



**Contact:**

Emily Morgan

[morgane@norwalkps.org](mailto:morgane@norwalkps.org)

203-854-4007 office

## **Norwalk Public Schools Leads Large Connecticut Cities in Performance Index and Academic Growth; Sees Sharp Drop in Chronic Absenteeism**

Norwalk, Conn. (Aug. 30, 2023) -- Norwalk Public Schools continues to lead other large cities across the state for the state's Performance Index and overall academic growth. The district also saw more students attending school regularly for the first time since the pandemic. Attendance matters as it is an essential prerequisite for learning.

The Connecticut State Department of Education recently released the results from the spring 2023 state assessments and chronic absenteeism data. The results show that across the state, there were improvements in student achievement in mathematics and science, but improvement in English language arts (ELA) was mixed. Several studies highlight the association of chronic absenteeism with student academic achievement and high school graduation.

Norwalk Public Schools ranked highest among other large Connecticut cities in the Performance Index for math, science and ELA. The Performance Index is the best measure of overall average achievement across standard and alternate assessments in a content area.

"We take great pride in our schools maintaining a high achievement standard amongst other big cities with similar demographics, but we also know that the work must continue to raise the level of performance and growth for all our scholars. We strive to rank high not only amongst other large cities but highest amongst the entire state," said Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent of Norwalk Public Schools.

Math proficiency increased by 2.4 percentage points among all Norwalk students, comparable to the state's 2.5 percentage point increase. Science proficiency increased by 1.1 percentage point in Norwalk, comparable to the state's 1.5 percentage point increase.

Norwalk Public Schools also ranked first among other large Connecticut cities for academic growth in math and ELA (science is not measured). Academic growth is a leading indicator of student achievement as it measures the pace of student learning in a school year.

Norwalk Public Schools saw its chronic absentee numbers drop by 5.7 percentage points overall in 2022-23 compared to the previous year. This is a decline of 21.3%. High needs students had a greater improvement with a 6.6 percentage point decrease in chronically

absent students, a decline of 20.6%.

Despite the improvement, the district is not satisfied with this high rate of chronic absenteeism and more work needs to be done to see that this recent decline is the beginning of a new trend that ultimately bolsters an academic recovery. It is promising to see that Norwalk's high needs students had a lower rate of chronic absenteeism than the state - 25.5% compared to 28.5% for state. Norwalk Public Schools is always striving to perform better than the state average in all areas of performance and growth.

“While it’s encouraging to see more of our scholars returning to school on a regular basis since the pandemic, daily attendance in school is critical to building reading proficiency, developing healthy routines, and staying on track to graduate high school. Most importantly, absenteeism is a lost opportunity to learn,” Estrella said.

A full presentation of Norwalk Public Schools’ state assessment results and a look at the district’s chronic absenteeism numbers will be provided at the Norwalk Board of Education workshop on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023 at 7 p.m. at the NPS Family Center.