



Date: April 15, 2021
To: Board of Directors
From: Kevin Sved, CEO
Subject: Expansion of In-Person Instruction

Update on 2020-21 Expansion of In-Person Instruction

On April 13, Watsonville Prep resumed in-person instruction for all students in a hybrid model with excitement and smooth operations. Gilroy Prep and Hollister Prep begin on April 19. The latest updates, including pictures, will be shared during the board meeting. This update focuses on our reopening priority to support behavioral, social-emotional, and mental health needs of students, families and staff. Please see the attached memo from Sharon Waller, Director of Student Services, which addresses this important priority during these times when many school community members are experiencing traumas and challenges.

Preparing for COVID-19 Variants

The UK variant is of most concern at this time. Nonetheless, county health officers are still optimistic that challenges posed by variants will not thwart current reopening plans. As these findings change day to day, we will provide the most recent information during the board meeting.

Planning for 2021-22

The current focus on 2021-22 planning is related to addressing learning loss. Steps being taken in this regard include:

1. Expanding summer school to serve a greater number of students
2. Increasing intervention supports during and after the regular school day
3. Increasing individual and small-group instruction in grades 1-3 by adding a small-group instructor to each grade level

As we look forward to the start of the next school year in August, it seems likely that the state will require full-time, in-person instruction as a requirement for full funding. The attached slides from the CA Department of Public Health detail the rationale for this optimistic outlook. Given the number of parents who chose to continue distance learning, Navigator leadership is exploring possible strategies to provide an independent study option for families not yet ready to return to on-site instruction. Staff will provide a report to the board on this option during its regularly-scheduled meeting on June 15, 2021.



Date: April 15, 2021

To: Board of Directors

From: Sharon Waller, Director of Student Services

Re: Supporting behavioral, social-emotional, and mental health needs of students, families and staff

Background

Since 2010, when the first Navigator School was launched, there has been a strong emphasis on student behavioral expectations and academic achievement. Visitors to our schools often report their observations of students' exemplary classroom behaviors and strong academic skills. When asked how the school teams achieved these outcomes, the answer always included the following practices: consistent procedures and expectations; the promotion of positive school culture, including school spirit wear, songs, chants, and affirmational and inspirational posters; and explicit lessons presented to all students about how to act toward each other.

The procedures and expectations, without NS labeling them at the time, were considered best practices of two nationwide efforts: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and the Multi-tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) framework. Each of these practices, when applied using data and fidelity, help schools to view the instructional model through a lens of equity. This lens of equity seeks to ensure all children receive the support they need to help them succeed in academics, social skills and behavior. *Every Child By Name and Need* is the motto that we have adopted to inspire our actions.

In 2018, NS received a statewide grant to fund an MTSS initiative. Navigator Schools began to follow the broader, research-based MTSS framework, a schoolwide system providing three tiers of support for students in the areas of academics, behavior and social-emotional learning (SEL). These support levels guide a structure of interventions of increasing intensity and personalized focus.

In the NS MTSS system that addresses social skills, behavior, and mental health, specific data is collected and used by various school staff members, including principals, vice principals, coaches, counselors, psychologists, and special education staff. This data is used

to determine the individual needs of students and their families, and the effectiveness of schoolwide and classroom programs related to a positive school culture for students and adults.

The student data collection includes weekly social-emotional student survey results, weekly behavioral data, attendance data, teacher reports, and benchmark Panorama social skills surveys. School sites and the support office administer targeted surveys to staff and families to gauge wellness, identify next steps for adult culture, and better address family needs.

The charts below list the tiered interventions and supports for social-emotional learning, behavior, and mental health. Tier 1 supports are designed for all students, Tier 2 interventions are for those students who need additional support, and Tier 3 interventions are for those students who need the most support.

Table 1. Tier One Social Emotional Learning (SEL), MH (Mental Health), and Behavior Interventions and Supports

SEL	MH and Behavior
Weekly direct instruction lessons using a specific curricula (PATHS and Second Step) to support self awareness, regulation, empathy, and problem-solving	Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) systems in place in classroom and schoolwide
Parent education workshops (Kind and Firm parenting, nutrition, bullying prevention, suicide prevention, online safety)	Positive school and classroom culture expectations
Schoolwide trainings for staff and students on bully prevention, suicide prevention, kindness, trauma-informed practices, Strong Start, etc.	Daily Strong Start routine in all classrooms

Daily Strong Start routine in all classrooms to help with self regulation, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and self efficacy	Navigator-wide classroom routines and procedures
Regular office hours available to staff for consultation on SEL (and behavior) by Wellness Team	Clearly defined behavioral expectations, rewards, and consequences
Weekly student surveys given to students (reviewed by Wellness Team and teachers); MTSS weekly meetings to review data and identify new tier strategies needed	Weekly review of behavioral data by leadership
Access to weekly enrichment activities (ie. Joyful January, Fabulous February, etc.)	

Table 2. Tier Two (more intensive) SEL, MH, and Behavioral Interventions and Supports

SEL	MH and behavior
Need specific groups (i.e. social skills, building confidence, academic)	Restorative Circles
Gaming clubs	Counselor-led groups to address wellness
Circle of Friends	Collaborating with community agencies for referrals to parenting classes
Various 'lunch bunches' (groups of students meeting with an adult over the course of several weeks to build connections)	Teacher-led boys or girls groups

Collaborating with outside agencies to provide boys/girls groups (ie. Youth Alliance, Joven Noble/Xochilt)	Mentor Club (cross-age mentoring)
	Strength Based Classroom Responsibilities (ie. door greeter to build connections, front of the line to build leadership, etc.)

Table 3. Tier Three SEL, MH and Behavior Interventions and Supports (many strategies cross-over at this most intensive level)

SEL	MH and behavior
1-1 counseling	Restorative projects / community service
Small group counseling (2-3 students)	1-1 counseling
Check In and Check Out System	Check-in/Check-out system
20-minute work-out (strength-based, student support group meeting)	Wraparound support for the family (home visits, family counseling)
Student study team (SST) leading to possible 504 plan or an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)	Referral to external support network for mental health support
Modified schedule	Behavior plan
Crisis Response Teams (CRT) in place	SST to possible 504 or IEP
	CRT in place

Current Update

The school leadership teams understand that many of our students, staff and families have been deeply affected by the pandemic. There is a common understanding amongst the staff that there will be an increase in mental health issues for students and families, and in some cases, staff members, due to traumas that have occurred as a result of COVID-19. Organizations who have opened up prior to NS have attested to these needs. Because of these heightened concerns, our schools are engaged in a comprehensive re-launch plan that emphasizes safety and positive school culture and then academic objectives. We want to ensure that students re-acclimate and feel successful as we do each August.

To ensure the success of the post-COVID re-launch of schools, all staff have been provided with professional development in areas specific to SEL, behavior and mental health, including trauma-informed educational practices, PBIS, behavior intervention strategies, and use of the Strong Start daily routine.

Some practices in place before COVID-19 are receiving greater emphasis during the hybrid return to school because of their efficacy as Tier One strategies in support of SEL, behavior and mental health. There is an organization-wide expectation that all teachers will use the strategies of PBIS in their classrooms, with an emphasis on safety, routines and procedures. A Strong Start session will be part of the daily class routine.

Students will receive weekly SEL lessons. In the middle school teachers are hosting daily SEL/community meetings to allow for more student to staff connection time. Students in 5th-8th grade will receive a workshop that provides them with resources to support improved mental health and guidance on where to go when they are not feeling mentally strong. Each campus will train and redeploy their crisis response teams to be ready to respond to students in need of urgent and intense mental health or behavioral support. Members of the student services staff will be strategically placed at campuses to provide additional support to teachers or students as needed. The stakeholder engagement team has been and will continue to be responsive to the needs of our families by providing families with resources such as food, clothing, and referrals to outside agencies, including ones that provide housing support.

The entire NS organization is committed to ensuring our students, families and staff are as safe and well as they can be upon returning to a hybrid model. Please reach out to me if you have any suggestions or questions.