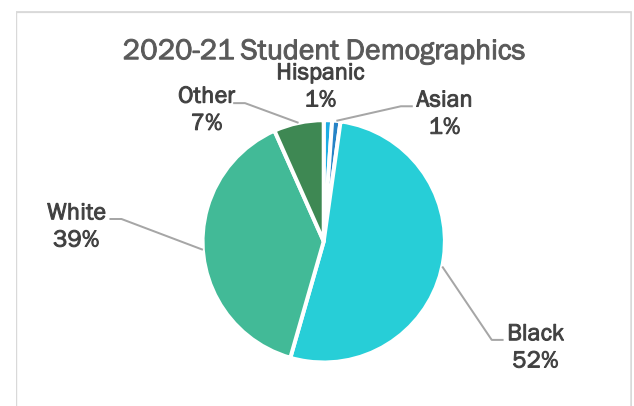
Wilson Preparatory Academy

Wilson Preparatory Academy is a K-12 public charter school located in Wilson, North Carolina. Our mission is to provide every student with a quality and relevant education that will prepare them to progress in a rapidly evolving global society. An integrated and comprehensive curriculum will be tailored to every student regardless of background, learning style, career or college pathway. The vision of Wilson Preparatory Academy is to graduate productive citizens successfully to engage in life-long learning and careers in a global society.

Year School Opened: 2014-15

Grant Awarded: 2020-21

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-12



% ED Student Population: 42%

Urbanicity: Rural / Wilson, NC

Persons in Poverty (Wilson County)⁷: 21.5%

teacher buy-in. Studies have shown that when teachers are given the opportunity to collaborate, set goals, and receive professional development, their students experience greater academic success (Hongboontri, 2014).

After developing a strategy for effective virtual instruction, the next logical step was to communicate their plan to families as it aligns with a 2020 study which found families who are well supported tend to positively impact their child's disposition and can help them "make the most of online learning opportunities" (Manca & Meluzzi). WPA established pathways for families to stay connected and informed. With the availability of NC ACCESS funds, the school hired Educational Networks to help with the redesign of their [school website](#). They also added direct links to their [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) feeds from the website, making the school website the launching point for communication. Since troubleshooting technical issues is an essential component of virtual learning, WPA leadership proactively addressed the need for tech support by establishing a unique email address in which families received a prompt response and had issues resolved quickly. Once communication methods were established, the school leadership invited families to attend a Zoom session outlining WPA's remote learning plan. During this meeting, school leadership introduced the school's chosen online learning platform, applications, and digital tools that students would be using every day. WPA staff answered common curriculum questions and ensured families knew how to reach out for help when troubleshooting technology issues. They followed up with families who had not yet received their school-provided Chromebooks or internet hot spots. Because of the virtual meeting, parents felt supported and were able to successfully navigate the schools' updated website. The school's website continues to be the focal point for communication with families and proves to be an effective means of advertising to the general public which was particularly helpful during the enrollment period for 2021-22.



Results

The updated web site and intentional focus on using school social media platforms to share information allowed families to easily access information and better understand opportunities available at WSA for their child(ren). Use of NC ACCESS funds to improve the school website resulted in the highest average daily attendance (ADA) of 960 students during the 2020-21 school year. Not only did this exceed the ADA for previous years, it also exceeded the school projects.

WSA also noted an increase in ED student enrollment of at least 15% following the launch of their updated website.

Challenges

Initially, adapting to remote learning was a challenging concept for everyone. School leadership intentionally invited teachers into the planning process and provided them with a blend of guidance and autonomy in order to ensure a comfortable, collaborative, and cohesive remote learning program. WPA supported families' transition to remote learning by outlining their virtual learning plan, keeping parents well informed through the school website, and establishing two-way methods of communication.

Future Modifications

WPA is preparing to offer in-person instruction in 2021-22, but will retain their licenses for virtual learning platforms and applications so that they can supplement in person instruction with high quality digital tools and transition to remote instruction if needed.

Critical Components

Getting Started

Leaders at WPA commented that funding to update their website was essential in improving their communication with families.

Being able to hire a consultant who supported the development of a remote learning plan and involving staff in the development process was also critical to their success.

Ongoing Supports

The school plans to continue using their new or improved methods of communication with families, whether learning continues online or in-person, to ensure families receive accurate and timely information.

Equity Connections

Studies have shown that “*schools with collaborative work cultures*” are most likely to improve the academic outcomes of all students (Lewis, Asberry, DeJarnett, & King, 2015). WPA teachers worked together with a consultant to establish a cohesive remote learning plan in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. They then delivered this plan to their school families and created multiple methods of communication to ensure that all families were supported. Additionally, facilitating informational meetings virtually allowed families with limited access to transportation or challenging work schedules to participate and stay informed (CDC, 2013).

Research

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