



ACPS Response to Hanover Excel Academy Evaluation Recommendations

The Office of Specialized Instruction, in collaboration with administration at T.C. Williams High School, instituted a revised structure of the special education continuum of services at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year. Many of the recommendations made by Hanover Research in the Excel Academy Evaluation report have been addressed through this revised structure, in which the division expanded availability of the key components provided through the Excel Academy. Specifically, additional Resource for Academic Purposes (RAP) classes were added, allowing any student who would benefit from the constructs of RAP and co-taught classes to participate. The RAP class is now a full block period, during which students receive direct instruction in building executive function skills as well as pre-teaching and re-teaching of core content subject matter. Additionally, this block allows for a 45-minute targeted reading and/or math intervention. A single administrator was identified who would be the point of contact, supervisor and evaluator of all special education staff at both T.C. Williams Campuses. ACPS has contracted with Dr. Marilyn Friend, to provide training, consultation and coaching on co-teaching practices for co-teachers. These revisions, as well as additional training and materials for teachers, have allowed for applying and enhancing the use of Excel Academy strategies for students with disabilities at T.C. Williams High School.

Recommendation #1 – Selection Transparency

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

Through expansion of the number of sections of co-teaching and RAP classes, the Excel Academy programming is no longer a separate program option, but now part of the continuum of services available to any student with an IEP at T.C. Williams High School. Based a student’s individual needs, special education service delivery can range from consultative support by a special education teacher to special education classes for the majority of a student’s day. As shown in Figure 1, the continuum of services includes programming which provides the opportunity for students to receive special education services within the general education class for core content areas, along with RAP support to assist students in accessing the general curriculum. In addition to the expanded opportunities for programming, a “RAP Considerations Guide” (attached) has been developed to assist IEP teams in making decisions related to student service delivery.

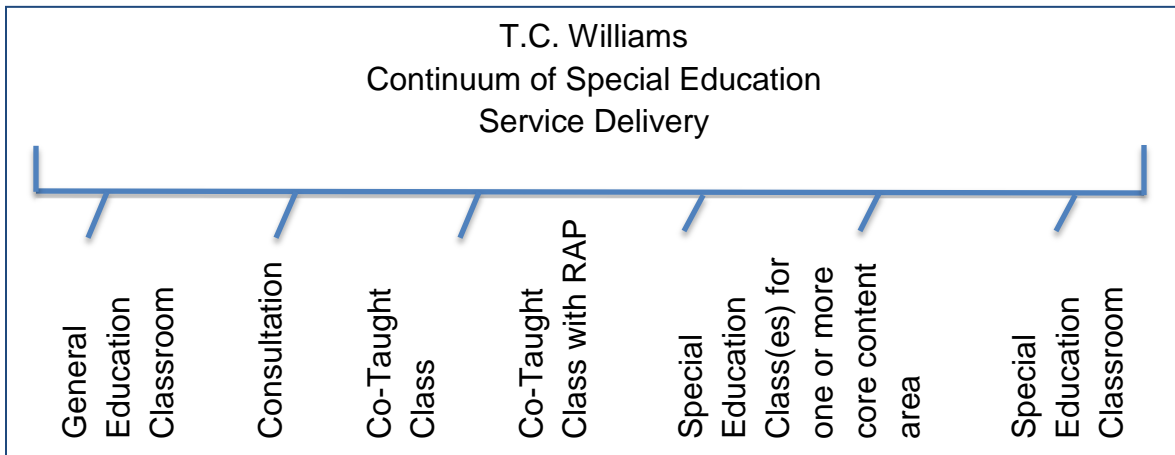


Figure 1

Recommendation #2

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

The Office of Specialized Instruction has worked closely with T.C. Williams Administration to redesign and implement changes to special education continuum of services programming. One Assistant Principal, under the direction of the school-based principal, has been assigned the oversight and support responsibilities for special education programming for both T.C. Williams Campuses. The assignment of one administrator supervising special education services in both campuses will promote consistency of programming. This school-based leader is working alongside the T.C. Williams special education department chairperson, central office instructional specialist and executive director of specialized instruction, to ensure teachers receive the training and support to implement the practices and principles outlined in the programming design.

Recommendation #3

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

ACPS has developed a framework for the RAP class, as well as an Executive Functioning instructional framework to promote greater program alignment and create consistency in program practices across teacher teams. Teachers were provided with training in August 2016 to support their understanding of the purpose and format of RAP classes; understanding of the major elements of the Executive Function instructional framework and understanding of the major technological tools associated with RAP. Class schedule structures and sample lesson plans were provided to teachers to promote consistency between classes. Sample core content modules were reviewed to assist teachers in development of the modules for their subject area of responsibility. Assistance was provided to teachers in creating google classrooms for sharing core content modules with colleagues and students. Coaching and modeling of RAP practices has been established and will continue throughout the school year. Teachers will also be provided assistance with development of core content modules as needed. Walkthrough look fors will be developed no later than the end of first semester to ensure administrators and other staff are consistent in evaluating the implementation of these programming principles.

Recommendation #4

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

One of the essential principles of the RAP class is to provide a space for nurturing teacher-student and student-student relationships based on high expectations and communal support. The RAP class schedule of meeting every school day assists in promoting this relationship building. Additionally, a team of two teachers is assigned to each RAP class, allowing a lower student teacher ratio and providing opportunities for small group or individual instruction. ACPS intends to continue providing the staffing and class schedule to allow these connections to form.

Recommendation #5

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

ACPS staff is committed to monitoring the fidelity of implementation of a continuum of services and will develop a schedule of walkthroughs to ensure high levels of implementation and consistency of practice across teacher teams. Student outcomes will be monitored and adjustments made to programming as needed. Instructional staff will implement progress monitoring strategies and hold regularly scheduled data analysis meetings to monitor individual student progress and modify instruction as necessary.

Communication Plan

Information regarding the Excel Academy Evaluation recommendations and ACPS Response will be communicated on the following schedule:

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