Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program: Year-One Implementation Evaluation

February 2024

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Background of Program

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

VBCPS has a long history with alternative education settings. Several centers operated in VBCPS beginning in the 1960s including the Center for Effective Learning, the Career Development Center, and Open Campus. In 1993, School Board Policy 6-27 regarding alternative education was adopted and then revised in July 2022. The policy states "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 four goals in its comprehensive five-year plan. They were as follows:

Goal 1: Improve the academic achievement of Virginia Beach Students.
Goal 2: Reduce the number of students needing alternative placement as a result of their behavior.
Goal 3: Reconceptualize and expand the focus of existing alternative education sites.
Goal 4: Develop the leadership skills of at-risk students.[5]

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.[6]

Background and Purpose of Program Evaluation

The Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program was selected for the Program Evaluation Schedule based on criteria specified in the 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.

In July 2021, members of the Program Evaluation Committee were provided instructions to review a list of 12 existing educational program within VBCPS and were asked to rank the programs based on the factors noted above. Based on the criteria in School Board policy 6-26, the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program was recommended for inclusion on the Program Evaluation Schedule. This recommendation was due to its potential to have a large, positive impact on VBCPS reaching its goals, the cost of the program, and the availability of information about the program's effectiveness.

After being selected for evaluation by the Program Evaluation Committee, the School Board approved the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program for an evaluation readiness report on September 14, 2021. During the 2021-2022 school year, the evaluation plan was developed by a committee of five participants consisting of the school's director, data specialist, program evaluators, and a representative from the Department of School Leadership. The recommendation from the evaluation readiness report was that the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program undergo a three-year evaluation during 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025. Years one and two of the evaluation plan during 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 would focus on the operation of the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program, while the third year of evaluation in 2024-2025 would focus on program effectiveness in terms of student outcomes and the degree to which the program met its goals and objectives. The recommended evaluation plan was presented to the School Board on August 23, 2022. On September 13, 2022, the School Board approved the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program: Evaluation Readiness Report including the program goals and objectives, the evaluation plan, and the recommendation concerning the three-year evaluation of the program.

This evaluation provides Renaissance Academy stakeholders, the school division administration, and the school board with information about the operation of the program, as well as baseline information about the goals

and objectives. Focusing on program operation will allow processes to be examined along with any modifications or changes made by the administration.

Program 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 in collaboration with the director of alternative education, data specialist, and Department of School Leadership. The goals were focused on student outcomes and included the following:

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

2. Students in alternative education will demonstrate success in school while attending Renaissance Academy,

3. Students in alternative education will successfully transition to their home school following enrollment at Renaissance Academy, and

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

Specific objectives within each goal were assessed as part of the evaluation question focused on progress being made toward meeting the student outcome goals and can be found in that section of the report. Operational or implementation aspects of the program were assessed as part of the planned program evaluation questions.

Evaluation Design and Methodology

Evaluation Design and Data Collection

The evaluation included mixed methodologies to address each of the evaluation questions, including providing baseline data and preliminary analyses for student outcome goals and objectives. Qualitative data were collected through meetings with Renaissance Academy staff, document reviews, and open-ended survey questions. Quantitative data were gathered through the VBCPS data warehouse and closed-ended survey questions. The Office of Research and Evaluation evaluators used the following data collections methods:

- Communicated with the director of the Alternative Education/Renaissance Academy, assistant principal, and data specialist to gather implementation-related information.
- Reviewed Renaissance Academy program documentation.
- Administered surveys to Renaissance Academy staff, staff at comprehensive middle and high schools, Renaissance Academy students, and parents of Renaissance Academy students.
- Collected student survey data through the VBCPS Annual Spring Survey.
- Collected data from the VBCPS data warehouse related to student demographic characteristics, program-related information, and student progress (e.g., enrollment, academic performance, attendance).
- Collected staff-related data from the Department of Human Resources.
- Collected cost information from the Department of Teaching and Learning, Department of Human Resources, Department of Budget and Finance, and Office of Transportation and Fleet Services.

Student Survey

Due to the transient nature of the students attending Renaissance Academy, there was a two-pronged approach to administering the student survey during the 2022-2023 school year. A link to the anonymous online survey was provided to administrators at Renaissance Academy in December 2022 to administer to students exiting the program at any time during the year. Then, the anonymous survey was given in June 2023 to all remaining students at Renaissance Academy because at that point in the school year, students at Renaissance Academy would remain at the school for the remainder of the 2022-2023 school year. Overall student response rates ranged from 7 percent to 37 percent (see Table 1).

Table 1: Students at Renaissance Academy Response Rates by Grade Level

Group	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
6th Grade	13	22%
7th Grade	25	22%
8th Grade	41	37%
Middle School Total	**79**	**28%**
9th Grade	21	15%
10th Grade	22	16%
11th Grade	13	15%
12th Grade	5	7%
High School Total	**61**	**14%**
Grand Total	**140**	**19%**

Annual Spring Survey

One of the purposes of the Annual Spring Survey is to combine survey items for multiple initiatives and programs for efficient collection of data needed for continuous improvement. Due to challenges with response rates on the survey developed exclusively for students at Renaissance Academy (see Table 1), the Annual Student Survey was reviewed for survey items that were aligned with concepts included in the goals and objectives. The Annual Student Survey was administered in April 2023 to all students in grades 4 through 12. On the Annual Student Survey, the middle school response rate for students at Renaissance Academy was 54 percent and the high school response rate for students at Renaissance Academy was 37 percent. Two survey items were identified to be identical, and student agreement responses on the Annual Student Survey were included in this evaluation for context due to the higher response rate providing a potentially more representative sample.

Plan for Survey Administration for Year-Two Evaluation in 2023-2024

The plan for survey administration for the year-two evaluation in 2023-2024 has been developed to yield a higher student response rate. The survey plan continues to include a two-pronged approach. First, the anonymous student survey link was provided to staff at Renaissance Academy in October 2023 to begin the data collection process earlier for students who may exit Renaissance Academy in the fall. In addition, all survey items for the alternative education program evaluation will be added as part of the 2024 VBCPS Annual Spring Survey rather than having a separate program evaluation survey for students. While this was not a feasible option in spring 2023 due to the length of the student survey, this option will be utilized in spring 2024.

Staff Surveys

Staff at Renaissance Academy including administrators, school counselors/school psychologists, student support specialists, and teachers received an email invitation to complete an anonymous survey in May and June 2023. Overall staff response rates ranged from 33 percent to 100 percent (see Table 2). Throughout the report, survey results were analyzed by school level. There were nine staff members who indicated they worked with both middle and high school students. Therefore, they were included in both the middle and high school percentages. However, their responses were only included once in the total calculation.

Table 2: Renaissance Academy Response Rates

Group	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
Administrators	5	83%
School Counselors/School Psychologists	2	33%
Student Support Specialists	3	100%
All Teachers	50	63%
Middle School Teachers Only*	12	39%
High School Teachers Only*	35	73%
Total	**60**	**64%**

*Note: This is an approximate response rate by school level. Only teachers that exclusively taught middle or high school were included in the response rate calculation by level. All other staff members could not be assigned a school level because they worked with both middle and high school students.

Staff at comprehensive secondary schools including principals, assistant principals, school counselors, school psychologists, and student support specialists received an email invitation to complete an anonymous survey regarding their knowledge and perceptions of the middle and high school alternative education program at Renaissance Academy. Overall staff response rates ranged from 11 percent to 72 percent (see Table 3). Of those comprehensive staff members who responded to the survey, 97 percent indicated they had experience working with students who attended the middle or high school alternative education program at Renaissance Academy. Perceptions in this report are based on comprehensive school staff members who indicated they had experience working with students who attended Renaissance Academy. In addition, throughout the report, comprehensive secondary staff members results are analyzed by school level. Two staff members indicated they worked with students in both middle and high school, therefore totals do not equal the sum of middle and high school staff.

Table 3: Staff at Comprehensive Secondary Schools Response Rates

Group	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
Principals	18	72%
Assistant Principals	40	55%
School Counselors	60	45%
School Psychologists	2	11%
Student Support Specialists	5	50%
Total	**125**	**48%**

Parent Survey

Parents of students who were enrolled at Renaissance Academy anytime during the 2022-2023 school year as of May 19, 2023 were emailed an anonymous survey in May and June 2023. Response rates were 11 percent at middle school and 14 percent at high school.

Table 4: Parent Response Rates by School Level

Group	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
Middle School	50	11%
High School	62	14%
Total	**112**	**12%**

For all stakeholders, survey agreement percentages reported in the evaluation are based on those who answered the survey item (i.e., missing responses were excluded from the percentages). In addition, several items had response options such as "Don't Know" and these responses were also excluded from the percentages. Survey results are reported at the division level, but results were also disaggregated and examined by school level (i.e., middle and high). Open-ended comments were analyzed for common themes.

Student Information From Data Warehouse

Quantitative data collected from the VBCPS data warehouse included student demographic characteristics and academic achievement as measured by Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, discipline referral data, attendance data, core course grade averages, and data from the senior exit survey where postgraduation plans are collected for the Virginia Department of Education. Data were analyzed based on the specific evaluation question or objective that was developed for the purposes of the program evaluation. Because there is significant transition into and out of the alternative education program at Renaissance Academy during the school year based on the design of the program, appropriate groups of students needed to be determined for the data analyses. Specific criteria for including students in the data analysis are described in the appropriate sections of the report.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions for this report were developed by the program evaluators in consultation with the director of alternative education/Renaissance Academy, data specialist, and a representative from the Department of School Leadership. The evaluation questions established for the year-one implementation evaluation were as follows:

1. **What is alternative education in VBCPS?**
2. **What options are part of alternative education in VBCPS to meet students' needs?**
   a. Renaissance Academy middle and high school program
      - Student support specialists and school counselors
      - Flexible schedule
      - Basic needs
      - Mentors
      - Career development and credentialing
      - World language
      - Evening program
   b. Other Alternative Education Options to Meet Students' Needs
3. **What are the characteristics of the students attending the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program?**
4. **What is the process and 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. Reenrollment (i.e., returning to Renaissance Academy within the same school year)

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 and families of students in Renaissance Academy's middle and high school alternative education program to be involved and 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?**

Evaluation Results and Discussion

Alternative Education in VBCPS

The first evaluation question focused on operationally defining alternative education in VBCPS including the mission, vision, and purpose.

The Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program seeks to meet the needs of students who are not experiencing success in regular secondary (grades 6 through 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.[7] 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 or recommended by school administrators through principal-to-principal placement to best meet students' needs.[8] In prior years, students could be referred to Renaissance Academy to meet students' course scheduling needs but in 2022-2023, all high schools adopted the 4x4 schedule. Therefore, course scheduling is no longer a reason for enrollment.[9] Parents can also initiate their student's enrollment at Renaissance Academy. The program serves both regular education and special 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."[10] 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 learning. In addition, leadership skills are embedded throughout the curriculum. Additional information about the Renaissance Academy academic program for middle school students indicated it builds 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.[11] The components that make up the Renaissance Academy's alternative education program are explored in the following section.

Comprehensive secondary school staff who had experience working with students who have attended Renaissance Academy were asked about their understanding of the program. Almost all staff agreed (97%)

they understood the purpose of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program in VBCPS, with slightly higher agreement among high schools.

Table 5: Staff at Comprehensive Secondary Schools Report Their Understanding of the Purpose of Renaissance Academy

Survey Item	MS	HS	Total
I understand the purpose of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program at VBCPS.	94%	98%	97%

Alternative Education Options to Meet Students' Needs

The second evaluation question focused on the options that are available at Renaissance Academy to meet students' unique needs. These options include staffing and programmatic components within the Renaissance Academy middle and high school program which is the focus of the current program evaluation, as well as other alternative education program options.

Renaissance Academy Middle and High School Program

Student Support Specialists and School Counselors

Student support specialists at both Renaissance Academy and comprehensive secondary schools aim to provide effective and efficient transitions for students between alternative programs and home schools. 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. Students may also be referred to a student support specialist by their home school's support team. Student support specialists 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. School counselors meet with students and ensure they are meeting their scheduling and graduation requirements. In addition, school counselors conduct 504 meetings, conduct self-harm assessments, and provide drop-out prevention and intervention support. During the 2022-2023 school year, the decision was made to team student support specialists and school counselors with assistant principals and assign them to a cluster of home schools.

Flexible Schedule

Renaissance Academy has flexible scheduling to allow students to obtain the credits they need in order to obtain a high school diploma. For example, if courses they need are not offered at Renaissance Academy, students have the option to be placed in Edgenuity or Apex courses or students may be granted permission for concurrent enrollment with their home school to complete the course remotely.[12]

Basic Needs

Renaissance Academy operates from the belief that students' basic needs should be met so they can focus on their academic tasks. All students who attend Renaissance Academy receive free and reduced meals. All students are provided a clear backpack, water bottle, school supplies, and basic toiletries for free. The school uniform is sold to students at cost with no additional increased cost, and those who are unable to purchase it are provided it for free.[13]

Mentors

The Renaissance Academy provides students with mentorship meetings scaled to meet students' needs and meetings typically focus on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision-making. The mentorship opportunities are being expanded for the 2023-2024 school year. For example, a mentorship program composed of retired VBCPS staff members is being developed for the 2023-2024 school year in addition to the implementation of tiered small group sessions.[14]

Career Development and Credentialing

One of the stated goals of the Renaissance Academy according to the current administration is for students to "enroll, employ, or enlist." In the 2022-2023 school year, staff at Renaissance Academy developed the RA Pathway Plan which is a five-year plan for career development. The goal is to offer programs and coursework for the following careers over the next several years: lawn maintenance, beekeeping, building maintenance, nail technician, and drone pilots. As of the 2023-2024 school year, Unmanned Systems (drone pilots) and Television Production I and II were introduced. The plan is for Introduction to Landscaping I and II and Building Maintenance I and II courses to be introduced in 2024-2025, and Nail Technician coursework to be introduced in 2025-2026 school year.[15]

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses offered at Renaissance Academy provide students with the opportunity to earn CTE credentials. The exams offered across the CTE courses include the Workplace Readiness Skills test, Servsafe Food Handler assessment, OSHA 10-Hour Construction Training, NRF Customer Service & Sales Exam, and the Microsoft Office Specialist exams (including MS Word, MS PowerPoint, MS Excel, and MS Access). Economics and Personal Finance courses allow students the opportunity to earn a CTE credential through the W!se Financial Literacy Certification Test.[16] In addition, the school counseling department at Renaissance Academy hosted a career fair in April 2023. Attendees for the fair included: Air Force, US Army, Virginia Beach Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, Tidewater Community College, and Hardee's. Renaissance Academy hosted a college fair in October 2022.

World Languages

Offering a world language credit allows students at Renaissance Academy to take courses that count toward graduation credit. In the 2022-2023 school year, the Renaissance Academy received a staff allocation for a high school Spanish teacher. As a result, the Renaissance Academy offers face-to-face Spanish I and II courses, as well as facilitates online courses in advanced Spanish with in-person support. Additional online courses allow students to take French and German. Students enrolled in world language classes at their home school many continue to pursue that course credit while enrolled at Renaissance Academy through the flexible scheduling options.[17]

Evening Program

The evening program is a tuition-based option available to students based upon student enrollment. Currently with the division's change to a 4x4 model, there is no enrollment in the evening program. The program is designed to encompass three sessions, meeting Monday through Thursday. Session 1 is a two-hour session that meets Monday through Thursday. Session 2 is a four-hour session that meets on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Session 3 is a four-hour session that meets Tuesday and Thursday evenings. According to the director of Alternative Education and Renaissance Academy, the evening program has the ability to resume any time the need would arise.[18]

Comprehensive Secondary Staff Perceptions of Renaissance Academy Meeting Students' Needs

Comprehensive secondary staff have a unique stake in the Renaissance Academy program since they are involved with both the referral and transition of students back to the home school. Comprehensive secondary staff members were asked their perceptions of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program meeting students' needs, improving students' behavior, and improving students' academic achievement. As indicated in Table 6, 68 percent of comprehensive secondary staff agreed the program meets students' needs, 53 percent agreed the program was effective at improving students' behavior, and 57 percent agreed the program was effective at improving students' academic achievement. Middle school staff from comprehensive schools had higher agreement levels than high school staff on each of the survey items. Renaissance Academy staff members, students, and parents were asked perceptions of the program meeting students' needs including improving behavior and academic achievement, and these results are presented in the student outcome goal section of the evaluation.

Table 6: Comprehensive Secondary Staff Members' Perceptions of Renaissance Academy Meeting Students' Needs

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
The Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program meets students' needs.	79%	60%	68%
The Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program is effective at improving students' behavior.	59%	50%	53%
The Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program is effective at improving students' academic achievement.	61%	57%	57%

Other Alternative Education Options to Meet Students' Needs

Due to the personalized nature of alternative education, VBCPS provides several additional options for students based on their needs. While these program options are available at Renaissance Academy, they are not specifically part of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program that is the focus of this evaluation. The information is provided to illustrate the scope of alternative education options within VBCPS.

The Anti-Tobacco Use Program (ATUP) is a multi-level program designed to eliminate tobacco use and possession at school and school-related functions by providing education to students, parents, staff, and the 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.

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. SAIP takes place at the Renaissance Academy and transportation is provided.[19]

Choices is a ten-session instructional program for students in grades 6-12 who consistently demonstrate inappropriate behaviors that interfere with learning, excluding truancy. 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.[20]

The Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEPP) 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. ISAEPP will only be considered for students after all measures to maintain students in a diploma program have been exhausted. To be referred to the program, students and/or parents contact a teacher, counselor, or administrator at their child's home school.[21]

Comprehensive secondary staff were surveyed about their familiarity with the purpose of the various alternative education programs at Renaissance Academy. A list of these results can be found in Appendix A.

Student Characteristics

The third evaluation question is focused on the characteristics of the students attending Renaissance Academy. During the 2022-2023 school year, 720 students were enrolled at Renaissance Academy at any time during the school year, with 284 students in grades 6 through 8 and 436 students in grades 9 through 12. 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 7 displays demographic data for these students based on information from the VBCPS data warehouse.

Table 7: Demographic Characteristics of Students Enrolled in Renaissance Academy Any Time During the 2022-2023 School Year

Characteristic	MS (N=284)		HS (N=436)		Total (N=720)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender						
Female	108	38%*	159	36%*	267	37%*
Male	176	62%**	277	64%**	453	63%**
Ethnicity						
American Indian	1	<1%	1	<1%	2	<1%
Asian	1	<1%	7	<2%*	8	1%*
Black	163	57%**	257	59%**	420	58%**
Hispanic	30	11%	36	8%	66	9%
Multiracial	31	11%	48	11%	79	11%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	<1%	0	0%	1	<1%
White	57	20%*	87	20%*	144	20%*
Economically Disadvantaged	224	79%**	264	61%**	488	68%**
Identified Special Education	64	23%**	97	22%**	161	22%**
Identified Limited English Proficiency	3	1%	3	1%	6	1%
Identified Gifted	8	3%*	9	3%*	17	3%*
Military Connected	20	7%*	40	9%*	60	8%*

*More than 5 percent **below** the percentage at the division level based on cumulative enrollment.
More than 5 percent **above the percentage at the division level based on cumulative enrollment.

The majority of students enrolled at Renaissance Academy were male (63%). Overall, across both levels, the majority of the students were Black (58%) and 20 percent of the students were White. The majority of students at Renaissance Academy were economically disadvantaged (68%). At the middle school level, a higher percentage of students enrolled at Renaissance Academy were identified as economically disadvantaged than high school students. A little less than one-quarter of students at Renaissance Academy were special education students (22%), 8 percent were military connected, 3 percent were identified gifted, and about 1 percent were

identified English Learners (EL). There were notable higher percentages of Male, Black, economically disadvantaged, and special education students at Renaissance Academy compared to students at the overall division level. There were notably lower percentages of females, White, Gifted and military connected students at Renaissance Academy than students at the overall division level. Additional data showed that a total of 76 students (11%) were retained in their grade level during the 2022-2023 school year, and 137 students (21%) were retained at some point during their academic career, but not during the 2021-2022 school year.

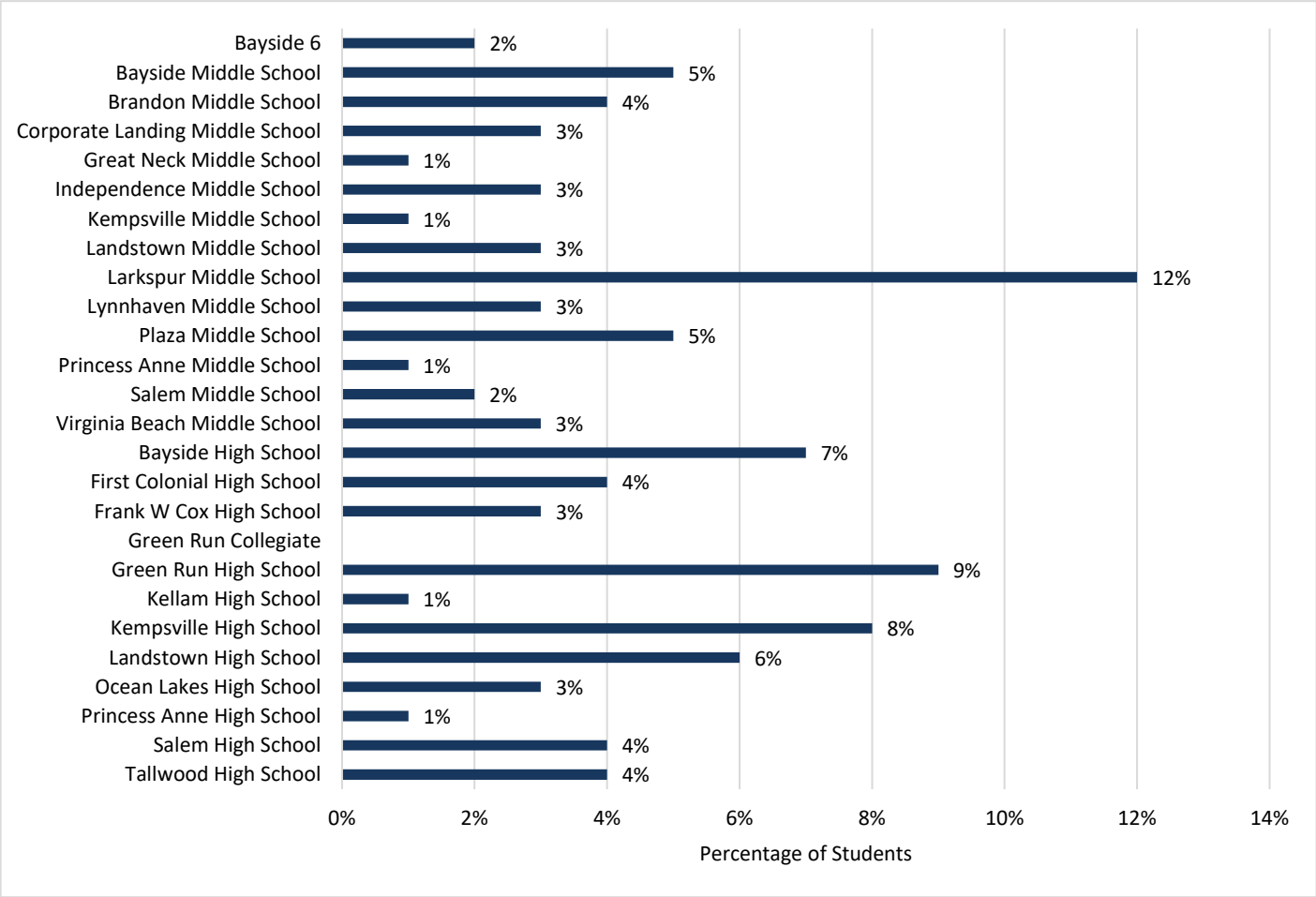
Of the 720 students enrolled at some time during the 2022-2023 school year, 58 percent (n=418) were enrolled in Renaissance Academy for the first time. The median number of days students were enrolled at Renaissance Academy was 76 days. Table 8 displays information about the length of student enrollment at Renaissance Academy in greater detail. When examining by grade level, a larger percentage of high school students were enrolled at Renaissance Academy for 90 percent or more of the school year than middle school students. A majority of the students enrolled at Renaissance Academy during 2022-2023 were there less than half of the school year (59%), while 41% percent were there for at least half of the year. Additionally, 10 percent (n=74) were enrolled the entire 2022-2023 school year or 180 days.

Table 8: Length of Student Enrollment at Renaissance Academy

Percent of Days Enrolled During the School Year	Percent of Enrolled Middle School Students	Percent of Enrolled High School Students	Percent of Total Enrolled Students
90% or more	10.2%	16.7%	14.2%
50%-89%	28.2%	26.6%	27.2%
10%-49%	58.8%	53.2%	55.4%
Less than 10%	2.8%	3.4%	3.2%

Figure 1 displays the students' last enrolled VBCPS home school for any student enrolled in Renaissance Academy during the 2022-2023 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 2022-2023.[22] The largest percentage of students had Larkspur Middle School listed as their last enrolled home school with 12 percent of students. The second most represented home school was Green Run High School with 9 percent, and the third was Kempsville High School with 8 percent of students. No students who attended Renaissance Academy during the 2022-2023 school year had Green Run Collegiate listed as their previous home school.

Figure 1: Students' Last Enrolled Home School



Note: N=669. This includes students who had a VBCPS middle school or high school listed as their last home school. There were 51 students who had their home school listed as another center or program, including SECEP Tidewater Regional Alternative Education Program, the VB Juvenile Detention Home or FAPT.

Referral and Transition Process

The fourth evaluation question focused on the process and 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. This section of the report focuses on the Renaissance Academy entry process, the process for students to transition back to their home school, and recidivism.

Entry Process

As previously mentioned, there were three avenues by which students enrolled at Renaissance Academy including referral by the Office of Student Leadership (OSL), principal-to-principal placement, or parent request. According to a summary of data provided by Renaissance Academy, based on student registrations, the majority of students were referred by the OSL due to behavior concerns during 2022-2023 (56%), and most remaining students were at Renaissance Academy at the start of the school year based on enrollment the prior year. Less than 1 percent were at Renaissance Academy as a result of principal placement. No students attended Renaissance Academy during the 2022-2023 school year due to parent requests.

According to the VBCPS Discipline Guidelines, there are five levels of responses to student behavior which are enforced by school personnel with students who exhibit inappropriate behavior that is in violation of school rules, *Code of Student Conduct*, School Board Policies and Regulations, and/or local, state, or federal laws. Responses to student behavior are progressive in nature; that is, the level of response increases as the number of instances of similar inappropriate behavior increases. Level 4 behaviors may require a student to report to the director of the Office of Student Leadership and result in a referral to Renaissance Academy. Level 5 behaviors are reserved for the most serious behaviors and result in a report to the director of the Office of Student Leadership. Once a student is referred to the OSL, a hearing takes place which includes an administrative statement that includes a recommendation for the outcome of the student (e.g., long-term suspension, alternative education placement, etc.). However, the final decision or outcome of the OSL hearing is made on a case-by-case basis and by the hearing officer.

Part of the entry process includes new student orientation which is a mandatory session for all students attending Renaissance Academy and their families. This orientation familiarizes students with the support team and provides them with information to help them successfully transition into their new educational experience. The orientation includes information about expectations, procedures, policies, and other pertinent details. In addition, families are provided with contact information of staff members who are directly supporting the students like the school counseling team and administrative team. Families are also provided the name of the individuals who comprise the student support team for each middle and high school. The student support team includes an administrator, student support specialist, and counselor. The orientation also includes the screening process to enter the building each day which includes going through a metal detector and search of items. Students are not allowed cell phones or any other electronic device or headwear (e.g., hats, hoods, scarves). All students are provided a clear backpack where they can store approved personal items. Families are provided with the hours of operation for both schools: high school hours are from 7:20 AM-2:00 PM and middle school hours are from 9:45 AM to 4:15 PM. Orientation includes information about transportation, which is provided to all students. Orientation includes school-wide expectations which are "Be Kind, Show Respect, Act Responsible," and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) matrix is discussed. The uniform policy is included which is required in order to enter the building every day. Staff members discuss the cost of the uniform which include a polo shirt or sweatshirt and khaki pants (full length). High school students wear gray and black polos while middle school students wear green and white polos. The orientation concludes with mandatory forms that must be completed: student registration, parent acknowledgement, media form, psychological services consent form, school search policy acknowledgement, and uniform policy acknowledgement.[23]

Transition Process

According to Renaissance Academy orientation documents, students have the ability to transition back to their home school once they meet the following three criteria: good grades (C or higher in all classes), good attendance (no more than six unverified), and good behavior (no in-school or out-of-school suspensions). Once these criteria have been met, the OSL serves as the main conduit for communication between Renaissance Academy and the home school by providing a letter with information regarding the status of the students' return.

The letter from OSL includes directions regarding the administrative process that needs to take place for students to withdraw from Renaissance Academy and re-enroll in their home school. A copy of this letter is given to the following stakeholders: the superintendent, the principal of the students' home school, the director of alternative education, school counseling department chair, and mailed to the student's parent or guardian. Each school is responsible for communicating the information regarding the students' return to their staff.

Integral to this process is the transition specialist and the student support specialist (SSS) team. The transition specialist provides comprehensive information about returning students to the SSS team. Upon receiving the names of returning students, the SSS team members will introduce themselves and work toward establishing a rapport. They will work with students for at least nine weeks, monitoring their progress and providing necessary support to ensure a successful transition to the home school. Students' progress is monitored through a SSS protocol. This internal report assesses their performance after a marking period. Once a student demonstrates success through the established criteria, they "graduate" from these services with the team. If students do not meet the criteria, the SSS will extend the support for another nine weeks, repeating the review process until the student demonstrates they are able to transition to their home school successfully.

Reenrollment

Students who do not successfully transition back to their home school may be referred again to Renaissance Academy. Reenrollment is defined as the percentage of students who attend Renaissance Academy and transition back to their home school or school within VBCPS and then attend Renaissance Academy again all within the same school year. The students included in the analysis were those who were enrolled in Renaissance Academy during the 2022-2023 school year, exited Renaissance Academy at some point during the 2022-2023 school year and went back to their homeschool or another school within VBCPS and then reentered Renaissance Academy again within 2022-2023. As displayed in Table 9, 14 percent of students who attended Renaissance Academy during 2022-2023 went back to their home school or another school in VBCPS and then reenrolled at Renaissance Academy again during 2022-2023. When examining data by school level, middle school students had a higher rate of reenrollment (34%) than high school students (5%).

Table 9: Percentage of Students Returning to Renaissance Academy During the 2022-2023 School Year

Criteria	Middle School Students	High School Students	Total Number of Students
Students Who Exited Renaissance Academy to Go Back to Their Home School or Another School in VBCPS	56	120	176
Students Who Went Back to Renaissance Academy	19	6	25
Total	**34%**	**5%**	**14%**

Perceptions of Referral and Transition Process

Comprehensive secondary staff members were asked survey items related to student referral criteria and the transition process. As indicated in Table 10, 88 percent of staff members agreed they understand the criteria for students to be referred to the alternative education program. There were no notable differences among school levels for this survey item. Eighty-three percent of comprehensive secondary staff agreed they understood the transition process for students moving from their home school to the Renaissance Academy. High school staff members reported somewhat lower levels of agreement on this item (79%) than middle school staff members (85%). Sixty-five percent of comprehensive secondary staff agreed they understood the transition process for students moving from Renaissance Academy back to their home school. On this transition item, middle school staff members reported lower levels of agreement percentages (61%) than high school staff members (68%).

Table 10: Comprehensive Secondary Staff Members' Perceptions of Referral Criteria and Transition Process

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
I understand the criteria for students to be referred to the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program.	87%	90%	88%
I understand the transition process for students moving from their home school to the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program.	85%	79%	83%
I understand the transition process for students moving from Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program back to their home school.	61%	68%	65%

Comprehensive secondary staff members were also asked an open-ended question regarding any comments about the processes related to the students attending Renaissance Academy. Overall, 34 staff members provided a comment on this survey item which was 28 percent of those staff members who responded to the survey and indicated they worked with students who have attended Renaissance Academy. The most mentioned comment was related to enrollment processes. Enrollment suggestions varied to include more streamlined processes and faster time between OSL notification and actual Renaissance Academy enrollment or better communication during this time period. The next most mentioned topic was improved communication with students' home school. Staff would like more communication prior to students transitioning back to their home school and updates about students' progress while at Renaissance Academy. The third most mentioned comment included the belief that students who are referred to Renaissance Academy should be required to attend.

Staff Characteristics and Professional Learning

The fifth evaluation question is focused on the characteristics of the staff at Renaissance Academy and professional learning opportunities. Demographic characteristics were examined for full-time instructional staff at Renaissance Academy in comparison to the division instructional staff. In comparison to all instructional staff throughout the division, there were higher percentages of male Renaissance Academy instructional staff as well as instructional staff who were Black, while there were lower percentages of female Renaissance Academy instructional staff members as well as those who were White (see Table 11). The average number of years teaching was lower for instructional staff at both the middle and high school levels at Renaissance Academy compared to the division instructional staff while there was a larger percentage of teachers new to the division at the division instructional in comparison to staff at Renaissance Academy.

Table 11: Staff Characteristics for Renaissance Academy Instructional Staff and All Instructional Staff

Group	Renaissance Academy Instructional Staff (N=82)	Division Instructional Staff (Middle and High) (N=2,586)
Female	63%	72%
Male	37%	28%
American Indian	0%	0%
Asian	4%	3%
Black	29%	12%
Hispanic	1%	5%
Multiracial	5%	2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%	0%
White	61%	77%
Percentage New to the Division	4%	9%
Average Years of Experience		
Middle*	11 years	13 years
High*	10 years	15 years
Percent Graduate Degrees	50%	53%

*Note: This is an approximate average years of experience by school level. Only teachers who exclusively taught middle or high school were included in the years of experience calculation. All other staff members could not be categorized by school level because they worked with both middle and high school students.

Staff at Renaissance Academy were surveyed about their satisfaction with their experience working at Renaissance Academy. As displayed in Table 12, approximately 87 percent of staff members indicated they were satisfied working at Renaissance Academy. There were no notable differences in satisfaction among school levels.

Table 12: Renaissance Academy Staff Reporting Satisfaction Working at Renaissance Academy

Survey Item	MS	HS	Total
Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience working at Renaissance Academy?	86%	86%	87%

Professional Learning

Renaissance Academy staff members were asked if they had participated in professional learning related to being a staff member at Renaissance Academy within the last three years. Of the 21 middle school staff members who responded, 18 (86%) reported they had participated in professional learning. Of the 44 high school staff members, 34 (77%) reported they had participated in professional learning. Of all 56 staff members who responded, 45 (80%) reported they had participated in professional learning in the past three years. When participants in professional learning were asked their perceptions of the opportunities, overall 70 to 73 percent agreed the professional learning helped prepare them to teach or provide services to students, enabled them to better meet students' needs, and that it was sufficient (see Table 13). A somewhat lower percentage of high school staff members agreed they received sufficient professional learning related to being a staff member at Renaissance Academy (67%).

Table 13: Renaissance Academy Staff Members' Perceptions of Professional Learning Within the Last Three Years

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
Professional learning helped prepare me to teach and/or provide services to the students at Renaissance Academy.	71%	70%	73%
Professional learning enabled me to better meet the needs of students at Renaissance Academy.	75%	72%	72%
I received sufficient professional learning related to being a staff member at Renaissance Academy.	76%	67%	70%

Note: There are nine staff members who indicated they work with both middle and high school students, therefore, they are included in both in the middle and high school percentages. However, their responses are only included once in the total calculation.

Renaissance Academy members were also asked an open-ended question regarding professional learning topics they would be interested in learning more about. Overall, 22 Renaissance Academy staff members provided a professional learning topic they would be interested in learning more about which was 37 percent of those staff members who responded to the survey. The most mentioned topic was de-escalation strategies, followed by trauma-informed practices, anger management strategies, and behavior interventions.

Family Engagement

The sixth evaluation question focused on opportunities for parents or families to be involved and engaged in their child's education at Renaissance Academy. As previously mentioned, new student orientation is a mandatory session for all students and families attending Renaissance Academy. This orientation familiarizes students with the support team and provides them with information to help them successfully transition into the building. The orientation includes information about staff members, policies including uniforms and procedures for entering the building, behavior expectations, and required forms.

As displayed in Table 14, a high percentage of parents reported the orientation session at Renaissance Academy was very helpful or somewhat helpful in helping their family understand the program's expectations for their students. High school parents reported higher percentages than middle school parents.

Table 14: Parents' Perceptions of Orientation Session

Survey Item	MS	HS	Total
How helpful was the orientation session at Renaissance Academy in helping your family understand the program's expectations for students?	90%	97%	94%

In addition to the new student orientation, Renaissance Academy holds an open house every September to provide students, families, and teachers with opportunities to discuss current academic performance, attendance, and behavior. Renaissance Academy shares a quarterly newsletter with the community to share pertinent information including calendar updates, school and division-wide announcements, and showcase students' academic endeavors (i.e., 3D drawings, field trips to First Landing State Park and Chrysler Museum of Art).

Renaissance Academy also engaged with the community in a variety of ways. Tidewater Community College representatives and ACCESS counselors visited Renaissance Academy four times between December through May in support of the division-wide Future Ready goal. Renaissance Academy participated in the following divisionwide or school-sponsored activities: African American Male Summit (January 2023), Black History Month Workshop (February 2023, hosted by Renaissance Academy), Official for the Day (March 2023), parent and review meeting for a grant application (April 2023), Maud Lewis Open House and Fundraiser for Juvenile Arthritis (April 2023, hosted by Renaissance Academy), and African American Music Month Juneteenth Celebration (June 2023, hosted by Renaissance Academy).

Progress Toward Meeting Goals and Objectives

The seventh evaluation question focused on progress toward meeting the student outcome goals and objectives of the middle and high school alternative education program. Although the focus of the current evaluation was on implementation, baseline data for student outcome goals and objectives were analyzed to provide preliminary results. The results are organized by goal area with data represented for each objective. Survey results were also analyzed for two groups of students: "Exited/Planned to Exit" and "Planned to Stay." "Exited/Planned to Exit" students included Renaissance Academy students who had either exited the program at some point during the 2022-2023 school year or intended to exit Renaissance Academy at the end of the school year and start the 2023-2024 school year at their home school. "Planned to Stay" included students who indicated they would be attending Renaissance Academy at the start of the 2023-2024 school year. Notable differences among these two groups were highlighted.

Build Relationships to Demonstrate Social-Emotional Competencies

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.

Students were surveyed about their perceptions of building positive relationships with students and staff at Renaissance Academy. Overall, students reported positive relationships with the different staff members at Renaissance Academy including teachers, administrators, student support specialists, and counselors ranging from 84 percent to 88 percent. Students reported lower agreement ratings on getting along well with other students. High school students reported higher agreement percentages on having positive relationships with other students than middle school students (88% vs. 68%) as displayed in Table 15. Students who "Exited/Planned to Exit" indicated higher agreement percentages on all relationship items than those who "Planned to Stay" ranging from 4 percentage points to 16 percentage points.

Table 15: Students' Perceptions of Building Positive Relationships With Students and Staff

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total	Exited/Planned to Exit	Planned to Stay
I have positive relationships with teachers at Renaissance Academy.*	85%	95%	89%	94%	84%
I have positive relationships with the director/principal and assistant principal(s) at Renaissance Academy.*	81%	88%	84%	88%	79%
I have positive relationships with student support specialists at Renaissance Academy.	75%	87%	80%	81%	79%
I have positive relationships with school counselors at Renaissance Academy.	86%	89%	88%	91%	83%
I get along well with other students at Renaissance Academy.*	68%	88%	77%	83%	67%

*Note: These survey items are repeated in Objective 3 as part of the items in the Relationship Skills competency aggregate rating.

Staff at Renaissance Academy were surveyed about their perceptions of building positive relationships with students. As displayed in Table 16, 98 percent of staff agreed they had positive relationships with students at Renaissance Academy, 84 percent agreed students had positive relationships with the staff, and 57 percent agreed students at Renaissance Academy got along well with other students at Renaissance Academy. Staff members' perceptions of students' relationships with staff and other students were lower at middle school than high school.

Table 16: Renaissance Academy Staff Members' Perceptions of Building Positive Relationships With Students

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
I have positive relationships with students at Renaissance Academy.	100%	98%	98%
Students have positive relationships with the staff at Renaissance Academy	76%	86%	84%
The students at Renaissance Academy get along well with other students at Renaissance Academy.	43%	61%	57%

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

Students were surveyed about their perceptions of feeling a sense of belonging and feeling welcome at Renaissance Academy. Students reported lower agreement percentages on items related to feeling like they belong or feel a sense of belonging at Renaissance Academy ranging from 53 percent to 62 percent. Students reported higher agreement percentages on items related to feeling valued and welcome at Renaissance Academy ranging from 62 percent to 77 percent. Overall, high school students had higher agreement ratings across all items as displayed in Table 17. Students who "Exited/Planned to Exit" indicated higher agreement percentages on welcome and feeling valued items except one item than those who "Planned to Stay" ranging from 3 percentage points to 8 percentage points.

Table 17: Students' Perceptions of Feeling a Sense of Belonging and Feeling Welcome at School

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total	Exited/Planned to Exit	Planned to Stay
I feel like I belong while I am at Renaissance Academy.	48%	60%	53%	52%	55%
Renaissance Academy provides a welcoming place for me to learn.	67%	89%	77%	79%	71%
I feel a sense of belonging at Renaissance Academy.	54%	71%	62%	61%	61%
I feel valued and included at Renaissance Academy.	67%	84%	74%	77%	69%

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.

The Relationship Skills competency includes areas such as communication, social engagement, relationship building, and teamwork. Aggregate ratings on the Relationship Skills social-emotional competency were calculated by dividing the total number of agreement responses by the total number of responses across all items within the competency. Overall, 74 percent of the student responses to the Relationship Skills items were agreement responses. High school students had higher aggregate ratings on survey items (81%) than middle school students (68%) as displayed in Table 18. In addition, middle school students had lower agreement percentages than high school students on three items: "I feel like I belong while I am at

Renaissance Academy," "I work out disagreements with other students by talking with them," and "I care about other students at Renaissance Academy." Differences on these items ranged from 12 to 24 percentage points Students who "Exited/Planned to Exit" reported higher agreement percentage on the Relationship Skills competency than those who "Planned to Stay" by 10 percentage points.

Table 18: Students' Perceptions of Demonstrating Competency in Relationship Skills

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total	Exited/Planned to Exit	Planned to Stay
Relationship Skills Competency	**68%**	**81%**	**74%**	**78%**	**68%**
Items within Relationship Skills Competency:					
I have positive relationships with teachers at Renaissance Academy.	85%	95%	89%	94%	84%
I have positive relationships with the director/principal and assistant principal(s) at Renaissance Academy.	81%	88%	84%	88%	79%
I get along well with other students at Renaissance Academy.	68%	88%	77%	83%	67%
I feel like I belong while I am at Renaissance Academy.	48%	60%	53%	52%	55%
I care about other students at Renaissance Academy.	59%	71%	64%	67%	63%
I work out disagreements with other students by talking with them.	56%	80%	66%	74%	53%
I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine.	76%	89%	82%	86%	74%

Staff at Renaissance Academy were surveyed about their perceptions of students demonstrating competency in relationship skills. As displayed in Table 19, 20 percent of staff agreed students demonstrated competency in relationship skills. Nearly half of staff (47%) agreed students' relationship skills improved while attending Renaissance Academy, but this was mainly based on high school staff (53%) who were more likely to agree students' relationship skills improved than middle school staff (33%).

Table 19: Renaissance Academy Staff Members' Perceptions of Students Demonstrating Competency in Relationship Skills

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
Students demonstrate competency in relationship skills.	19%	20%	21%
Students' relationship skills have improved while attending Renaissance Academy.	33%	53%	47%

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.

The Self-Management competency includes areas such as impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal setting, and organizational skills. Aggregate ratings on the Self-Management

social-emotional competency were calculated by dividing the total number of agreement responses by the total number of responses across all items within the competency. Overall, 79 percent of the student responses to the Self-Management items were agreement responses. High school students had higher aggregate ratings on survey items (88%) than middle school students (72%) as displayed in Table 20. In addition, middle school students had lower agreement percentages than high school students on two items: "I stop and think before doing anything when I get angry" and "I can control myself when I am upset." Differences on these items ranged from 29 to 31 percentage points. Students who "Exited/Planned to Exit" reported higher agreement percentage on the Self-Management competency than those who "Planned to Stay" by 20 percentage points.

Table 20: Students' Perceptions of Demonstrating Self-Management

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total	Exited/Planned to Exit	Planned to Stay
Self-Management Competency	**72%**	**88%**	**79%**	**85%**	**65%**
Items within Self-Management Competency:					
I am able to find positive ways to deal with problems in my life.	79%	93%	85%	89%	76%
I take action to reach the goals I set for myself	85%	93%	88%	91%	81%
I finish tasks even if they are hard for me.	81%	89%	85%	88%	80%
I stop and think before doing anything when I get angry.	51%	82%	65%	77%	39%
I can disagree with others without starting an argument or a fight.	74%	88%	80%	89%	60%
I can control myself when I am upset.	60%	84%	70%	77%	57%

Staff at Renaissance Academy were surveyed about their perceptions of students demonstrating competency in self-management skills. As displayed in Table 21, 18 percent of staff agreed students demonstrated competency in self-management skills. However, 46 percent of staff agreed students' self-management skills improved while attending Renaissance Academy.

Table 21: Renaissance Academy Staff Members' Perceptions of Students Demonstrating Competency in Self-Management Skills

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
Students demonstrate competency in self-management skills.	14%	18%	18%
Students' self-management skills have improved while attending Renaissance Academy.	48%	48%	46%*

*Note: Overall percentage is lower than individual school levels because there were nine staff members who indicated they worked with both middle and high school students. Therefore, they were included in both the middle and high school percentages. However, their responses were only included once in the total percentage.

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.

The Responsible Decision Making Skills competency includes identifying and solving problems, analyzing situations, evaluating, reflecting, and ethical standards. Aggregate ratings on the Responsible Decision Making social-emotional competency were calculated by dividing the total number of agreement responses by the total number of responses across all items within the competency. Overall, 80 percent of the student responses to the Responsible Decision Making Skills items were agreement responses. High school students had higher aggregate ratings on survey items (88%) than middle school students (74%) as displayed in Table 22. Talk about the two lowest for MS here. Students who "Exited/Planned to Exit" reported higher agreement percentages on the Responsible Decision-Making competency than those who "Planned to Stay" by 13 percentage points.

Table 22: Students' Perceptions of Demonstrating Responsible Decision Making

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total	Exited/Planned to Exit	Planned to Stay
Responsible Decision Making Competency	**74%**	**88%**	**80%**	**84%**	**71%**
Items within Decision Making Competency:					
I know how to decide right from wrong.	90%	86%	88%	90%	83%
I am able to make good choices that lead to success.	83%	93%	87%	90%	83%
I think about what might happen before I make a decision.	67%	89%	77%	88%	53%
I ask for advice when making an important decision.	70%	88%	78%	77%	78%
When I need help, I find someone to talk with.	61%	84%	71%	76%	59%

Staff at Renaissance Academy were surveyed about their perceptions of students demonstrating competency in responsible decision making skills. As displayed in Table 23, 16 percent of staff agreed students demonstrated competency in responsible decision making skills. However, half of all staff who responded to the survey agreed students' responsible decision making skills improved while attending Renaissance Academy.

Table 23: Renaissance Academy Staff Members' Perceptions of Demonstrating Responsible Decision Making

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
Students demonstrate competency in responsible decision-making skills.	14%	16%	16%
Students' responsible decision-making skills have improved while attending Renaissance Academy.	48%	52%	50%

Demonstrate Success While Attending Renaissance Academy

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.

All stakeholders including students, parents, Renaissance Academy staff, and comprehensive secondary school staff were surveyed about their perceptions of students' gaining the tools and strategies for success in school while attending Renaissance Academy. As displayed in Table 24, 74 percent of students agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, they gained the tools and strategies for success. High school students had a higher

agreement percentage than middle school students (82% vs. 67%). There were no differences in agreement percentages when comparing students who exited or planned to exit (73%) and those who planned to remain at Renaissance Academy (73%%). Overall, lower percentages of parents (52%) agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, their child gained the tools and strategies for success. Parents of high school students had a higher agreement rating than middle school parents (58% vs. 33%). Overall, a majority of staff at Renaissance Academy (59%) agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, students gained the tools and strategies for success. High school Renaissance Academy staff had a somewhat higher agreement percentage than middle school Renaissance Academy staff (59% vs. 52%).

Table 24: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Gaining Tools and Strategies for Success

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
Student – While attending Renaissance Academy, I have gained the tools and strategies for success.	67%	82%	74%
Parent – While attending Renaissance Academy, my child gained the tools and strategies for success.	33%	68%	52%
RA Staff – While attending Renaissance Academy, students gained the tools and strategies for success in school.	52%	59%	59%

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.

The data analyzed for this objective included all students who attended a school in VBCPS prior to Renaissance Academy because student data outside of VBCPS is not maintained in the data warehouse.[24] The total number of students included in this analysis was 253. A decline was defined as having fewer referrals or suspensions when enrolled at Renaissance Academy than when they were enrolled at their home school during 2022-2023. In addition, to be included a student had to have had at least one referral or at least one suspension at their home school prior to attending Renaissance Academy. Without a referral or suspension, a student would not be able to show a decline for the purposes of this objective.

Overall, 70 percent of students demonstrated a decline in discipline referrals after enrolling in Renaissance Academy. When examining data by school level, a higher percentage of high school students demonstrated a decline (74%) than middle school students (67%). Overall, 76 percent of students demonstrated a decline in the number of in-school suspensions and 63 percent demonstrated a decline in the number of out-of-school suspensions. When examining data by school level, a higher percentage of middle school students demonstrated a decline in in-school suspensions (81%) than high school students (68%), while a higher percentage of high school students demonstrated a decline (75%) in out-of-school suspensions than middle school students (54%).

Table 25: Percentage of Students Demonstrating a Decline in Discipline Referrals and Suspensions After Enrolling in Renaissance Academy

School Level	Decline in Number of Discipline Referrals		Decline in Number of In-School Suspensions		Decline in Number of Out-of-School Suspensions		Decline in Total Number of Suspensions	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Middle School	90	67%	63	81%	72	54%	85	63%
High School	87	74%	34	68%	88	75%	84	71%
Total	**177**	**70%**	**97**	**76%**	**160**	**63%**	**169**	**67%**

Stakeholders including students, parents, and Renaissance Academy staff were surveyed about their perceptions of students demonstrating satisfactory behavior. As displayed in Table 26, 84 percent of students agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, they demonstrated satisfactory behavior, and 88 percent of students agreed their behavior improved while attending Renaissance Academy. High school students had higher agreement percentages than middle school students for both survey items. Higher percentages of students who exited or planned to exit also agreed they demonstrated satisfactory behavior (86% vs. 78%) and their behavior had improved (90% vs. 82%) than students who planned to remain at Renaissance Academy next year. Overall, 62 percent of parents agreed while attending Renaissance Academy their child demonstrated satisfactory behavior with high school parents having a notably higher agreement percentage than middle school parents. Overall, 38 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, students demonstrated satisfactory behavior with higher agreement levels at the high school level than the middle school level. Overall, 53 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed while at Renaissance Academy, students' behavior improved with relatively similar percentages at both middle and high schools.

Table 26: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Demonstrating Satisfactory Behavior at Renaissance Academy

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
Student – While attending Renaissance Academy, I have demonstrated satisfactory behavior.	81%	89%	84%
Student – While attending Renaissance Academy, my behavior has improved.	85%	90%	88%
Parent – While attending Renaissance Academy, my child demonstrated satisfactory behavior.	48%	74%	62%
RA Staff – While attending Renaissance Academy, students have demonstrated satisfactory behavior.	25%	45%	38%
RA Staff – While attending Renaissance Academy, students' behavior has improved.	50%	54%	53%

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.

The percentage of students at Renaissance Academy who consistently attended school was based on those with an attendance rate of 90 percent or higher. Analyses were limited to students who were enrolled for at least one quarter or approximately 45 days.[25] The total number of students included in this analysis was 605. As displayed in Table 27, overall, one-quarter of students had an attendance rate of 90 percent or higher. A higher percentage of middle school students (29%) had an attendance rate of 90 percent or higher than high school students (22%).

Table 27: Percentage of Students With An Attendance Rate of 90 Percent or Higher

School Level	Number of Students With Attendance Rate of 90% or Higher	Percentage With Attendance Rate of 90% or Higher
Middle School	68	29%
High School	83	22%
Total	**151**	**25%**

Stakeholders including students, parents, and Renaissance Academy staff were surveyed about their perceptions of students' attendance. As displayed in Table 28, 87 percent of students agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, their attendance was satisfactory, and 82 percent agreed their attendance improved while at Renaissance Academy. Higher percentages of students who exited or planned to exit also agreed their attendance had been satisfactory (89% vs. 81%) than students who planned to remain at Renaissance

Academy, but relatively similar percentages of students who exited or planned to exit agreed their attendance had improved than students who planned to remain at Renaissance Academy (81% vs. 83%).

Overall, 71 percent of parents agreed while attending Renaissance Academy their child demonstrated satisfactory attendance, and 54 percent of parents agreed their child's attendance improved while attending Renaissance Academy. Parents of high school students were more likely to agree their child's attendance improved than parents of middle school students. Overall, 42 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, students had satisfactory attendance, and 48 percent agreed while at Renaissance Academy, students' attendance improved. For both attendance survey items, middle school staff had a higher agreement percentage than high school staff.

Table 28: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Attendance While Attending Renaissance Academy

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
Student – While attending Renaissance Academy, my attendance has been satisfactory.	83%	91%	87%
Student – While attending Renaissance Academy, my attendance has improved.	81%	83%	82%
Parent – While attending Renaissance Academy, my child's attendance was satisfactory.	71%	71%	71%
Parent – While attending Renaissance Academy, my child's attendance improved.	48%	60%	54%
RA Staff – While attending Renaissance Academy, students' attendance was satisfactory.	60%	35%	42%
RA Staff – While attending Renaissance Academy, students' attendance has improved.	63%	42%	48%

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.

The data analyzed for this objective included students who had the opportunity to have quarterly grades at their home school and quarterly grades at Renaissance Academy. Students had to have been enrolled at Renaissance Academy for at least one quarter (45 days) to be included. In addition, this objective included all students who attended a school in the VBCPS division prior to Renaissance Academy and who had valid quarterly core course grade averages at both their home school and Renaissance Academy (e.g., courses that were missing or had Pass/Fail grades were not included in the analyses). Finally, students who had the same core course grade averages at their home school and Renaissance Academy were not included in the percentage who showed improvement because maintaining the same core course average was not considered improvement for this objective. The total number of students included in this analysis was 231.

Overall, 68 percent of students demonstrated improvement in core course grade averages after enrolling in Renaissance Academy. When examining the results by school level, a higher percentage of high school students (78%) demonstrated improvement than middle school students (59%).

Table 29: Percentage of Students Demonstrating Improvement in Core Course Grade Averages

School Level	Number of Students With Improvement in Core Course Grade Averages	Percentage With Improvement in Core Course Grade Averages
Middle School	70	59%
High School	88	78%
Total	**158**	**68%**

Stakeholders including students, parents, and Renaissance Academy staff were surveyed about their perceptions of students' academic performance. As displayed in Table 30, 83 percent of students agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, their academic performance was satisfactory, and 83 percent of students agreed their academic performance improved. For both academic performance survey items, high school students had higher agreement percentages than middle school students. Relatively similar percentages of students who exited or planned to exit also agreed their academic performance had been satisfactory (83% vs. 81%), while similar percentages agreed their academic performance had improved than students who planned to remain at Renaissance Academy next year (83%).

Overall, 55 percent of parents agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, their child's academic performance improved with notable differences in agreement levels between parents of high school students (64%) and parents of middle school students (43%). Overall, 62 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, students' academic performance improved with higher agreement among high school staff (68%) than middle school staff (40%).

Table 30: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Academic Performance at Renaissance Academy

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
Student – While attending Renaissance Academy, my academic performance has been satisfactory.	76%	91%	83%
Student – While attending Renaissance Academy, my academic performance has improved.	79%	88%	83%
Parent – While attending Renaissance Academy, my child's academic performance improved.	43%	64%	55%
RA Staff – While attending Renaissance Academy, students' academic performance improved.	40%	68%	62%

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

Students included in this analysis were any student who took an assessment while at Renaissance Academy and had a valid scale score on the SOL test (e.g., zeros were not included in the analysis). No students who took alternate tests were included in this analysis because they did not take alternate tests while at Renaissance Academy. The total number of students included in the analyses are noted in Table 31. Overall, 69 percent passed the Writing: End-of-Course test, 66 percent passed the English: End-of-Course test, and 54 percent passed the Algebra I SOL test. Less than half of the students taking the other SOL tests earned a passing score. The remaining percentage of students passing each test are displayed in Table 31.

Table 31: Percent of Students Passing Standards of Learning (SOL) Tests

Test	Total Number of Students Who Took Test	% Pass
Grade 6		
Grade 6 English	44	30%
Grade 6 Math	38	11%
Grade 7		
Grade 7 English	71	23%
Grade 7 Math	67	10%
Grade 8		
Grade 8 English	51	27%
Grade 8 Math	47	9%
Grade 8 Science	50	12%
Grade 8 History	57	18%
Grade 8 Writing	49	4%
End-of-Course Test		
Algebra 1	92	54%
Biology	68	18%
Earth Science	13	46%
English	59	66%
Geography	32	28%
Geometry	18	0%
Virginia History	21	24%
World History I	45	9%
Writing	42	69%

Note: SOL tests were excluded if less than 10 students took the test.

Transition Successfully to Home School

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.

Stakeholders including students, parents, and Renaissance Academy staff were surveyed about their perceptions of students gaining tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school. As displayed in Table 32, 85 percent of students agreed they gained the tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school or school they attended prior to Renaissance Academy. High school students had somewhat higher agreement percentages than middle school students. Eighty-seven percent of students agreed they felt prepared to return to their home school, and 74 percent agreed they felt ready to return to their home school. Higher percentages of students who exited or planned to exit also agreed they had gained tools and strategies to successfully transition back (89% vs. 75%), they felt prepared to return to their home school (92% vs. 72%), and they felt ready to return to their home school (79% vs. 64%) than students who planned to remain at Renaissance Academy next year.

Overall, 55 percent of parents agreed their child gained tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school or school they attended prior to Renaissance Academy. Overall, 68 percent of parents agreed their child was ready to return to their home school. For both perception items pertaining to the

transition process, high school parents had higher agreement percentages than middle school parents especially related to their students gaining the tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school. Overall, 59 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed students have gained tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school or school they were enrolled in prior to Renaissance academy. Renaissance Academy high school staff had higher agreement percentages than middle school staff. Overall, 53 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed students were prepared to return to their home school. The majority of staff at comprehensive secondary schools (54%) agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, students gained the tools and strategies for success. Comprehensive middle school staff had higher agreement percentages than comprehensive high school staff (63% vs. 46%).

Table 32: Students' Perceptions of Gaining Tools and Strategies to Transition Back to Their Home School

Survey Items	MS	HS	Total
Student – I have gained tools and strategies to successfully transition back to my home school or the school I was enrolled at prior to attending Renaissance Academy.	82%	89%	85%
Student – I feel prepared to return to my home school.	86%	87%	87%
Student – I feel ready to return to my home school.*	76%	72%	74%
Parent – My child gained tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school, or school they were enrolled in prior to attending Renaissance Academy.	38%	67%	55%
Parent – My child is ready to return to their home school.	62%	72%	68%
RA Staff – Students have gained tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school, or school they were enrolled in prior to attending Renaissance Academy.	57%	61%	59%
RA Staff – Students are prepared to return to their home school.	52%	53%	53%
Comprehensive Secondary School Staff – While attending Renaissance Academy, students gained the tools and strategies for success in school.	63%	46%	54%

*Note: Student response options included: Yes/No/Don't Know

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.

The data analyzed for this objective included students who had exited Renaissance Academy and returned to their home school. Students who exited Renaissance Academy in September or June were excluded from this analysis because they did not spend a sufficient amount of time at Renaissance Academy or at their home school to adequately assess their behavior through discipline referrals. The total number of students included in this analysis is noted in Table 33. Students were grouped by the home school where they enrolled after exiting Renaissance Academy and the former Renaissance Academy students' referral data were compared to their home school's average. This method allowed the school context for discipline referrals to be taken into account given there is variability within schools related to referral rates. Discipline data from the home schools came from the annual discipline report for 2022-2023.

Overall, after enrolling in a home school upon exiting Renaissance Academy, former Renaissance Academy students had a higher average number of referrals (2.1) compared to the students' home school's average referral rate (0.7). When examining data by school level, former middle school Renaissance Academy students

had a higher average number of referrals (3.6) than high school students (1.6). There were three individual middle schools and two individual high schools where former Renaissance Academy students had on average, a lower number of referrals compared to their home school's average number and therefore, demonstrating success for the purposes of this objective.

Table 33: Average Number of Referrals by School Level

School Level	Cumulative Enrollment	Referrals Per Total Number of Students: Home School*	Average Number of Referrals	Number of RA Students At School	Referrals Per Total Number of Students: RA Students	Average Number of Referrals
Middle School (n=10)	10235	9222	0.9	27	98	3.6
High School (n=11)	20891	11225	0.5	86	138	1.6
Total	**31126**	**20447**	**0.7**	**113**	**236**	**2.1**

*Note: Middle school and high schools in these data were based on the schools where Renaissance Academy students enrolled after leaving Renaissance Academy.

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

The data analyzed for this objective included students who had exited Renaissance Academy and returned to their home school. Students who exited Renaissance Academy in September or June were excluded because they did not spend a sufficient amount of time at Renaissance Academy or at their home school to adequately assess their attendance. Assessing whether a student's attendance rate was similar to or higher than his or her attendance rate at Renaissance Academy was based on whether their percentage of days in attendance at their home school was the same or better. The total number of students included in this analysis was 111.

As displayed in Table 34, overall, half of former Renaissance Academy students had attendance rates similar or better once they returned to their home school. A higher percentage of middle school students had similar or better attendance rates (67%) than high school schools (44%).

Table 34: Percentage of Students With Attendance Rates Similar to or Better Than While at Their Home School

School Level	Number of Students With Similar or Better Attendance	Percentage With Attendance Rates Similar or Better While at Home School
Middle School	18	67%
High School	37	44%
Total	**55**	**50%**

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 or higher than their grade average while at Renaissance Academy.

The data analyzed for this objective included students who had exited Renaissance Academy and returned to their home school. Students who exited Renaissance Academy in September or June were excluded because they did not spend a sufficient amount of time at Renaissance Academy or at their home school for course grades to represent their academic performance at the site. Students who had the same core course grade average they had at Renaissance Academy or better were determined to be successful for the purpose of this objective, but this does not include those who had a zero as their core course grade average at Renaissance Academy and a zero as their core course grade average at their home school. The total number of students included in the analyses is noted in Table 35.

As displayed in Table 35, 21 percent of high school students maintained or improved their core course grade averages after returning to their home school, but no middle school students maintained or improved their core course grade averages after returning to their home school.

Table 35: Percentage of Students Who Maintained Their Academic Performance at Their Home School

School Level	Total Number of Students	Percentage
Middle School	21	0%
High School	77	21%
Total	**98**	**16%**

Graduate and Develop Postgraduation Plans

Goal #4: Students in alternative education will graduate and develop a postgraduation 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.[26]

The data analyzed for this objective included students who were part of the 2022-2023 on-time graduation cohort who attended Renaissance Academy at any point during their middle school or high school years. In addition, students must have attended at least 45 days in total at Renaissance Academy. As displayed in Table 36, 70 percent of students who attended Renaissance Academy in middle school graduated in four years, whereas 58 percent who attended Renaissance Academy in high school graduated in four years. Of all students who were enrolled at any point during middle or high school, 61 percent graduated within four years.

Table 36: Percentage of Students Who Graduated in Four Years

School Level	Percentage of 2022-2023 Cohort Who Graduated in 4 Years
RA During Middle School	70%
RA During High School	58%
RA Anytime (Total)	61%

Note: Data only includes students who attended Renaissance Academy for at least 45 days in total and excludes students who were only enrolled in ISAEP.

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

Students were asked their perceptions of their academic and career planning process. Overall, 74 percent of students agreed they received assistance, resources, and information at Renaissance Academy that helped them make informed decisions about their options after high school graduation. High school students reported higher levels of agreement at 83 percent than middle school students at 67 percent.[27] This survey item was asked on a survey of all high school and middle school students as part of Navigational Markers for *Compass to 2025*. For reference, division high school students overall reported similar agreement percentages as high school Renaissance Academy students (84% vs. 83%). However, division middle school students reported higher agreement percentages on this item than middle school Renaissance Academy students (84% vs. 67%).

Table 37: Students Reporting Academic/Career Planning

Survey Item	MS	HS	Total	Exited/Planned to Exit	Planned to Stay
I received assistance, resources, and information at Renaissance Academy that helped me make informed decisions about my options after I graduate from high school [e.g., college (enroll), employment (employ), or military service (enlist)].	67%	83%	74%	73%	74%

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

Students were surveyed about setting goals for their learning and future plans. Overall, 77 percent of students agreed as part of their experience at Renaissance Academy, they set goals for their learning and future plans. High school students reported higher levels of agreement at 84 percent than middle school students at 71 percent.[28] This survey item was asked on a survey of all high school and middle school students as part of Navigational Markers for *Compass to 2025*. For reference, division high school students overall reported similar agreement percentages as high school Renaissance Academy students (86% vs. 84%). However, division middle school students reported higher agreement percentages on this item than middle school Renaissance Academy students (82% vs. 71%).

Table 38: Students Reporting Setting Goals for Their Learning and Future Plans

Survey Item	MS	HS	Total	Exited/Planned to Exit	Planned to Stay
As part of my experience at Renaissance Academy, I set goals for my learning and my future plans.	71%	84%	77%	77%	75%

Students were asked an open-ended question on the survey about the assistance, resources, information, or activities they had at Renaissance Academy to help them make decisions about their future. Overall, 39 students provided a comment which was 28 percent of those students who responded to the survey. The most common response among middle and high school students was staff at Renaissance Academy provided them with encouragement or support. Several students named specific staff members they made connections with.

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

Seniors who graduated while at Renaissance Academy were asked their postgraduation plans on the senior exist survey to collect data for the Virginia Department of Education. As displayed in Table 39, 45 percent of students reported they did not have any or were undecided about their postgraduation plans, 38 percent indicated they planned to continue their education, 17 percent indicated they planned to attend a two-year college, and 14 percent reported they planned to attend a four-year college and employment, respectively. Seven percent reported they had other education plans such as business, technical, apprenticeship, or other educational opportunity and 3 percent indicated they planned to join the military.

Table 39: Seniors Who Graduated While At Renaissance Academy Postgraduation Plans

Postgraduation Plans	Percentage (n=29)*
None (No plans indicated or Undecided)	45%
Total Continuing Education**	38%
Two-Year College	17%
Four-Year College	14%
Other Education Plans (Business, Technical, Apprenticeship, or Other Educational Opportunity)	7%
Employment	14%
Military	3%

*Note: Includes 23 students who graduated while enrolled at Renaissance Academy and 6 students who graduated during the summer.
**Note: Two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and other included in Total Continuing Education.

Stakeholder Perceptions

The eighth evaluation question focused on stakeholders' perceptions of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program satisfaction, and what students gained from the program and areas of program improvement based on comments made by students, parents, and staff on the surveys.

Stakeholders' Perceptions of Program Meeting Students' Needs

Stakeholder Satisfaction

Table 40 displays the results for the survey item assessing overall satisfaction. Overall, 83 percent of students expressed satisfaction with their experience at Renaissance Academy. High school students had higher agreement percentages than middle school students (94% vs. 74%). Additionally, higher percentages of students who exited or planned to exit indicated they were satisfied with their experience at Renaissance Academy (84% vs. 78%) than students who planned to remain at Renaissance Academy next year.

Overall, 53 percent of parents expressed satisfaction with their students' experience at Renaissance Academy. Echoing students' experiences, parents of high school students were more likely to indicate they were satisfied than parents of middle school students (62% vs. 42%). Overall, 61 percent of comprehensive secondary staff expressed satisfaction with Renaissance Academy. Middle school staff members were more likely to indicate they were satisfied than high school staff members (76% vs. 50%). The majority of Renaissance Academy staff (65%) were satisfied with the experience students had at Renaissance Academy and percentages for middle and high school staff were similar.

Table 40: Overall Satisfaction with Renaissance Academy

School Level	Students	Parents*	RA Staff*	Comprehensive Secondary Staff
Middle School	74%	42%	65%	76%
High School	94%	62%	64%	50%
Total	**83%**	**53%**	**65%**	**61%**

*Note: Parents were asked the following survey question, "Overall, how satisfied are you with your child's experience at Renaissance Academy?"
**Note: Renaissance Academy Staff were asked the following survey question, "Overall, how satisfied are you with the experience students have at Renaissance Academy?"

Program Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Students were asked two open-ended questions on the survey about what they gained from enrolling in Renaissance Academy and improvements they would suggest for Renaissance Academy. Overall, 58 students provided a comment about what they gained from the program which was 41 percent of those students who responded to the survey. The most common response regarding what they gained included tools to better control their behavior. High school students reported gaining friendships.

Overall, 38 students provided a comment about improvements they would suggest for Renaissance Academy which was 27 percent of those students who responded to the survey. The most common response among high school students was more freedom including a less stringent dress code and allowing cell phones. The second most discussed comment included improving teachers' classroom management skills. The most common response among middle school students included more support for improving their social-emotional learning skills, specifically their ability to control their anger. Echoing high school students' comments, the second most mentioned theme by middle school students included improving teachers' classroom management skills.

Renaissance Academy staff were also asked two open-ended questions on the survey about what students gained from attending Renaissance Academy and improvements they would suggest for Renaissance Academy. Overall, 36 Renaissance Academy staff members provided a comment about what students gained from the program which was 60 percent of those staff members who responded to the survey. The most common response regarding what students gained included students having access to one-on-one or small group instruction which provided them with more individualized and/or personalized instruction. The second most common theme included the program providing students with a new environment and/or a new opportunity to be successful.

Overall, 44 Renaissance Academy staff members provided a comment about improvements they would suggest which was 73 percent of those staff members who responded to the survey. The most common response among staff members was a need for more staff members who would then help keep class sizes small or support staff. The second most discussed topic was a need for direct teaching of social-emotional learning tools for students. The third most discussed theme included alternatives to the current model for discipline and a clear articulation of the mission and vision for alternative education within VBCPS.

Comprehensive secondary staff were also asked two open-ended questions on the survey about what students gained from attending Renaissance Academy and improvements they would suggest for Renaissance Academy. Overall, 74 comprehensive secondary staff members provided a comment about what students gained from the program which was 61 percent of those staff members who responded to the survey. The most common response among comprehensive secondary staff members was students gained individualized learning opportunities complemented by small class sizes and structure. The second most common response was improved behavior.

Overall, 65 comprehensive secondary staff members provided a comment about improvements they would suggest for Renaissance Academy which was 54 percent of those comprehensive secondary staff members who responded to the survey. The most common response was related to improving the transition process for students from their home school to Renaissance Academy and from Renaissance Academy back to their home school. Many staff members expressed a need for a shorter timeframe between the date students are referred to Renaissance Academy by the Office of Student Leadership and the date students actually begin attending Renaissance Academy. The second most common response was improving communication between Renaissance Academy and the home school related to students' progress related to behavior and academics.

Parents were also asked two open-ended questions on the survey about what students gained from attending Renaissance Academy and improvements they would suggest for Renaissance Academy. Overall, 32 parents provided a comment about what students gained from the program which was 29 percent of those parents who responded to the survey. The most common response was improved behavior including self-control and a better understanding of the relationship between actions and consequences. The second most common response among parents was the formation of positive relationships with staff members.

Overall, 40 parents provided a comment about improvements they would suggest for Renaissance Academy which was 36 percent of those parents who responded to the survey. The most common response among parents was better communication between parents and schools. The second most common response was related to more supports for their child's unique needs including mental health supports or therapy.

Additional Cost

The final evaluation question focused on the cost of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program to the school division. This section of the report summarizes the total additional costs for Renaissance Academy from the 2022-2023 fiscal year. To the greatest extent possible, costs included in this section were for the middle and high school alternative education program and did not include costs for other alternative education options (e.g., ISAEP). Cost data were collected from the departments of School Leadership, Budget and Finance, Human Resources, and School Division Services. Costs for 2022-2023 related to the Renaissance Academy were totaled from the following areas: instructional supplies, technology, office supplies, professional learning, recognition/community building, local travel, staff costs, transportation, and building costs.

The total cost for the 2022-2023 school year was estimated to be $14,062,434 (see Table 41). The largest expense was staffing costs which totaled an estimated $11,776,132.[29] Staffing costs included 1 director of alternative education, 5 assistant principals, 22 middle school teachers, 51 high school teachers, 8 special education teachers, and 10 security assistants, along with other staff and costs associated with substitutes. The next largest cost was for student transportation which included approximately $461,249 in driver costs and $536,213 for operational costs which included fuel, maintenance, and vehicle depreciation at $2.50 per mile. The third largest expense included building costs which included $591,715 in building utilities (e.g., gas, water, etc.) and $205,690 for building maintenance. An additional $91,558 that Renaissance Academy received in School Allocations funding is not included in Table 41 because it could not be determined those funds were additional costs based on the per pupil school allocation funding process. To calculate the school allocations, the budget office uses projected student membership based on reports from the demographer and bases the Renaissance Academy school allocation on an enrollment number of 1,000 students and a set per pupil amount for each category of funding.[30] To the extent that a home school's projected membership numbers do not include students who were enrolled at Renaissance Academy, the home schools would not receive a per pupil allocation for those students.

Table 41: Cost of the Renaissance Academy Program in 2022-2023

Cost Category	Cost 2022-2023 Fiscal Year
Instructional Supplies	$45,421
Technology	$414,724
Office Supplies	$8,882
Professional Learning	$2,716
Recognition/Community Building	$18,062
Local Travel	$1,630
Staff Costs	$11,650,410
Substitutes	$125,722
Transportation	$997,462
Building Costs (Utility and Building Maintenance)	$797,405
Total Annual Operating	**$14,062,434**

Summary

School Board Policy 6-27, adopted in August 1993 and updated in July 2022 recognizes that the needs of all students in VBCPS cannot be met within the formal school curriculum, therefore, alternative educational experiences, like Renaissance Academy, has the potential to meet students' unique needs.

The focus of this year-one evaluation was the implementation and operation of the program as well as providing baseline data for student outcome goals. The evaluation examined alternative education in VBCPS, options within alternative education, student characteristics, student referral and transition processes, staff characteristics and professional learning, family involvement opportunities, progress toward student outcome goals, stakeholders' overall perceptions, and cost to the division.

The Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program aims to meet the needs of students in grades 6 through 12 who are not experiencing success in regular secondary settings. The program offers students different opportunities to best meet their needs when traditional education interventions do not effectively remedy students' behavioral and/or academic difficulties. Students attending Renaissance Academy are recommended for placement by the Office of Student Leadership for behavioral concerns, recommended by school administrators through principal-to-principal placement, or by parent request. The program serves both special education and regular education students, and some students are enrolled short-term while other are enrolled long-term. Almost all (97%) of comprehensive secondary staff agreed they understood the purpose of the Renaissance Academy program at VBCPS.

Students enrolled at Renaissance Academy participate in general curriculum courses, and the program includes instruction regarding life skills to promote the development of self-determination, responsibility, and integrity that fosters a sense of self-esteem. Students have an individualized plan with flexible learning opportunities that address social-emotional behavior and character components. Components of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program during 2022-2023 included support from student support specialists and school counselors, flexible scheduling options, basic needs, mentors, career development and credentialing, and world languages. Comprehensive secondary staff were asked their perceptions of the program meeting students' needs based on their experiencing referring students to the program and transitioning out. Staff agreed (68%) the program meets students' needs, 53 percent agreed the program is effective at improving students' behavior, and 57 percent agreed the program is effective at improving students' academic achievement.

During the 2022-2023 school year, 720 students were enrolled at Renaissance Academy at some time during the school year, with 284 students in grades 6 through 8 and 436 students in grades 9 through 12. The majority of students enrolled were male (63%), over half of the students were Black/African American (58%), and 20 percent were White. The majority of students at Renaissance Academy were economically disadvantaged (68%). Twenty-two percent were special education students, 8 percent were military connected, 3 percent were identified gifted, and about 1 percent were identified English Learners (EL).

Over half of the students enrolled at Renaissance Academy were there for the first time during 2022-2023. The majority of students were enrolled for less than half the school year (59%), and 10 percent were enrolled for the entire school year. The median number of days students were enrolled was 76 days. The largest number of students had Larkspur Middle School, Green Run High School, and Kempsville High School as their last enrolled home school, ranging from 12 percent to 8 percent of students enrolled at Renaissance Academy.

Part of the evaluation focused on the criteria and process for students to be referred to Renaissance Academy, to transition back to their home school, and reenrollment at Renaissance Academy. Over half of students (56%) attending Renaissance Academy during the 2022-2023 school year were referred by the Office of Student Leadership due to behavior concerns and less than 1 percent attended due to principal referrals. The remaining students were at Renaissance Academy at the start of the school year. The criteria for students to transition back to their home school included good grades (C or higher in all classes), good attendance (no more than 6 unverified absences), and good behavior (no in-school or out-of-school suspensions). Integral to the transition process are the student support specialists who support students for at least nine weeks during their transition period. Overall, the reenrollment rate at Renaissance Academy during 2022-2023 was 14 percent based on students who attended Renaissance Academy during 2022-2023, went back to their home school or another school in VBCPS, and then went back to Renaissance Academy again during 2022-2023. When examining data by school level, middle school students had a higher rate of recidivism (34%) than high school students (5%). Staff members at comprehensive secondary schools were asked their perceptions of the referral and transition process. Overall, high percentages of staff (at least 83%) agreed they understood the referral criteria and transition process to Renaissance Academy. Somewhat lower percentages of staff (65%) agreed they understood the transition process for students moving from Renaissance Academy back to their home school. Comprehensive secondary staff members were also asked an open-ended question regarding any comments about the processes related to the students attending Renaissance Academy. The most mentioned comments were related to streamlining the enrollment processes, improved communication with students' home schools, and the belief that students who are referred to Renaissance Academy should be required to attend the school.

Regarding staff and professional learning at Renaissance Academy, in comparison to all instructional staff throughout the division, there were higher percentages of male Renaissance Academy instructional staff as well as instructional staff who were Black, while there were lower percentages of female Renaissance Academy instructional staff members as well as those who were White. Renaissance Academy instructional staff had on average a lower number of years of teaching experience than instructional staff throughout the division, and there was a larger percentage of Renaissance Academy instructional staff who were new to the division in comparison to instructional staff throughout the division. Overall, staff reported being satisfied (87%) with their experience working at Renaissance Academy. The majority of staff members (80%) reported participating in professional learning related to being a staff member at Renaissance Academy in the past three years. Overall, 70 percent of staff members who participated in professional learning agreed it was sufficient and 72 to 73 percent agreed it helped prepare them to teach or provide services to students and enabled them to better meet students' needs. Renaissance Academy staff were asked an open-ended survey question regarding professional learning topics they would be interested in learning more about. The most mentioned topics were de-escalation strategies, trauma-informed practices, anger management, and behavior interventions.

Renaissance Academy provides opportunities for families of students to be involved and engaged. New student orientation provided information about expectations, procedures, policies, and other pertinent details, and it is mandatory for all students and families attending Renaissance Academy. A high percentage of parents (94%) agreed orientation was helpful in helping their family understand the program's expectations. Renaissance Academy holds an open house every September and shares a quarterly newsletter with the community.

Baseline data for student outcome goals were analyzed to provide preliminary results. The student outcome goals focused on building relationships, demonstrating success in school while attending Renaissance Academy, transitioning to their home school following enrollment at Renaissance Academy, and graduating and developing a post-graduation plan. One pattern of results showed on most survey items, students who exited Renaissance Academy or planned to exit at the end of the school year had more positive perceptions on survey items related to the goal areas than students who were not exiting and returning to their home school for the start of the next school year. Another pattern of results showed students, parents, and Renaissance Academy staff at the middle school level generally had lower perceptions in multiple areas than high school students, parents, and Renaissance Academy staff.

Regarding the goal focused on building relationships, relatively high percentages of students agreed they had positive relationships with staff including teachers, the director/principal and assistant principals, student support specialists, school counselors, and school psychologists at Renaissance Academy (79% to 84%). Students had a somewhat lower percentage of agreement (67%) about getting along with other students at Renaissance Academy. High percentages of Renaissance Academy staff agreed they had positive relationships with students (98%) and students had positive relationships with staff (84%). Staff had a somewhat lower percent of agreement (57%) about students getting along well with other students. Students were surveyed about their perceptions of feeling a sense of belonging and feeling welcome at Renaissance Academy. Overall, 77 percent of students agreed Renaissance Academy provided a welcoming place to learn, yet 53 percent of students agreed they felt like they belonged while at Renaissance Academy. On the Relationship Skills competency aggregate rating, 74 percent of students' responses to multiple survey items were agreement responses. Overall, 21 percent of staff agreed students demonstrated competency in relationship skills, but 47 percent of staff agreed students' relationship skills improved while attending Renaissance Academy. On the Self-Management competency aggregate rating, 79 percent of students' responses on multiple survey items were agreement responses. Overall, 18 percent of staff agreed students demonstrated competency in self-management skills, but 46 percent agreed students' self-management skills improved while attending Renaissance Academy. On the Responsible Decision Making aggregate rating, 80 percent of students' responses on multiple survey items were agreement responses. Overall, 16 percent of staff agreed students demonstrated competency in responsible decision-making skills, but 50 percent agreed students' responsible decision making skills improved while attending Renaissance Academy.

Regarding the goal focused on students demonstrating success in school while attending Renaissance Academy, 74 percent of students, 52 percent of parents, 59 percent of Renaissance Academy staff, and 54 percent of comprehensive secondary school staff agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, students gained the tools and strategies for success in school. Overall, 70 percent of students demonstrated a decline in discipline referrals, and 67 percent of students demonstrated a decline in the total number of suspensions after enrolling in Renaissance Academy. Eighty-four percent of students, 62 percent of parents, and 38 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, students demonstrated satisfactory behavior. Additionally, 88 percent of students and 53 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, students' behavior improved. Overall, one-quarter of students had an attendance rate of 90 percent or higher. When asked about students' attendance while attending Renaissance Academy, 87 percent of students, 71 percent of parents, and 42 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed students' attendance was satisfactory. Additionally, 82 percent of students, 54 percent of parents,

and 48 percent of Renaissance Academy agreed students' attendance improved while attending Renaissance Academy. Overall, 68 percent of students demonstrated improvement in core course grade averages after enrolling in Renaissance Academy. When asked about academic performance, 83 percent of students agreed their academic performance was satisfactory. Additionally, 83 percent of students, 55 percent of parents, and 62 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed students' academic performance had improved while attending Renaissance Academy. Students' academic proficiency as measured by the percent passing applicable Standards of Learning (SOL) tests was examined. Overall, 69 percent passed the Writing: End-of-Course test, 66 percent passed the Reading: End-of-Course test, and 54 percent passed the Algebra I SOL test while enrolled at Renaissance Academy. Less than half of students passed the other SOL tests taken while at Renaissance Academy.

Regarding the goal that students will successfully transition to their home school following enrollment at Renaissance Academy, 85 percent of students, 55 percent of parents, and 59 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed students gained tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school or school they had enrolled in prior to attending Renaissance Academy. When asked if they felt prepared to return to their home school, 87 percent of students agreed they were prepared to return, and 53 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed students were prepared. When asked if they felt ready to return to their home school, 74 percent of students felt ready along with 68 percent of parents. When examining the extent to which students demonstrated satisfactory behavior after returning to their homeschool, overall, former Renaissance Academy students had a higher average number of referrals compared to students' home school's average referral rate. Overall, half of middle and high school students had attendance rates similar or better once they returned to their home school compared to when they were at Renaissance Academy. In terms of students maintaining their academic performance at their home school, 21 percent of high school students maintained their core course grade averages after returning to their home school, while no middle school students maintained their core course grade averages after returning to their home school.

Regarding the goal that students will graduate and develop a post-graduation plan, 70 percent of students who attended Renaissance Academy in middle school graduated in four years, whereas 58 percent who attended Renaissance Academy in high school graduated in four years. Based on students who were enrolled at Renaissance Academy at any time, 61 percent graduated within four years. When asked if students received assistance, resources, and information at Renaissance Academy that helped them make informed decisions about their options after high school, 74 percent of students agreed, and 77 percent of students agreed they set goals for their learning as part of their learning experience at Renaissance Academy. Students were asked an open-ended question on the survey about the assistance, resources, information, or activities they had at Renaissance Academy to help them make decisions about their future. The most common response among middle and high school students was staff at Renaissance Academy provided them with encouragement or support. Renaissance Academy seniors who graduated were asked their postgraduation plans. Forty-five percent of students who graduated did not have a plan indicated or were undecided about their postgraduation plans, 17 percent indicated they planned to attend a two year college, and 14 percent reported they planned to attend a four year college and employment, respectively, 7 percent had other education plans (business, technical, apprenticeship, or other educational opportunity), and 3 percent planned to join the military.

Stakeholders' were asked their overall perceptions of the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program and provided an opportunity to comment on what students gained from enrollment and areas for improvement. When asked about their overall satisfaction with the Renaissance Academy alternative education program, 83 percent of students, 53 percent of parents, and 61 percent of comprehensive secondary staff agreed. The majority of Renaissance Academy staff (65%) were satisfied with the experience students had at Renaissance Academy.

When stakeholders were asked what students gained from enrolling in Renaissance Academy, the most common responses among middle and high school students were tools to better control their behavior, and high school students reported gaining friendships. The most common responses from Renaissance Academy staff members included students having access to one-on-one or small group instruction which provided them with more individualized and/or personalized instruction, and it provided them with a new environment and/or a new opportunity to be successful. The most common responses among comprehensive secondary staff members were individualized learning complemented by small class sizes and structure and improved behavior. The most common responses among parents were improved behavior, including self-control and a better understanding of the relationship between actions and consequences, and the formation of positive relationships with staff members.

Regarding how the middle and high school alternative education program at Renaissance Academy could be improved, the most common responses among high school and middle school students were more freedom, including a less stringent dress code and allowing cell phones, improving teachers' classroom management skills, and support for improving their social-emotional learning skills, specifically their ability to control their anger. The most common responses for improvement among Renaissance Academy staff members were more staff members to keep class sizes small or to support staff, direct teaching of social-emotional learning strategies, alternatives to the current model for discipline, and a clear articulation of the mission and vision for alternative education within VBCPS. The most common responses for improvement among comprehensive secondary staff were related to improving the transition process for students from their home school to Renaissance Academy and from Renaissance Academy back to their home school and improving communication between Renaissance Academy and the home school. The most common responses among parents for improvement were better communication between parents and Renaissance Academy and more student supports.

The cost for the Renaissance Academy middle and high school program during the 2022-2023 school year totaled an estimated $14,062,434. The three largest expenses included staffing costs ($11,776,132), transportation ($997,462), and building costs ($797,405).

The recommendations included continuing the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program with modifications as follows: identify and implement strategies or activities to improve students' relationship skills with other students, self-management skills, and responsible decision making skills, especially at the middle school level at Renaissance Academy; increase the availability of professional learning opportunities for staff related to managing students behaviors in the classroom and teaching students' strategies for anger management; review and strengthen the transition process from Renaissance Academy to the students' home school including evaluating the criteria and procedures for return to support student success; and enhance instructional strategies and academic opportunities to improve Renaissance Academy students' SOL performance and readiness for academic demands when returning to their home school.

Recommendations and Rationales

Recommendation #1: Continue the Renaissance Academy middle and high school alternative education program with modifications as noted in recommendations 2 through 5. *(Responsible Group: Renaissance Academy).*

Rationale: The first recommendation is to continue the Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program with modifications noted in recommendations 2 through 5 below. Based on School Board Policy 6-26, following an evaluation, a recommendation must be made to continue the initiative without modifications, continue the initiative with modifications, expand the initiative, or discontinue the initiative.

Recommendation #2: Identify and implement strategies or activities to improve students' relationship skills with other students, self-management skills, and responsible decision-making skills especially at the middle school level at Renaissance Academy. *(Responsible Group: Renaissance Academy).*

Rationale: The second recommendation is to identify and implement strategies or activities to improve students' relationships skills with other students as well as their self-management and responsible decision making skills especially at the middle school level at Renaissance Academy. When students were surveyed about their Relationship Skills, Self-Management Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making Skills competencies, middle school students reported lower aggregate ratings across all competencies than high school students ranging from 6 to 16 percentage points. When examining specifically students' perceptions of peer relationships, 68 percent of middle school students reported agreement with getting along well with other students. Renaissance Academy middle school staff members had a similar pattern of results with 43 percent agreeing students got along well with other students at Renaissance Academy. Only about half of middle school students reported being able to work out disagreements with other students by talking with them. Renaissance Academy staff reported low levels of agreement students demonstrated competency regarding relationship skills, self-management skills, and decision making skills ranging from 16 percent to 21 percent. Levels were low for both middle and high school staff, but middle school staff reported lower levels across all three competencies. Around half of Renaissance Academy staff did report students showed improvement across these competencies while attending Renaissance Academy suggesting additional improvement is possible with appropriate strategies.

Recommendation #3: Increase the availability of professional learning opportunities for staff related to managing student behaviors in the classroom and teaching students strategies for anger management. *(Responsible Group: Renaissance Academy).*

Rationale: The third recommendation is to increase the availability of professional learning opportunities for staff related to managing student behaviors in the classroom and teaching students strategies for anger management. When staff members were asked if they received sufficient professional learning related to being a staff member at Renaissance Academy, 67 percent of high school staff and 76 percent of middle school staff agreed with this item. Overall, 73 percent of staff agreed the professional learning helped prepare them to teach or provide services to students and 72 percent agreed it enabled them to better meet the students' needs at Renaissance Academy. When staff were provided an opportunity to list professional learning topics they would be interested in learning more about, topics were related to managing student behaviors like de-escalation strategies, trauma-informed practices, anger management, and behavior interventions. In addition, when students were asked how Renaissance Academy could be improved, students reported better classroom management from teachers.

Recommendation #4: Review and strengthen the transition process from Renaissance Academy to the students' home school including evaluating the criteria and procedures for return to support student success. *(Responsible Groups: Department of School Leadership, Office of Student Leadership, and Renaissance Academy).*

Rationale: The fourth recommendation is to review and strengthen the transition process from Renaissance Academy to the students' home school including evaluating criteria and procedures for return to support student success. When comprehensive secondary staff who worked with students who had attended Renaissance Academy were asked about understanding the transition process for students moving from Renaissance Academy back to their home school, 61 percent of middle school staff and 68 percent of high school staff agreed. Comprehensive secondary staff reported in survey comments the need for this transition process to be improved through additional communication prior to students returning to their home school and communication about students' progress while they were at Renaissance Academy. Overall, parents (55%) and Renaissance Academy staff (59%) had relatively low agreement levels when asked about students gaining the tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school, with lower agreement among parents and staff of middle school students. In addition, 53 percent of Renaissance Academy staff reported students were prepared to return to their home school. Overall, 54 percent of comprehensive secondary staff agreed while attending Renaissance Academy, students gained the tools and strategies for success in school. Based on behavior, attendance, and academic measures, both middle and high school students appeared to have a challenge maintaining their performance once they transitioned from Renaissance Academy back to their home school. On average, former Renaissance Academy students at both levels had more referrals than their home school average referral rate, about half the students maintained their attendance rate, and 16 percent maintained their course grade average. When examining reenrollment data, 34 percent of middle school students who exited Renaissance Academy in 2022-2023 reenrolled in Renaissance Academy in the same year along with 5 percent of high school students.

Recommendation #5: Enhance instructional strategies and academic opportunities to improve Renaissance Academy students' SOL performance and readiness for academic demands when returning to their home school. *(Responsible Groups: Renaissance Academy and Department of Teaching and Learning).*

Rationale: The fifth recommendation is to enhance instructional strategies and academic opportunities to improve Renaissance Academy students' SOL performance and readiness for academic demands when returning to their home school. Of the 18 SOL tests taken by middle and high school students, only 3 tests (Writing: EOC, English: EOC, and Algebra 1) had a majority of students pass the test (54% to 69%). The remaining 15 tests had pass rates ranging from 0 percent to 46 percent. When students returned to their home school, overall, 16 percent of students maintained or improved their core course grade averages compared to when they were at Renaissance Academy. When examined by school level, no middle school students maintained or improved their core course grade averages after returning to their home school, while 21 percent of high school students maintained or improved their core course grade averages. Although students generally agreed (85%) they gained the tools and strategies to successfully transition back to their home school, parents, comprehensive secondary staff, and Renaissance Academy staff had lower agreement rates to the same survey item ranging from 54 to 59 percent. Middle school parents had the lowest agreement (38%) students gained tools and strategies to transition back to their home school. In addition, 53 percent of Renaissance Academy staff agreed students were prepared to return to their home school. Enrollment data showed some students attended Renaissance Academy during 2022-2023, returned to their home school, and then reenrolled at Renaissance Academy in the same year. Middle school students reenrolled at Renaissance Academy during 2022-2023 at a higher rate (34%) than high school students (5%).

Appendix

Appendix A

Comprehensive secondary staff were asked their familiarity with alternative education program at Renaissance Academy. As displayed in the table below, 88 percent of staff indicated they were familiar with the purpose of the middle and high school Renaissance Academy program, 86 percent indicated they were familiar with the purpose of SAIP, 79 percent indicated they were familiar with the purpose of Choices, and 75 percent indicated they were familiar with the purpose of student support specialists. In addition, 58 percent of comprehensive secondary staff indicated they were familiar with the purpose of ISAEP, 50 percent indicated they were familiar with the purpose of the Anti-Tobacco Use program, and 31 percent indicated they were familiar with the purpose of the online learning program. High school staff members had higher familiarity agreement percentages about the purpose of the ISAEP program, SAIP, Anti-Tobacco Use Program, and online learning compared to middle school staff members, but middle school staff members had higher familiarity agreement percentages about the purpose of the middle and high school program at Renaissance Academy, Choices, and student support specialists.

Comprehensive Secondary Staffs Members' Perceptions of Familiarity With Alternative Education Programs at Renaissance Academy

I am familiar with the purpose of the following alternative education programs at Renaissance Academy. . .	MS	HS	Total
Renaissance Academy (middle/high school program)	89%	87%	88%
Substance Abuse Intervention Program (SAIP)	81%	90%	86%
Choices	87%	71%	79%
Student Support Specialists	78%	71%	75%
Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP)	22%	89%	58%
Anti-Tobacco Use Program	46%	53%	50%
Online Learning	28%	32%	31%

Note: Two staff members indicated they work with both middle and high school students, therefore, they are included in both in the middle and high school percentages. However, there responses are only included once in the total calculation.

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://schoolboard.vbschools.com/policies/section-6/6-27
[4] Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Alternative Education Task Force Report (draft).
[5] Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Alternative Education Five-Year Plan, 1998-2003, March 1998.
[6] Source: https://www.vbschools.com/about/data/historical-overview-of-vbcps
[7] As cited in Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Renaissance Academy Alternative Education Program: Evaluation Readiness Report, August 2022.
[8] Source: https://vbcoursecatalog.vbschools.com/renaissance-academy-alternative-programs-grades-912
[9] Source: James Miller, personal communication, July 18, 2022.
[10] Source: https://renaissanceacademy.vbschools.com/
[11] Secondary School Curriculum for Students of Virginia Beach City Public Schools, 2019-2020.
[12] A. Livingston, personal communication, October 23, 2023.
[13] A. Livingston, personal communication, October 23, 2023.
[14] A. Livingston, personal communication, October 23, 2023.
[15] A. Livingston, personal communication, October 23, 2023.
[16] A. Livingston, personal communication, October 23, 2023.
[17] A. Livingston, personal communication, October 23, 2023.
[18] J. Miller, personal communication, January 12, 2024.
[19] Source: Page 52
https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1691005313/vbschoolscom/p2ppsczg6jdvzksloosp/CodeStudentConduct.pdf
[20] Source: Page 51
https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1691005313/vbschoolscom/p2ppsczg6jdvzksloosp/CodeStudentConduct.pdf
[21] Source: https://vbcoursecatalog.vbschools.com/renaissance-academy-alternative-programs-grades-912
[22] The year that students were last enrolled in their VBCPS home school varied. For example, the last home school enrollment for students was as follows: three students in 2016-2017, four students in 2017-2018, 22 students in 2018-2019, 33 students in 2019-2020, 67 students in 2020-2021, and 465 students in 2021-2022.
[23] A. Livingston, personal communication, October 23, 2023.
[24] Students who attended SECEP and Juvenile Detention Center are not included in the analysis. The data warehouse maintains some data points on these students including demographic information, but it does not include discipline data.
[25] This analysis was conducted with student attendance of 7 days, 30 days, and 45 days. All percentages remained constant at 25% at all three attendance numbers.
[26] The on-time graduation (OTG) cohort includes students who earned a Board of Education approved diploma within four years of entering high school for the first time. The cohort includes special education and English Learner (EL) students who took additional years to graduate on time based on the formula approved by the Virginia Board of Education.
[27] Students at Renaissance Academy took the VBCPS Annual Student Survey in April 2023. Response rates on this survey item were higher which can provide a more representative sample of the overall population of students at Renaissance Academy. On the annual survey, 63% (n=102) of middle school students agreed and 67% (n=94) of high school students agreed they received assistance, resources, and information at the school to help them make informed decisions about their options after they graduate high school.
[28] On the Annual Spring Survey, 67% (n=101) of middle school students agreed and 73% (n=94) of high school students agreed as part of their school experience, they set goals for their learning and future plans on the VBCPS Annual Student Survey.
[29] The estimate of staff costs is based on the average salary cost calculated using the average hourly rate for each position based on Renaissance Academy allocated positions as of December 14, 2022. Staffing costs also included fringe benefits

(i.e., FICA, Virginia Retirement System, and life insurance) costs at 26.82 percent and health insurance costs per FTE at $8,804. This information was provided by the Office of Budget Development.

[30] C. Armstrong, personal communication, January 25, 2024.

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February 2024