



Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program: Evaluation Readiness Report

August 2022

By Noel G. Williams, Ph.D., Program Evaluation Specialist and
Heidi L. Janicki, Ph.D., Director of Research and Evaluation



Planning, Innovation, and Accountability
Office of Research and Evaluation
Virginia Beach City Public Schools

Table of Contents

Figures.....	4
Background	5
Program Description and Purpose.....	5
Selection and Approval of Program for Evaluation.....	8
Overview of Current Goals and Objectives	8
Process for Developing Revised Goals and Objectives	9
Revised Goals and Objectives.....	10
Goals and Objectives	10
Baseline Data.....	11
Evaluation Plan and Recommendation	14
Scope and Rationale of Proposed Evaluation	15
Proposed Evaluation Method.....	15
Recommendations and Rationale	19
Appendix	20
General Recommendations from Alternative Education Task Force.....	20
Endnotes	21

Tables

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Students Enrolled in Renaissance Academy any time during the 2021-2022 School Year.....	12
Table 2: Length of Student Enrollment at Renaissance Academy	12
Table 3: Data Collection Process for Student Outcome Goals and Objectives	17

Figures

Figure 1: Students' Last Enrolled Home School	14
---	----

Background

Program Description and Purpose

What is Alternative Education?

The U.S. Department of Education defines alternative education as, “a public elementary/secondary school that: (a) addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school; (b) provides nontraditional education; (c) serves as an adjunct to a regular school; or (d) falls outside the categories of regular education, special education, or career/technical education.”¹ Despite this U.S. Department of Education definition, within the educational community, there is no commonly used or accepted definition or classification of alternative education in school systems across the country. Two major reasons for the ambiguity surrounding alternative education are the fact that there are a wide variety of settings that school systems consider to be alternative (i.e., self-contained schools, residential facilities, etc.) and a myriad of reasons why students are placed in alternative settings.² The next section will explore how alternative education is defined and how it operates within Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS).

Alternative Education in Virginia Beach City Public Schools

According to School Board Policy 6-27, adopted in August 1993 and updated in July 2022, “the School Board realizes that the needs of all of our students cannot be met within the formal school curriculum. Therefore, the School Board encourages alternative educational experiences that will enhance a student’s learning, and which will increase students’ ability to achieve success in the world of work. Alternative education programs will be provided where the needs have been identified, where the establishment of such programs is feasible, and where the proposed programs fall within the jurisdiction of this School Division.”³ In 1998, a five-year alternative education comprehensive plan was adopted by the School Board to support students’ educational and personal needs.⁴ The five-year plan stated the purpose of alternative education, “is to restore an identified student to a level of academic performance and behavioral responsibility that supports the student’s educational and personal needs.” After the second year of implementation of the plan, the associate superintendent of the department of curriculum and instruction determined that a comprehensive review and evaluation of alternative education was necessary. As a result, in fall 2000, the superintendent recommended the appointment of an alternative education task force leader, which was approved by the School Board. The goal of the task force was to use a variety of information gathering techniques to effectively answer five specific questions: 1) What is the appropriate scope and authority of alternative education for VBCPS? 2) How effectively are existing programs identifying their purpose, missions, goals and objectives? 3) How effectively are existing programs achieving their goals and objectives? 4) Are there areas of identified need that are not being addressed by alternative education? 5) How effectively are students being transitioned into, from, and between alternative education programs? The task force conducted surveys and interviews of personnel, students, and parents, and reviewed documents in schools. The task force reported their findings and recommendations designed to enhance services so that students participating in alternative education could overcome challenges and thrive. The task force identified nine general recommendations. These recommendations included accommodating students according to their needs, having each initiative be guided by clear, measurable, rigorous goals, and clearly define target populations for each program. A full list of the findings can be found in the Appendix. Since the alternative education plan’s inception, the program has evolved in its various program offerings, but the purpose of meeting students’ unique needs has remained. In 2010, Renaissance Academy opened as a special purpose center for students in grades 6 through 12 and combined alternative education services from two separate middle and high school sites into one location.⁵

Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program

According to the vbschools.com website, the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program seeks to meet the needs of students who are not experiencing success in regular secondary (grades 6-12) settings. The program offers students different opportunities to best meet their needs when traditional education interventions do not effectively remedy students' behavior and/or academic difficulties.⁶ Some of the students participating in the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program are enrolled by choice and others are by assignment. Students enrolled at Renaissance Academy are recommended for placement by the Office of Student Leadership for behavioral concerns, recommended by school administrators through principal-to-principal placement to best meet students' needs, and/or to meet students' course scheduling needs.⁷ Parents can also initiate their student's enrollment at Renaissance Academy. The program serves both special education and regular education students, and some students are enrolled short-term, while others are enrolled long-term. The mission of Renaissance Academy is, "to provide a quality education through shared responsibility in a safe supportive environment for all students to meet the challenges of a global society."⁸ This mission also includes a focus on providing information and facilitating improved communication between parents, teachers, students, and other members of the community.

Students enrolled at Renaissance Academy participate in general curriculum courses. This curriculum includes comprehensive instruction that merges life skills necessary for success in the 21st century with existing Virginia Beach City Public Schools curricula. The curriculum aims to promote the development of self-determination, responsibility, and integrity in a learning environment that fosters a sense of self-esteem and importance to society. The program provides flexible learning opportunities that address student social-emotional behavior concerns using character education components. In addition, leadership skills are embedded throughout the curriculum. An individualized plan for each student, the Alternative Contract for Excellence (ACE), is designed collaboratively by academy staff, parents, and the student to ensure that each student meets his/her educational goals.⁹

The Renaissance Academy academic program for middle school students is designed to build on students' strengths with the goal of remediating their academic needs through rigorous and relevant instruction. The environment is specifically designed to provide students with individualized attention and focused assistance based on their academic needs. The program operates as a school-within-a-school and focuses on developmental needs with the goal of grade-level performance. The class sizes are small, 15 students or less, which provides students the opportunity to form supportive relationships with fellow students and staff.¹⁰ Renaissance Academy for high school students offers online learning and the Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP), which are discussed in greater detail below. In addition, qualified high school students may enroll in multiyear career or technical and career education programs.

Other Alternative Education Options

Due to the personalized nature of alternative education, there are several additional options offered to students based on students' needs. The following section discusses these programs in greater detail.

Anti-Tobacco Use Program (All Student Levels)

The Anti-Tobacco Use Program (ATUP) is a multi-level (Levels 1-4) program designed to eliminate tobacco use and possession at school and school-related functions by providing education to students, parents, staff, and community as to the health hazards regarding tobacco use. ATUP is available to students at all school levels and students and/or parents may request participation in ATUP. However, students typically enter the program because they have been identified as being in possession of tobacco products on school grounds. ATUP is an educational approach for dealing with tobacco use and/or possession of tobacco products by

students. Students referred for Level 1 (first offense) participate in a curriculum at their home school by the school nurse. Level 2 students (second offense) can agree to participate in the Tobacco Education Program (TEP), in lieu of a five day out-of-school suspension. The TEP consists of two classes conducted by a prevention educator from the City of Virginia Beach Department of Human Services and last two hours. Students referred to Level 3 (third offense) are referred to the Substance Abuse Intervention Program (SAIP), which is discussed in further detail below. Level 4 students (fourth offense) are referred to the Office of Student Leadership for long-term suspension.¹¹

Substance Abuse Intervention Program (Grades 6-12)

The Substance Abuse Intervention Program (SAIP) is a ten-day instructional program designed for students who are first-time violators of School Board policies regarding drug and alcohol use and abuse. Students are offered this substance abuse program in lieu of long-term suspension from school. Students may also volunteer to participate in this program. While attending SAIP, students' days are structured into three sections. Students participate in direct and interactive instruction on substance abuse and the development of responsible thinking/decision-making skills, participate in one-on-one mentoring sessions to develop their assets and resiliency to resist at-risk behaviors, and complete academic assignments provided by their home school. SAIP takes place at the Renaissance Academy and transportation is provided.¹²

Choices Program (Grades 6-12)

Choices is a ten-session instructional program for students who consistently demonstrate inappropriate behaviors that interfere with learning, excluding truancy. Students placed in this program have not successfully implemented the behavioral interventions recommended by their school's support team and administrative staff. Students are referred to the program by the principal, parent/guardian, discipline hearing officer, or School Board Discipline Committee as an alternative to suspension. Choices is designed to serve eight to ten students at one time during the regular school day and takes place at the students' home school.¹³

Student Support Specialists (Grades 6-12)

All students transitioning from the Renaissance Academy and alternative education programs are referred to the student support specialists at Renaissance Academy and/or their home school. Student support specialists aim to provide effective and efficient transition of students between alternative programs/centers and home schools. Students may also be referred to a student support specialist by the school's support team at their home school. They work collaboratively with the members of the school's support team in each secondary school to determine appropriate interventions for students identified as being at-risk. Specialists address issues related to academics, attendance, and behavior, and students are released from direct supervision from the student support specialist when they demonstrate improvements in attendance, academic performance, and behavior and receive positive feedback from parents and staff. Student support specialists facilitate the Choices program and provide informational sessions to parents.¹⁴

Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (Grades 9-12)

The Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISEAP) is a Commonwealth of Virginia initiative to provide an opportunity for students ages 16-17 to work toward a General Education Development (GED) certificate and a vocational/career skill without dropping out of school. Students must be referred and must qualify to be admitted to the program. This program is considered only after all measures to maintain students in a diploma program have been exhausted. Students who are considered for the program are experiencing academic challenges, considering dropping out of school, and/or appear unlikely to earn a traditional high school diploma. A typical ISEAP student is often one full year behind in credits compared to his/her ninth-grade

cohort or overage and has not yet reached ninth grade. To be referred to the program, students and/or parents contact a teacher, counselor, or administrator at their child's home school.¹⁵

Online Learning (Grades 9-12)

High school students attending Renaissance Academy may be assigned to an online learning laboratory for one or more academic courses when placement in a regular classroom setting is not possible. For example, a student may be scheduled in an online learning lab when a required course is not being offered at Renaissance Academy or a student may be placed in order to resolve a scheduling conflict. Students may also be assigned an online learning laboratory for other considerations which are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In order to attend the online learning laboratory, a student must be enrolled in Renaissance Academy and referred by a counselor or dean to participate in the program.¹⁶

Selection and Approval of Program for Evaluation

The Alternative Education Program was selected and approved for the 2021-2022 Program Evaluation Schedule based on criteria specified in School Board Policy 6-26, adopted by the School Board on September 5, 2007. The following excerpt is from School Board Policy 6-26:

Existing programs will be evaluated based on an annual Program Evaluation Schedule which will be developed by the Program Evaluation Committee and approved by the School Board annually. On a yearly basis, the Program Evaluation Committee will present a list of programs recommended for evaluation to the Superintendent and the School Board. This listing will include the rationale for each recommendation based on an approved set of criteria. All programs will be prioritized for evaluation based on the following factors:

1. Alignment with the school division's strategic plan and School Board goals;
2. Program cost;
3. Program scale;
4. Cross-departmental interest;
5. Community/stakeholder interest in the program;
6. Availability of information on the program's effectiveness; and
7. Date of most recent evaluation.

On July 22, 2021, members of the Program Evaluation Committee were emailed a PowerPoint that included information about the process for developing the school division's program evaluation schedule and a list of 12 existing educational programs to review and rank based on the criteria above. Rankings were compiled and programs recommended for evaluation were determined and shared with the committee. The Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program was selected as one of the top programs for evaluation based on the Program Evaluation Committee members' perceptions that it had the potential to have a large and positive impact on VBCPS reaching its goals, the cost of the program, and because information about the program's effectiveness within the division was not readily available. The final list of programs recommended for evaluation was presented to the School Board on August 24, 2021 and approved on September 14, 2021. The Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program was approved to undergo an evaluation readiness review during the 2021-2022 school year in order to define program goals and identify measurable objectives.

Overview of Current Goals and Objectives

The Alternative Education Program at Renaissance Academy is guided by School Board policy, work of the previous task force, the school's mission, and the school's Plan for Continuous Improvement (PCI). The task force reported that the purpose of alternative education is to restore an identified student to a level of

academic performance and behavioral responsibility that supports the student’s educational and personal needs. The mission of Renaissance Academy is, “to provide a quality education through shared responsibility in a safe supportive environment for all students to meet the challenges of a global society.” The school’s website highlights the school’s focus on preparing students for success with their postgraduation plans, whether plans include attending college, joining the workforce, or serving in the military. At the school-level, measurable goals for Renaissance Academy are outlined in the school’s PCI. In 2021-2022, these goals included strengthening students’ reading skills, demonstrating numeracy skills, improving on-time graduation rates, and improving the future readiness of students through industry certification pass rates and exploring career goals. Academic, attendance, and behavioral data are reviewed regularly at the school to monitor progress. As part of the evaluation readiness process, this information about the purpose of the program and school-level goals was the basis for the development of formal, divisionwide goals for alternative education.

The next section of this report describes the process for developing goals and objectives for the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program with essential input from the leadership at Renaissance Academy.

Process for Developing Revised Goals and Objectives

According to School Board Policy 6-26, for programs selected for an Evaluation Readiness Report, PIA will “assist program staff in defining measurable goals and objectives, as well as linkages with activities and outcomes. An Evaluation Readiness Report focusing on the outcomes of this process and baseline data (if available) will be presented to the Superintendent and School Board ...” The process to complete the Evaluation Readiness Report began during the 2021-2022 school year with a review of existing documentation for the Renaissance Academy by program evaluators from the Office of Research and Evaluation.

A committee of four participants consisting of the school’s principal, data specialist, and program evaluators were involved in conversations, along with a Department of School Leadership representative. The committee was formed to develop goals and measurable objectives for the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program as stated in School Board Policy 6-26. Committee members initially met on April 28, 2022 to discuss the evaluation readiness process, the overall evaluation of the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program, and to begin defining the goals and objectives. The discussion also centered on the proposed scope of the evaluation, including the development of the Evaluation Readiness Report. In order to frame and focus the discussion, discussion focused on two major questions:

- If the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program were successful, in general, what would success look like?
- If the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program were successful, what specific outcomes would be expected?

Discussion during the initial meeting also focused on reviewing the available information regarding the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program’s background and purpose and identifying additional components that would provide useful information regarding implementation and student outcomes. Following the initial meeting discussion and review of documents, goals and specific measurable objectives were developed, which focused on student outcomes. In addition, wording for each objective states explicitly the manner in which the objective will be measured and evaluated during the evaluation process.

A second meeting was held on July 18, 2022, with the committee to review the draft program goals and measurable objectives and obtain any additional feedback about measuring progress toward meeting each goal. The committee provided feedback regarding the goals during this meeting, and on July 19, 2022, a document with the updated revised goals and objectives was sent to the committee for final feedback. No

additional feedback was received, and the final version of goals and objectives is included in the next section of this report.

Revised Goals and Objectives

As a result of the evaluation readiness process, 4 goals and 18 objectives were developed for the evaluation of the alternative education program. The goals and objectives were focused on student outcomes.

The student outcome goals focused on building relationships and social-emotional competence, success while attending Renaissance Academy, successful transition back to home schools, and graduating with postgraduation plans in place. Operational or implementation aspects of the program will be assessed as part of the planned evaluation questions.

Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Students in alternative education at Renaissance Academy will build relationships that help foster their ability to demonstrate social-emotional competencies.

Objective 1: Students will build positive relationships with students and staff at Renaissance Academy as measured by student and staff survey responses.

Objective 2: Students will feel a sense of belonging and feel welcome at their school as measured by student survey responses.

Objective 3: Students will demonstrate competency in Relationship Skills as measured by aggregate ratings on survey items that are part of the Relationship Skills social-emotional competency on the student survey, as well as staff survey responses.

Objective 4: Students will demonstrate competency in Self-Management as measured by aggregate ratings on survey items that are part of the Self-Management social-emotional competency on the student survey, as well as staff survey responses.

Objective 5: Students will demonstrate competency in Responsible Decision Making as measured by aggregate ratings on survey items that are part of the Responsible Decision Making social-emotional competency on the student survey, as well as staff survey responses.

Goal #2: Students in alternative education will demonstrate success in school while attending Renaissance Academy.

Objective 1: Students will gain tools and strategies to demonstrate success in school as measured by student, staff, and parent survey responses.

Objective 2: Students at Renaissance Academy will demonstrate satisfactory behavior as measured by a decline in the number of discipline referrals and referrals resulting in in-school and out-of-school suspensions after enrolling in Renaissance Academy, as well as student, staff, and parent survey responses.

Objective 3: Students at Renaissance Academy will consistently attend school as measured by the percent of students with an attendance rate of 90 percent or higher.

Objective 4: Students at Renaissance Academy will demonstrate improvement in academic performance as measured by improvement in core course grade average after enrolling in Renaissance Academy, as well as student, staff, and parent survey responses.

Objective 5: Students who attend Renaissance Academy will demonstrate academic proficiency as measured by the percent passing the applicable Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.

Goal #3: Students in alternative education will successfully transition to their home school following enrollment at Renaissance Academy.

Objective 1: Students will gain tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school as measured by student, staff, and parent survey responses.

Objective 2: Students who return to their home school will demonstrate satisfactory behavior as measured by discipline referrals that are less than or consistent with the home school's average referral rate.

Objective 3: Students who return to their home school will consistently attend their home school as measured by attendance rates that are similar to their attendance rate while at Renaissance Academy.

Objective 4: Students who return to their home school will maintain their level of academic performance at their home school as measured by core course grade averages at the end of the year that are similar to their grade average while at Renaissance Academy.

Goal #4: Students in alternative education will graduate and develop a post-graduation plan.

Objective 1: Students who attended Renaissance Academy during middle or high school will graduate in four, five, or six years as measured by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) on-time graduation rate data.

Objective 2: Students who attend Renaissance Academy will report that the academic/career planning process helped them to make informed decisions about college, employment, or military service as measured by student survey responses.

Objective 3: Students who attend Renaissance Academy will report that they set goals for their learning and future plans as measured by student survey responses.

Objective 4: Seniors who graduate while at Renaissance Academy will report that they have postgraduation plans as measured by VDOE student exit survey responses.

Baseline Data

During the 2021-2022 school year, 661 students were enrolled at Renaissance Academy at any time during the school year, with 230 students in grades 6-8 and 431 students in grades 9-12. Table 1 displays demographic data for these students based on information from the VBCPS data warehouse. Please note that these students include those enrolled in the Renaissance Academy's middle or high school alternative education program where they receive instruction in the general curriculum. These data do not include students who participated in other alternative education options.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Students Enrolled in Renaissance Academy any time during the 2021-2022 School Year

Characteristic	MS (N = 230)		HS (N = 431)		Total (N=661)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender						
Female	77	33%*	134	31%*	211	32%
Male	153	67%**	297	69%**	450	68%
Ethnicity						
American Indian	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Asian	3	1%	6	1%	9	1%
Black/African American	129	56%**	237	55%**	366	55%
Hispanic	21	9%	33	8%	54	8%
Multiracial	21	9%	50	12%	71	11%
White	56	24%*	104	24%*	160	24%
Economically Disadvantaged	182	79%**	280	65%**	462	70%
Identified Special Education	60	26%**	105	24%**	165	25%
Identified Limited English Proficiency	1	<1%	3	1%	4	1%
Identified Gifted	10	4%*	7	2%*	17	3%
Military Connected	17	7%*	35	8%*	52	8%

Note: *More than 5 percent **below** the percentage at the division level. ** More than 5 percent **above** the percentage at the division level cumulative enrollment counts.

The majority of students enrolled at Renaissance Academy were male (68%). Overall across both levels, about half of the students were Black/African American (55%) and about one-quarter of the students were White (24%). The majority of students at Renaissance Academy were economically disadvantaged (70%). At the middle school level, a higher percentage of students enrolled at Renaissance Academy were identified as economically disadvantaged than high school students. About one-quarter of students at Renaissance Academy were special education students (25%), 8 percent were military connected, 3 percent were identified gifted, and about 1 percent were identified English Learners (EL).

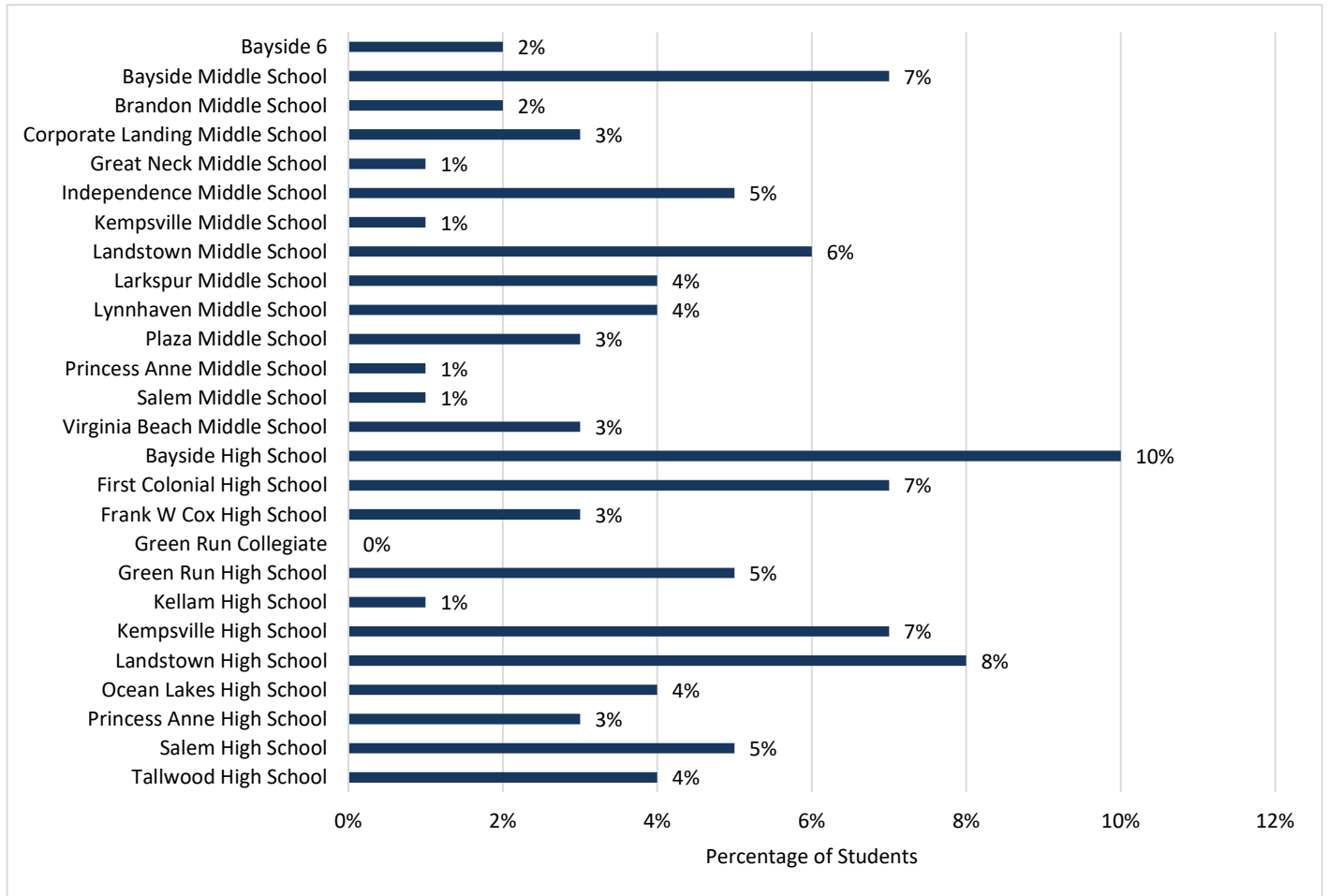
Of the 661 students enrolled at some time during the 2021-2022 school year, 72 percent (n=473) were enrolled in Renaissance Academy for the first time. Additionally, 7 percent (n=47) were enrolled the entire 2021-2022 school year. The median number of days students were enrolled at Renaissance Academy was 81 days. Table 2 displays information about the length of student enrollment in Renaissance Academy in greater detail. A majority of the students enrolled at Renaissance Academy were there less than half of the school year (59%). Additional data showed that a total of 86 students (13%) were retained during the 2021-2022 school year, and 149 students (26%) were retained at some point during their academic career, but not during the 2021-2022 school year.

Table 2: Length of Student Enrollment at Renaissance Academy

Percent of Days Enrolled During the School Year	Percent Of Enrolled Students
90% or more	11%
89%-50%	30%
49%-10%	55%
Less than 10%	4%

Figure 1 displays the students' last enrolled VBCPS home school for any student enrolled in Renaissance Academy during the 2021-2022 school year. The home school listed is students' last enrolled school prior to being enrolled in Renaissance Academy, which may have been in a school year prior to 2021-2022.¹⁷ Bayside High School had the largest number of students listed as their last enrolled home school with 10 percent of students, the second most represented home school was Landstown High School with 8 percent, and the third was First Colonial High School, Kempsville High School, and Bayside Middle School each with 7 percent of students. No students that attended Renaissance Academy during the 2021-2022 school year had Green Run Collegiate listed as their previous home school.

Figure 1: Students' Last Enrolled Home School



Note: N=594. This includes students who had a VBCPS middle school or high school listed as their last homeschool. There were 3 students who did not have a prior home school listed, and 64 students who had their home school listed as other center or program, including SECEP Autism Spectrum Program, SECEP Tidewater Regional Alternative Education Program, the VB Correctional Center, or the VB Juvenile Detention Home.

As previously mentioned, students enrolled at Renaissance Academy were there for three reasons: 1) referred by the Office of Student Leadership, 2) principal-to-principal placement, or 3) scheduling needs. According to a summary of data provided by Renaissance Academy, approximately 71 percent of students during 2021-2022 had been referred by the Office of Student Leadership due to behavior concerns, approximately 23 percent were at Renaissance Academy as a result of principal referrals, and 6 percent were enrolled based on their course scheduling needs.¹⁸

Evaluation Plan and Recommendation

According to School Board Policy 6-26, an Evaluation Readiness Report will focus on the outcomes of the evaluation readiness process and “will be presented to the Superintendent and School Board with a recommendation regarding future evaluation plans for the program. If appropriate based on the evaluation readiness process, the program will be scheduled for a comprehensive evaluation.” In accordance with this policy, a proposed plan of action for the evaluation of the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program is described below.

Scope and Rationale of Proposed Evaluation

The scope of the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program evaluation will be a three-year evaluation focused on the middle and high school program. A three-year evaluation is planned based on the transient nature of students within the program representing different cohorts of students, as well as the school's new administration team's plans for potential enhancements to the program. The first two years of the evaluation will focus on the implementation and operation of the program. Two years of focusing on program operation will provide an opportunity to fully understand the program and document any modifications or changes made by the new administration. During the first year of the evaluation, baseline student outcome data related to the goals and objectives will be collected and analyzed. Student outcome data will also be collected and analyzed during the second year of evaluation. The third year of the evaluation will focus on assessing the program's effectiveness in terms of student outcomes and the degree to which the program met its goals and objectives.

For the three-year evaluation, information will be provided for the following five areas:

1. Operational Components

- Rationale: It is standard practice within an evaluation framework to examine issues related to implementation in order to assess functioning.

2. Characteristics of Students at Renaissance Academy

- Rationale: The purpose of identifying characteristics of students in Renaissance Academy is to better understand the population of students being served.

3. Meeting Goals and Objectives

- Rationale: Progress made toward meeting the outcome goals and objectives will be assessed to determine the extent to which the program is effective.

4. Stakeholder Perceptions

- Rationale: Assessing perceptions of Renaissance Academy stakeholder groups (i.e., students, parents, and staff at Renaissance Academy; secondary principals; assistant principals; school counselors; and student support specialists) will identify strengths, potential areas for improvement, and a general understanding of the role of Renaissance Academy within the division.

5. Cost

- Rationale: The cost of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program will be determined in order to provide information about the benefit of the service in relation to its overall cost.

Proposed Evaluation Method

In preparation for this Evaluation Readiness Report, the report provided from the Alternative Education Task Force and previous program evaluations conducted for other VBCPS alternative education programs were reviewed including ISEAP and Student Support Services. The reports provided a resource for planning the current evaluation. To the greatest extent possible, the evaluation methods that are proposed are aligned with information in the literature about best practices in the evaluation of alternative education programs.

The proposed evaluation will include mixed-methodologies to address each of the evaluation questions, including the goals and objectives. Goals and objectives will be evaluated based on multiple measures when possible. Data collection will occur during 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025 and include both quantitative

(e.g., student demographics, survey ratings, etc.) and qualitative data (e.g., open-ended survey questions, interview responses). The majority of quantitative data will be extracted from the VBCPS data warehouse, including student demographic data, course grades, attendance, and discipline data. To gather perception data, surveys will be administered to key stakeholder groups including Renaissance Academy students, teachers, and parents, as well as middle and high school building administrators, school counselors, and student support specialists. Due to the transient nature of students at Renaissance Academy, surveys will be administered when they exit the program or at the end of the school year for those who remain enrolled. Surveys for other stakeholders will be conducted at the end of the school year. Qualitative data will be gathered from open-ended survey items and meetings with the program staff at Renaissance Academy.

Evaluation Design and Questions

The proposed evaluation questions are listed below.

- 1. What is alternative education in VBCPS?**
 - a. What is the mission, vision, and purpose of alternative education?
- 2. What options are part of alternative education in VBCPS to meet students' needs?**
 - a. Renaissance Academy
 - Middle school/high school program
 - Anti-Tobacco Use Program
 - Choices
 - ISAEP
 - Online Learning
 - Student support specialists
 - Substance Abuse Intervention Program
 - b. Other services
 - Student support specialist, and/or counselor
 - Flexible schedule
 - Basic needs
 - Mentors
 - Career development and credentialing
 - Foreign language
 - Evening program
- 3. What are the characteristics of the students attending the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program?**
- 4. What is the process/criteria for students to be referred to the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program and to transition back to their home school?**
 - a. Entry Process: Student discipline hearing process, principal placement, scheduling needs
 - b. Process to Transition to Home School: Criteria, transition plans for returning to home school
 - c. Recidivism (i.e., returning to Renaissance Academy)
- 5. What are the staff characteristics and qualifications and what professional learning opportunities are provided for alternative education staff?**
- 6. What opportunities are provided for parents/families of students in Renaissance Academy's middle and high school alternative education program to be involved/engaged?**
- 7. What progress has been made toward meeting the student outcome goals and objectives of the middle and high school alternative education program?**
- 8. What were the stakeholders' perceptions of the middle and high school alternative education program?**
- 9. What is the cost of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program to the school division?**

Table 3 outlines the process for collecting data to address Evaluation Question 7 focused on student outcome goals and objectives. For reference, the goals and objectives can be found beginning on page 10.

Table 3: Data Collection Process for Student Outcome Goals and Objectives

Program Objective	Data Used to Evaluate Progress Toward Meeting Objectives	Measure	Data Source
Goal 1 Objective 1	Data regarding student and staff perceptions of positive relationships (Timeframe: administered when students exit RA or at the end of the school year)	Percentage of respondents agreeing	Survey
Goal 1 Objective 2	Data regarding student perceptions of sense of belonging and feeling welcome (Timeframe: administered when students exit RA or at the end of the school year)	Percentage of respondents agreeing	Survey
Goal 1 Objective 3	Data regarding student and staff perceptions of the Relationship Skills social-emotional competency (Timeframe: administered when students exit RA or at the end of the school year)	Percentage of student agreement responses for items in the SEL competency; percentage of staff agreeing	Survey
Goal 1 Objective 4	Data regarding student and staff perceptions of the Self-Management social-emotional competency (Timeframe: administered when students exit RA or at the end of the school year)	Percentage of student agreement responses for items in the SEL competency; percentage of staff agreeing	Survey
Goal 1 Objective 5	Data regarding student and staff perceptions of the Responsible Decision Making social-emotional competency (Timeframe: administered when students exit RA or at the end of the school year)	Percentage of student agreement responses for items in the SEL competency; percentage of staff agreeing	Survey
Goal 2 Objective 1	Data regarding student, staff, and parent perceptions on gaining tools and strategies to demonstrate success	Percentage of respondents agreeing	Survey
Goal 2 Objective 2	Data on discipline referrals and in-school and out-of-school suspensions; Data regarding student, staff, and parent perceptions of students' behavior	Percentage of students displaying a decline in discipline referrals and in-school and out-of-school suspensions; percentage of respondents agreeing	Data Warehouse; Survey
Goal 2 Objective 3	Data regarding student attendance record	Percentage of students with attendance rate of 90 percent or higher	Data Warehouse
Goal 2 Objective 4	Data regarding students' core course grade averages; Data regarding student, staff, and parent perceptions of academic performance	Percentage of students displaying improvement in core course grade averages; percentage of respondents agreeing	Data Warehouse; Survey
Goal 2 Objective 5	Data regarding students' SOL tests	Percentage of students passing SOL tests	Data Warehouse

Program Objective	Data Used to Evaluate Progress Toward Meeting Objectives	Measure	Data Source
Goal 3 Objective 1	Data regarding student, staff, and parent perceptions on gaining tools and strategies to successfully transition back to home school	Percentage of respondents agreeing	Survey
Goal 3 Objective 2	Data on students' discipline referrals after students return to their home school	Average number of referrals for students returning from Renaissance Academy is less than or consistent with the home school's average number of referrals per student	Data Warehouse
Goal 3 Objective 3	Data on students' attendance rate after students return to their home school	Percentage of students with attendance rates similar to attendance rates while at Renaissance Academy	Data Warehouse
Goal 3 Objective 4	Data regarding students' core course grades after returning to their home school (Timeframe: Quarter 4 grades for students who had been enrolled for at least 9 weeks)	Percentage of students with core course grade averages similar to their grade averages while at Renaissance Academy	Data Warehouse
Goal 4 Objective 1	Data regarding students' graduation from high school	Percentage of students who attended Renaissance Academy who graduate in 4, 5, or 6 years	VDOE Graduation Data
Goal 4 Objective 2	Data regarding student perceptions of engaging in the academic/career planning process	Percentage of respondents agreeing	Survey
Goal 4 Objective 3	Data regarding student perceptions of future goal setting	Percentage of respondents agreeing	Survey
Goal 4 Objective 4	Data regarding seniors' postgraduation plans	Percentage of respondents indicating they have a plan after graduation to further their education, become employed, or join the military	VDOE Senior Exit Survey Data

Recommendations and Rationale

Recommendation #1: Conduct a three-year evaluation of the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program with reports provided to the School Board during fall 2023, 2024, and 2025. (Responsible Group: Office of Planning, Innovation, and Accountability)

Rationale: It is proposed that a three-year evaluation of the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program be conducted during 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025. Years one and two of the evaluation plan during 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 will focus on the operation of the Renaissance Academy alternative education program. Devoting two years of focus to program operation will allow processes to be examined along with any modifications or changes made by the administration. Student outcome data related to the goals and objectives will be analyzed each year. Year three, the evaluation will shift to focusing on program effectiveness in terms of student outcomes and the degree to which the program met its goals and objectives.

General Recommendations from Alternative Education Task Force

1. Accommodate students according to their needs
2. Require alternative education programs, when created or restructured, to meet the conditions established by research and the findings of this task force as necessary for a successful program. Each program must:
 - Have clear, measurable, rigorous goals
 - Be supported with on-going, high-quality training for staff
 - Be assessment-driven in providing services to students
 - Have procedures in place to monitor how well the program is implemented
 - Have clear entry and exit criteria
 - Have transition planning for when the student returns to the home school
3. Serve students whose primary challenge is behavioral in different settings from students whose primary challenge is academic
4. Clearly define the target population for each program
5. Develop more sophisticated outcome measures for all programs
6. Develop more effective transition services into present alternative programs so that all essential information needed for educational planning arrives in a timely manner
7. Develop more effective transition services out of present alternative programs to help students maintain gains achieved in the alternative setting
8. Improve the communication between alternative schools and regular schools, as well as communication among alternative schools
9. Enhance interagency cooperation to better share the expertise, commitment, and responsibility to serve at-risk students

Endnotes

- ¹ Mark Glander, "Selected Statistics From the Public Elementary and Secondary Education Universe: School Year 2014–15" (NCES 2016-076). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016076.pdf>, 2016, p. B-1.
- ² Skip Kumm, Sarah Wilkinson, and Sara McDaniel, Alternative Education Settings in the United States," *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 2020, pp. 1-4.
- ³ Source: https://www.vbschools.com/about_us/our_leadership/school_board/policies_and_regulations/section_6/6-27
- ⁴ Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Alternative Education Task Force Report (draft).
- ⁵ Source: https://www.vbschools.com/about_us/departments/facilities_services/completed/RenaissanceAcademy
- ⁶ Source: https://www.vbschools.com/academic_programs/alternative_education
- ⁷ Source: James Miller, personal communication, July 18, 2022.
- ⁸ Source: <https://renaissanceacademy.vbschools.com/>
- ⁹ Secondary School Curriculum for Students of Virginia Beach City Public Schools, 2019-2020.
- ¹⁰ Secondary School Curriculum for Students of Virginia Beach City Public Schools, 2019-2020.
- ¹¹ Source: https://www.vbschools.com/academic_programs/alternative_education/anti-tobacco_use_program_all_levels
- ¹² Source: https://www.vbschools.com/academic_programs/alternative_education/substance_abuse_intervention_program_6-12
- ¹³ Source: https://www.vbschools.com/academic_programs/alternative_education/choices_program_6-12
- ¹⁴ Source: https://www.vbschools.com/academic_programs/alternative_education/student_support_specialists
- ¹⁵ Source: https://www.vbschools.com/academic_programs/alternative_education/individual_student_alternative_education_plan
- ¹⁶ Source: https://www.vbschools.com/academic_programs/alternative_education/online_learning_9-12
- ¹⁷ The year that students were last enrolled in their VBCPS home school varied. For example, three students last home school enrollment was in 2016-2017, four students was in 2017-2018, 22 students was in 2018-2019, 33 students was in 2019-2020, 67 students was in 2020-2021, and 465 students was in 2021-2022.
- ¹⁸ Source: Girard Larkin, III, personal communication, August, 4, 2002. Please note that these percentages include students (N=736) enrolled at Renaissance Academy receiving the general curriculum, and students enrolled in ISAEP.

Aaron C. Spence, Ed.D., Superintendent
Virginia Beach City Public Schools
2512 George Mason Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23456-0038

Produced by the Office of Planning, Innovation, and Accountability
For further information, please call (757) 263-1199

Notice of Non-Discrimination Policy

Virginia Beach City Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation/gender identity, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition, disability, marital status, age, genetic information or military status in its programs and activities, employment, or enrollment and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. School Board policies and regulations (including but not limited to, [Policies 2-33](#), [4-4](#), [5-7](#), [5-19](#), [5-20](#), [5-44](#), [6-7](#), [6-33](#), [7-48](#), [7-49](#), [7-57](#) and Regulations [2-33.1](#), [4-4.1](#), [4-4.2](#), [4-4.3](#), [5-7.1](#), [5-44.1](#), [7-11.1](#) and [7-57.1](#)) provide equal access to courses, programs, enrollment, counseling services, physical education and athletic, vocational education, instructional materials, extracurricular activities, and employment.

Title IX Notice: Complaints or concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of sex or sexual harassment should be addressed to the Title IX Coordinator, at the VBCPS Office of Student Leadership, 641 Carriage Hill Road, Suite 200, Virginia Beach, 23452, (757) 263-2020, Mary.Gonzalez@vbschools.com (student complaints) or the VBCPS Department of School Leadership, 2512 George Mason Drive, Municipal Center, Building 6, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23456, (757) 263-1088, Robert.Wnukowski@vbschools.com (employee complaints). Additional information regarding Virginia Beach City Public Schools' policies regarding discrimination on the basis of sex and sexual harassment, as well as the procedures for filing a formal complaint and related grievance processes, can be found in School Board Policy 5-44 and School Board Regulations 5-44.1 (students), School Board Policy 4-4 and School Board Regulation 4-4.3 (employees) and on the School Division's website at Diversity, Equity and Inclusion/Title IX. Concerns about the application of [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](#) should be addressed to the Section 504 Coordinator/Executive Director of Student Support Services at (757) 263-1980, 2512 George Mason Drive, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23456 or the Section 504 Coordinator at the student's school. For students who are eligible or suspected of being eligible for special education or related services under IDEA, please contact the Office of Programs for Exceptional Children at (757) 263-2400, Plaza Annex/Family and Community Engagement Center, 641 Carriage Hill Road, Suite 200, Virginia Beach, VA 23452.

The School Division is committed to providing educational environments that are free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying. Students, staff, parents/legal guardians who have concerns about discrimination, harassment, or bullying should contact the school administration at their school. Promptly reporting concerns will allow the school to take appropriate actions to investigate and resolve issues. School Board Policy [5-7](#) addresses non-discrimination and anti-harassment, Policy [5-44](#) addresses sexual harassment and discrimination based on sex or gender. Policy [5-36](#) and its supporting regulations address other forms of harassment.

Alternative formats of this publication which may include taped, Braille, or large print materials are available upon request for individuals with disabilities. Call or write Nikki Garmer, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, 2512 George Mason Drive, P.O. Box 6038, Virginia Beach, VA 23456-0038. Telephone (757) 263-1199 (voice); fax (757) 263-1131; (757) 263-1240 (TDD) or email her at anna.garmer@vbschools.com.

vbschools.com
your virtual link to Hampton Roads' largest school system



No part of this publication may be produced or shared in any form without giving specific credit to Virginia Beach City Public Schools.

August 2022