

**PLAZA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL
YEAR-THREE EVALUATION**

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Department of Accountability
2512 George Mason Drive
Virginia Beach, VA 23456

October 2006

©2006 All Rights Reserved

PLAZA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YEAR-THREE EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUTHOR: Martha J. Tompkins, Ph.D., Assessment Specialist
Department of Accountability

OTHER CONTACT PERSON: Jared A. Cotton, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent
Department of Accountability

On November 19, 2002, the School Board approved Plaza Elementary School's application to become the fourth year-round school (YRS) in Virginia Beach. The Plaza Year-Round School program began in July 2003 with Brookwood Elementary School as the "sister site" for the YRS program. Year-one and year-two evaluations were presented to the School Board in October 2004 and October 2005, respectively.

This year-three evaluation focused on actions taken in response to the year-two evaluation recommendations, the YRS program characteristics during the third year, attainment of program goals, and program costs.

FINDINGS

- The Plaza staff addressed the recommendations from the year-two evaluation. The principal monitored the opt-in and opt-out numbers and invited additional parents to participate in the YRS program. The Plaza staff continued to use and implement strategies designed to address student discipline concerns. In addition, staff members continued to analyze SOL and Stanford 10 assessment data to determine ways to improve students' academic achievement.
- During the three years of YRS, the calendar scheduled 183 instructional days, and fall, winter, and spring intersessions. Total intersession days varied from 23 to 25 days and intersession lengths varied from 5 to 10 days each year. More intersession classes were offered during the spring intersession in years two and three. Consistent during the three years was that more time and more classes were scheduled for remediation.
- Teachers fulfilled their contractual intersession teaching obligation by teaching during one intersession or during one week of intersession. Some teachers taught more than one week and some shared teaching responsibilities. Teacher assistants also taught intersession classes.
- The intersession curriculum, developed in the planning year, was supplemented with the Voyager® program and AIMS activities. A substantial majority of teachers liked the intersessions and indicated they would teach another intersession. Teachers used

the summer school criteria, along with Plaza-specific criteria, to refer students for remediation intersessions.

- An initial reduction in staff in year one paralleled a reduction in student enrollment. But from year one to year three, the number of staff members did not change and staff characteristics changed only slightly. The majority of staff members had worked at Plaza five years or less. Three-fourths of the staff members were completing their third year of YRS.
- In year three, a lower percentage of teachers had advanced degrees, slightly more teachers were new to the division, and teachers had slightly less years of teaching experience. Overall, teacher qualifications were similar to division averages.
- In 2005-06, 139 students opted-out of Plaza, while 118 students opted-in from Brookwood or out-of-zone. During the three years, more students opted-out than opted-in to Plaza; however, the difference in year three (21) was significantly smaller than year two (86). Plaza was under capacity all three years of implementation.
- The student enrollment fluctuated slightly during the three YRS years, and the student characteristics varied only slightly. A majority of first- through fifth-grade students (55%) reported they had attended YRS three years.
- Plaza achieved success in increasing academic achievement (Goal 1). From the year before the implementation of YRS and during the three years of YRS, Plaza earned and maintained Full Accreditation status. The year three percent passing for SOL tests in grades 3 and 5 increased for eight of nine tests when compared to the year prior to the implementation of YRS. After three years of YRS, however, the percent passing at Plaza exceeded the division on only three SOL tests at grades 3 and 5. On the Stanford 10 assessments, however, Plaza's students exceeded the division on two total tests and five of the eight subtests.
- The retention rate provided another measure of academic achievement. Only two students were retained in year three, which was a large decrease from retentions in the year prior to the implementation of YRS (14).
- Students, parents, and staff members indicated positive perceptions related to increased achievement. Students (93%) thought intersession learning helped them in school. Parents, students, and staff thought students learned better with YRS. A larger percentage of staff members in year three thought YRS helped students learn better and retain information. Seventy-seven percent of the staff members thought Plaza was successful in achieving Goal 1 (to increase academic achievement).
- Year-round school appeared to have a positive impact on attendance. From the year prior to the implementation of YRS, the student monthly attendance percentage increased. The annual average attendance was above the year prior to the implementation of YRS and the division average. Students (57%) thought their

attendance improved, but during the three years, less than 40 percent of the parents shared this opinion. Seventy-one percent of the staff members thought Plaza was successful in achieving Goal 2 (to increase attendance).

- During the three years, between approximately one-third to one-half of the school population was referred to intersessions or attended the intersessions. The highest rate of referred students attending intersessions were generally observed in year three. During the three years, Plaza emphasized remediation with more classes, longer intersessions, and more students attending intersessions for remediation.
- In year three, a substantial majority of students liked the intersessions and would attend another intersession. A substantial majority of teachers liked teaching the intersessions, had enough planning time, and would teach another intersession. A large majority of staff members agreed the intersessions benefited students needing remediation and enrichment. Of the four program goals, the largest percentage of staff members (90%) rated Goal 3 (to increase opportunities for learning) as successful.
- Plaza achieved mixed success in fostering positive attitudes toward learning. When compared with year one, a larger percentage of staff members agreed students were more enthusiastic, but in year three, less than one-half of the staff members agreed that parents participate more often or that students behaved better as a result of YRS.
- Discipline data revealed limited success in positive attitudes. From year one to year three, the number of discipline referrals and number of students referred increased.
- The YRS calendar did not appear to have an adverse impact on students, parents, or staff. A substantial majority of parents, students, and staff indicated that they were able to participate in family activities. Students thought they felt better attending YRS, but parents had lower agreement on this item. A majority of staff members indicated they were less stressed, less fatigued, and their attendance improved with YRS.
- The YRS program had the support of stakeholders during the three years. A substantial majority of staff agreed the community, students, and staff supported the program. A substantial majority of staff members (87%) thought Plaza was successful in fostering a positive attitude toward learning. Goal 4 was the second highest rated goal. Parents also expressed satisfaction with the program. Ninety percent of the parents would recommend YRS to other parents, and 94 percent of the parents of children in grades one through four planned to have their children return to YRS.
- The operating costs for YRS and the intersession costs were compared with projected costs. The total operating cost for YRS for 2005-06 was \$85,343. This included costs for transportation (\$52,297), contract extensions (\$33,035), and communication (\$11). The intersession cost for personnel, transportation, and materials was \$75,050, which was \$36,889 less than the projected amount of \$111,939. This was largely because the actual cost for the intersession coordinators, teachers, and materials were lower than the projected costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue the year-round school program at Plaza Elementary School.
- Continue to analyze assessment results and utilize the remediation intersessions to provide necessary interventions in an effort to increase academic achievement that meets or exceeds the division SOL and Stanford 10 scores.
- Expand professional development opportunities related to effective discipline strategies and continue to monitor discipline data to determine the impact of these strategies on student behavior.