

Recommendations for the Enhancement of Excel Academy

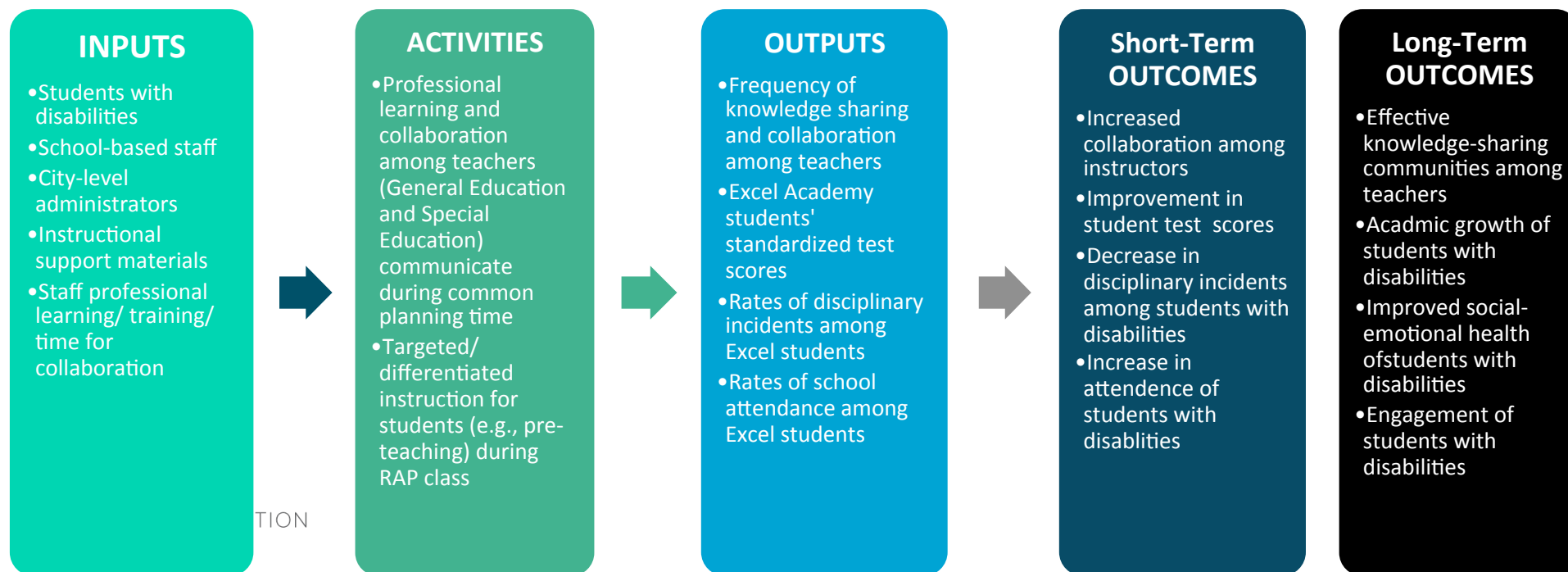
Prepared for Alexandria City Public Schools
November 2016



Excel Academy

- Excel Academy began in the fall of 2013 to provide students with disabilities with an inclusive environment; today, the program serves 59 students and involves:
 - A common planning time for Excel Academy teachers to collaborate
 - Opportunities for co-teaching with general and special education teachers
 - A Resource for Academic Purposes (RAP) course that provides the pre-teaching of skills and vocabulary to students.

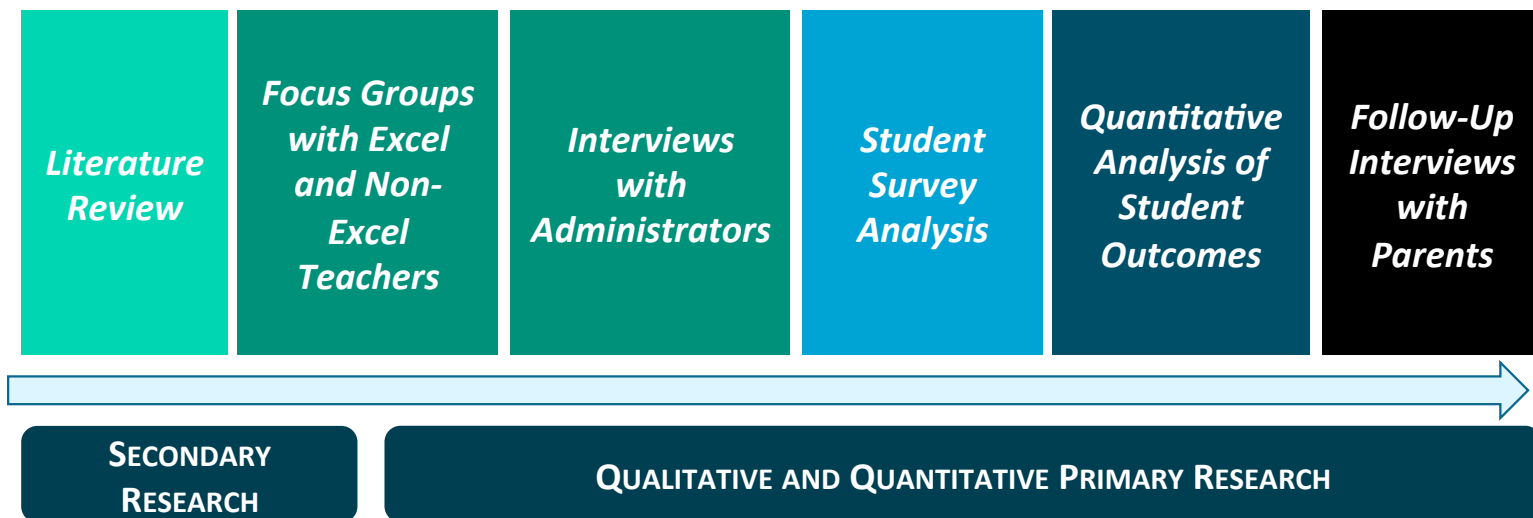
Excel Academy Logic Model



Approach to Program Evaluation

- At the request of ACPS, Hanover Research took a comprehensive, multi-methods research approach to program evaluation, delivering a total of five consecutive reports, each applying a singular method for assessment.

Methodological Approach to Comprehensive Program Evaluation



Review of Recommendations



Selection Transparency



ACPS leaders should formulate *clear standards* for making decisions about student eligibility for enrollment in the Excel Academy program and communicate those standards to staff.

Without clear student selection criteria, administrators have been unable to provide teachers and other staff with an adequate response as to how students are chosen for the program. This has led to...

- The frustration of teachers and staff
- A reduction in stakeholder confidence about the program

ACPS should consider selection transparency as a goal for standardizing the program and improving administrator-staff relations.

Most prominent
factor for
enrollment:

Learning
Disability

Leadership and Support



Despite co-teaching pressure, students do appear to **enjoy the co-teaching/RAP** model:

68%

find RAP helps them most

-compared to-

43%

who prefer one-on-one teacher support

Hanover recommends ACPS clearly *articulate and assign leadership and support responsibilities to specific personnel* for program oversight and management

Teachers and staff often felt that the program lacked direction and that there was no person to turn to for support.

A lack of leadership has especially proven problematic as instructors feel that the **co-teaching model places too much pressure on staff** to balance curriculum and instructional responsibilities.

The addition of a leader and support staff may ease:

- Instructors' concerns about planning for RAP courses
- Communicating with team partners
- Delegating tasks among co-teachers.

Alignment



Hanover recommends that ACPS leaders give *greater consideration to program alignment* in an effort to create more consistency in program practices across teacher teams.

Excel Academy teachers found that the lack of a centralized vision has led to inconsistencies in program delivery, resulting in:

- Miscommunications
- Multiple communications
- Differences in instructional practice across teams

Instructors and staff may collectively share their own approaches to pre-teaching and student support, benchmarking practices to formulate a plan to program implementation.

Actionable
Steps
Align
Share
Benchmark
Plan
Brainstorm



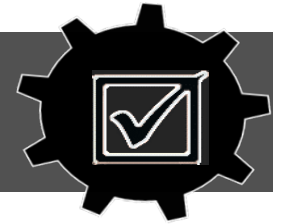
86%
**of students said
teachers expect
them to work
hard**

ACPS should continue to encourage strong *connections* between and among the program's students and teachers.

One of the largest benefits to Excel Academy as reported by all stakeholder groups is the opportunities for teachers and staff to get to know and work with students on a more personalized basis.

A focus on teacher-student connections should remain a primary goal as ACPS leaders work to improve the standardization of practices.

Evaluation



Hanover recommends that ACPS leaders develop a clear set of standards for monitoring program delivery and the *evaluation* of student outcomes.

Without any outcomes standards or student and teacher data to analyze, administrators and teachers could not speak to students’:

- Academic outcomes
- Social outcomes
- Behavioral outcomes

As ACPS moves forward with Excel Academy’s development, program leaders should outline an actionable plan for program evaluation informed by both short- and long-term goals.

64%

of students said the program helps them to do better in school



yet students in Excel Academy
achieve GPAs **.25**
points lower than non-
enrolled students



For more information about
Hanover Research, see:
www.hanoverresearch.com



Office of Specialized Instruction Excel Report: Next Steps November 2016

Dr. Terri Mozingo, Ed. D.
Terry Werner, M. Ed., J. D.



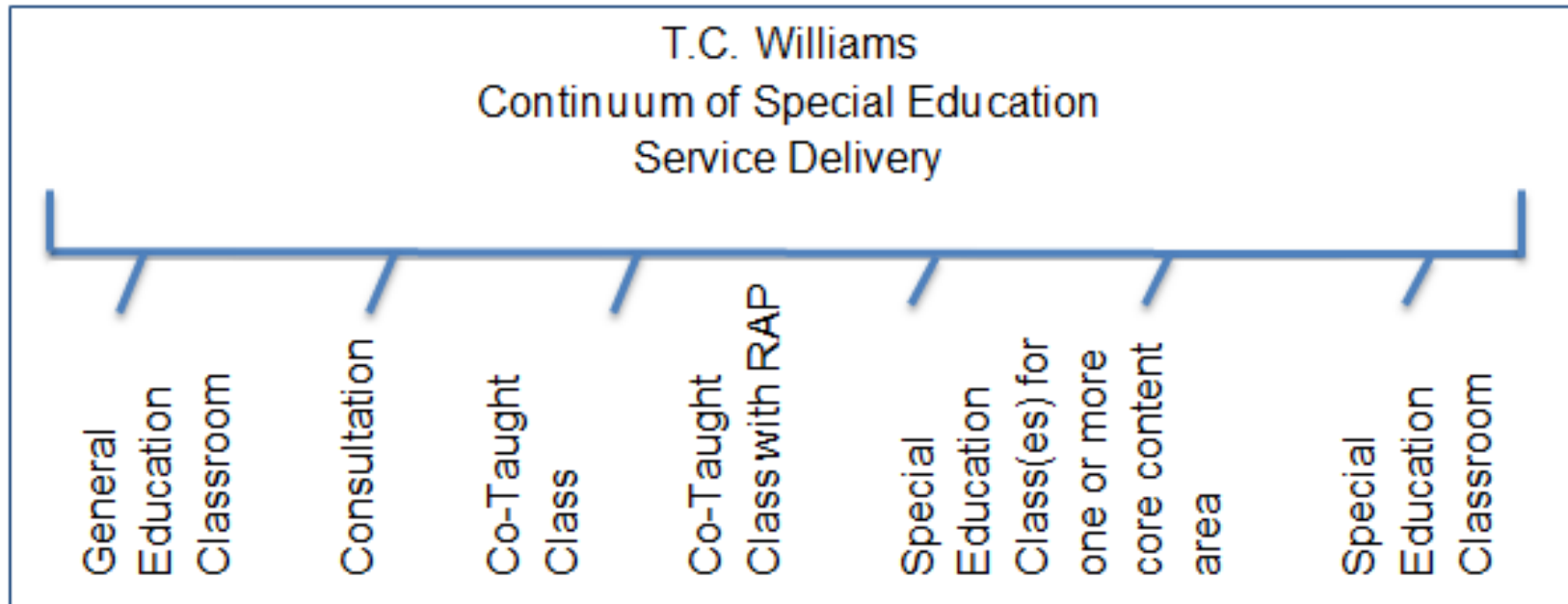
Every Student Succeeds

Recommendation #1

ACPS leaders should formulate clear standards for making decisions about student eligibility for enrollment in the Excel Academy Program and communicate those standards to staff.

- Continuum of Special Education Services
 - Service delivery ranges from consultative support to special education classes for the majority of a student's day
- Expanded number of sections of co-taught classes
- Expanded number of sections of RAP classes
- No longer a separate program option
- Available to any student with an IEP at T.C. Williams High School
- RAP Considerations Guide
 - For use by a student's IEP team to make decisions regarding the need for support through a RAP class.

Continuum of Services



Recommendation #2

Hanover recommends ACPS clearly articulate and assign leadership and support responsibilities to specific personnel for program oversight and management.

- One Assistant Principal, under the direction of the school-based principal, has been assigned the oversight and support responsibilities for special education programming for both T.C. Williams Campuses
 - Promotes consistency of programming
 - Working alongside the T.C. Williams special education department chairperson, central office instructional specialist and executive director of specialized instruction
 - Ensuring teachers receive the training and support to implement the practices and principles outlined in the programming design

Recommendation #3

Hanover recommends that ACPS leaders give greater consideration to program alignment in an effort to create more consistency in program practices across teacher teams.

- In order to promote consistency in practices, ACPS has instituted the following:
 - RAP Class Framework
 - Executive Functioning Instructional Framework
 - Training for Teachers
 - Purpose of RAP class
 - Elements of Executive Function Instructional Framework
 - Technological Tools used in RAP Classes
 - Sample Lesson Plans
 - Sample Core Content Modules
 - Walkthrough Look Fors (will be developed no later than end of first semester)

Recommendation #4

ACPS should continue to encourage strong connections between and among the program's students and teachers.

- RAP Class Schedule – Meeting Every School Day
 - Assists in promoting relationship building with students
- Two Teachers Assigned to RAP Class (Main Campus)
 - Allows lower student teacher ratio
 - Provides opportunities for small group or individual instruction

Recommendation #5

Hanover recommends that ACPS leaders develop a clear set of standards for monitoring program delivery and the evaluation of student outcomes.

- Schedule of walkthroughs will be developed
 - Ensure high levels of implementation and consistency of practice across teacher teams
- Monitoring student outcomes
- Progress Monitoring implemented by instructional staff
- Regularly scheduled data analysis meetings
 - Monitor individual student progress and modify instruction as necessary

Communication Plan

Timeframe	Stakeholder	Person(s) Responsible
November 2016	ACPS School Board Brief	Dr. Terri Mozingo, Clint Page, Terry Werner
November 2016	T.C. Williams Leadership	Dr. Terri Mozingo, Gerald Mann, Terry Werner
December 2016	T.C. Williams Teachers	Terry Werner, Dr. Jesse Dingle, Patricia Williamson
January 2017	SEAC	Terry Werner