

# The School Board Brief: International Academy

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**May 6, 2016**

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

We are currently providing English Language Learner (ELL) services through the International Academy model to over 600 immigrant students at T.C. Williams High School and approximately 200 immigrant students at Francis C. Hammond Middle School. This model has led to positive instructional changes in the classroom and has resulted in improved student support systems, student achievement results, and graduation rates. ACPS and the Internationals Network for Public Schools (INPS) formally entered into partnership in the spring of 2012. Full implementation of the model began with two teams of teachers and two cohorts of students on a 9<sup>th</sup> grade course sequence in the 2012-2013 school year. The INPS model is known for its innovative and unique approach to working with immigrant students, emphasizing the following five core principles:

1. Heterogeneity and collaboration
2. Experiential learning
3. Language and content integration
4. Localized autonomy and responsibility
5. One learning model for all

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

1. During the 2010-2011 school year, the English Language Learner Office conducted an internal review of the status of the division's programs and services for students identified as English Language Learners. At the high school level, the findings revealed a need to:
  - Increase on-time graduation rates of ELL students
  - Reduce drop-out rates of ELL students
  - Assist ELL students in accessing the General Education Curriculum
  - Work with school administration, counselors and staff to enroll ELL students identified as having lower English proficiency levels in credit-bearing content courses
  - Provide teachers more professional development support in using highly effective and engaging teaching practices for improving ELL student achievement
2. Given these findings, staff expressed a strong commitment and sense of urgency to making adjustments to both programming and instructional delivery for ELL students. This process began by researching best ELL instructional practices across the nation, specifically those that were highly effective models of success in high schools with populations similar to those in Alexandria City Public Schools. A major focus of the research was the INPS.
3. Every teacher in the International Academy network is trained as a teacher of content and language. Teachers work on interdisciplinary teams and receive on-going, sustained professional development on the implementation of the five core principles. Students engage in project-based learning in mixed groups of language levels and native languages. Additionally, the staffing model includes a dedicated ELL counselor and social worker focusing on the students' specific needs.

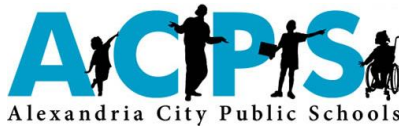
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4. Given the positive impact of the INPS model for immigrant students at T.C. Williams, the ELL Office collaboratively worked with the administration at Francis C. Hammond Middle School to plan and implement the International Academy model there. At T.C. Williams we are in our fourth year of implementation, and will have our first graduating class of students this June. At F.C. Hammond we are in our first year of implementation of the INPS model.

## DATA FINDINGS

1. One of the greatest positive effects resulting from implementation of the INPS model has been the instructional changes produced in the classroom, which include:
  - Increased collaborative interdisciplinary and content-specific planning
  - Expanded focus on project-based learning that incorporates both language and content integration
  - Reinforced conceptual understanding and language development across students' four core content areas
  - Increased focus on student centered learning, student collaborative work and student ownership of work
2. The following data were compiled and are presented below for School Board review:
  - 30% of the students in ACPS have a home language other than English, representing over 80 languages and 90 countries.
  - At the secondary level, 75% of ACPS ELL students are born outside of the country.
  - Average daily attendance for students in the International Academy model at T.C. Williams is 93.5% compared to 91.8% for all students at T.C. Williams.
  - Of the 122 student withdrawals this year from the International Academy model, 88% (107 students) are attributable to students moving out of the state, country, or to another Virginia high school.
  - Of the 102 seniors in the International Academy model, 72 are ready to graduate while 30 still need to pass one or more SOL tests to graduate. The majority of these 30 students are English proficiency Level 1 and 2. 45% need to pass a Reading SOL test and 43% need to pass a Writing SOL.
  - Honors and AP Course Data for International Academy ELL Students: 81 junior and senior students in the IA model enrolled in Honors classes this school year (49 in Honors classes within the IA model; 32 in Honors classes in the general education setting). 59 students enrolled in AP classes (27 within the IA model and 32 in the general education setting).
  - Honors and AP Course Retention Data for International Academy ELL Students: The retention rate for Honors for students within the IA model is 99%, compared to 58% for IA ELL students taking Honors in the general education setting. For AP courses, the retention rate is 80% within the IA model, compared to 68% in the general education setting.



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue full implementation of the International Academy model and F.C. Hammond Middle School and T.C. Williams High School for grades 6-8 and 9-12, with a continued focus on ongoing, sustained professional development to improve teachers' content and language integration in the classroom.
2. Ensure full implementation of the Advisory component of the INPS model in the International Academy model at T.C. Williams High School to expand and enhance support of students' emotional and social well-being.
3. Expand specific best practices and approaches to teaching and learning in classrooms outside of the International Academy model (e.g., collaborative planning; cooperative learning structures and student-centered learning; integrated content and language instruction; scaffolding and differentiation for different types of learners; authentic, project-based learning).

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