

AN EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT X-CD PROGRAM AT THREE MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Comprehensive Evaluation

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment
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Project X-CD Program Evaluation Scorecard

Response to Recommendations				
Implementation				
Students Served				
Outcomes				
Program Effects				
Stakeholders' Perceptions				
Cost				
	N/A	Not Met	Partially Met	Met

Overall Recommendation:

- Expand
- Continue without Modifications
- Continue with Modifications
- Discontinue

Response to School-Board Approved Recommendations	Expectations
Meaningful actions taken in response to all recommendations from the most recent program evaluation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Met
Meaningful actions taken in response to most recommendations, but some recommendations were not fully addressed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met
Little to no meaningful actions taken in response to the majority of the recommendations from the most recent program evaluation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
No school-board approved recommendations available.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Implementation (Pages 8-21):	Expectations
Implementation of program activities (e.g., student selection, schedule, staff development, curriculum) is closely aligned with the program's purpose, goals, and objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Met
Implementation of some program activities (e.g., student selection, schedule, staff development, curriculum) is closely aligned with the program's purpose, goals, and objectives, while other aspects of implementation are not as well aligned.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Met
Implementation of program activities (e.g., student selection, schedule, staff development, curriculum) is not closely aligned with the program's purpose, goals, and objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
Students Served (Pages 21-25):	Expectations
At or near intended capacity (90% or above) and serving targeted student population.	<input type="checkbox"/> Met
Less than capacity (under 90% of program's capacity) while serving targeted student population OR at or near capacity (90% or above), but not serving the targeted student population.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Met
Less than capacity (under 90% of program's capacity) AND not serving targeted population.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
Outcomes (Pages 25-26):	Expectations
Evidence that progress has been made in meeting all program goals and/or objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Met
Evidence that progress has been made in meeting some program goals and/or objectives, while other program goals and/or objectives were not fully met.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met
Little or no evidence that program goals and/or objectives have been met.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
No measurable goals or objectives available for the program.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Program Effects (Pages 26-45):	Expectations
Clear evidence that the program is having a positive effect (i.e., goal-related outcomes are attributable to the program).	<input type="checkbox"/> Met
Mixed evidence that the program is having a positive effect (i.e., goal-related outcomes are attributable to the program).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Met
Little or no evidence that the program is having a positive effect (i.e., goal-related outcomes are attributable to the program).	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
Unable to determine if the program is having a positive effect (i.e., adequate comparison group not available).	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Stakeholders' Perceptions (Pages 45-58):	Expectations
Consistently positive perceptions from stakeholders regarding effectiveness and satisfaction levels (e.g., 80% or more respondents demonstrating positive perceptions regarding key program elements).	<input type="checkbox"/> Met
Inconsistent and/or mixed perceptions regarding effectiveness and satisfaction levels (e.g., some positive and some less positive perceptions regarding key program elements).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Met
Consistently less positive perceptions regarding effectiveness and lower satisfaction levels (e.g., less than 80% of respondents demonstrating positive perceptions regarding key program elements).	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
Cost (Pages 58-59):	Expectations
At or near annual program budget (within 10%) with evidence of efficient use of resources.	<input type="checkbox"/> Met
Evidence of efficient use of resources, but more than 10% over budget.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met
More than 20 percent over budget OR evidence of inefficient use of resources regardless of actual versus budgeted expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
No proposed budget available.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Total Annual Cost:	\$1,471,904 Approximate Cost Per Pupil: \$3,717

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to provide the School Board and Superintendent with information on the functioning of the Project X-CD program currently operating in three middle schools. On May 22, 2007, as part of the Fiscal Year 2007-08 Budget/Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Workshop, the Superintendent advised the School Board of plans to “proceed with reviews of programs for students examined to determine if they are effective and, if not, decide what strategies should be employed to ensure improvement.” The Project X-CD program was specifically listed as a program to be reviewed. The program was originally implemented in 1998-99 as a “school-within-a-school” alternative education program for academically at-risk general education middle school students. This report represents the first comprehensive evaluation of the program since its inception. For this reason, a multi-stage mixed-methods evaluation design was used to examine program alignment, effectiveness, cost, and stakeholders’ perceptions of the program.

The Project X-CD program originated from the *Alternative Education Five-Year Plan* adopted by the School Board in March 1998. The program was designed as a “school-within-a-school” (SWAS) program for general education students with low reading, writing, and mathematical skills. The program began operating in 1998-99 at Bayside, Corporate Landing, Larkspur, and Plaza middle schools and provided services to general education sixth-grade students. In 1999-00, the program was expanded to include sixth- and seventh-grade students at each of the program sites. The program continued to operate at two grade levels until the 2004-05 school year when the programs at Corporate Landing and Larkspur were expanded to include grades six through eight. Since that time, the program has continuously operated in grades six and seven at Plaza and grade six through eight at Corporate Landing and Larkspur. The building-level administration at Bayside Middle School opted to discontinue the program in 2006-07.

The Project X-CD program operates as a school-within-a-school by capping the program capacity at 60 students per grade level and delivering core instruction in classes capped at 15 students. The program is designed to provide students with intensive and specialized instruction during uninterrupted blocks of time to provide focused instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics. The program is also intended to provide students with instruction using interdisciplinary lessons, flexible grouping, and alternative methods that focus on conceptual understandings of content. Throughout the history of the program, only the core courses were

capped at a smaller size. The Project X-CD students attended electives and physical education with other students in the building.

Based on program documentation, students are selected to participate in the program based on a review of their educational history. Indicators used for selection purposes include prior academic performance, attendance, standardized test score data, mobility, discipline referrals, and grade retentions. These indicators appear on a matrix that is to be used for the purpose of student selection decisions. The program documentation also indicates that students can exit the program after one year in the program if they demonstrate sustained, above-average academic achievement, improvement in school attendance, and the absence of discipline referrals. Students can also be exited from the program based on recommendations from the student’s parent/guardian, teacher, administrator, and/or guidance counselor.

During the 2007-08 school year, the Project X-CD program operated at three middle schools in the division including Corporate Landing, Larkspur, and Plaza. The program operated in grades 6, 7, and 8 at Corporate Landing and Larkspur middle schools and in grades 6 and 7 at Plaza Middle School. The goals of the program were as follows:

- Accelerate students to grade-level academic competency within one, two, or three years.
- Increase student attendance, thus reducing the dropout rate of at-risk students.
- Modify and prevent inappropriate student behavior.

The current evaluation employed a multi-stage mixed-methods design to address the components identified in the scorecard that follows. The evaluation included the collection of qualitative data in the form of program documents, interview and focus group notes, and quantitative data in the form of student demographics, achievement and non-achievement-related student data, as well as survey data.

Response to Recommendations	Expectations
No school-board approved recommendations available.	N/A
<u>Rationale for Rating:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This evaluation represented the first comprehensive evaluation of the Project X-CD program since its inception in 1998-99. There were no school-board approved recommendations associated with this program. 	
Implementation	Expectations
Implementation of some program activities (e.g., student selection, schedule, staff development, curriculum) is closely aligned with the program’s purpose, goals, and objectives, while other aspects of implementation are not as well aligned.	Partially Met
<u>Rationale for Rating:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, administrators’ and teachers’ descriptions of the program’s purpose were aligned with the purpose of the program as serving general education students who demonstrated difficulty in elementary and/or middle school but who did not exhibit chronic misbehavior. 	

- The program goal of modifying or preventing inappropriate student behavior did not appear to be in alignment with the student selection matrix (i.e., awarding more points for better behavior) or the intent to offer an alternative education program focused primarily on students with academic difficulties as opposed to behavioral issues.
- Based on the interviews with the building-level administrators at each of the program sites, several similarities and differences emerged with respect to how students were identified for the program and who was involved in the process. Administrators from across the three sites indicated that the matrix served as a guide for identifying students but was not strictly adhered to for that purpose. Administrators at multiple program sites indicated that the matrix underidentified students for the program and that flexibility was needed for the proper identification and placement of students.
- More than 90 percent of the Project X-CD teachers at Larkspur and Plaza agreed that the student selection process identified students who could best benefit from the program. One-third of the teachers at Corporate Landing expressed agreement with this item. During the teacher focus groups at Corporate Landing, several references were made to the manner in which students were identified for the program and the extent to which teachers should be involved in placement decisions or deciding if a student should be removed from the program.
- Although program documents indicate that students demonstrating sustained academic improvement may be exited out of the program, there appeared to be very little documentation or guidance governing these types of decisions. Administrators and teachers from across the three program sites indicated that most students do not transition out of the program once they are placed in the program.
- The average class size observed for the Project X-CD classrooms was approximately half the size of the other core classes at the Project X-CD sites. As of September 30, 2007, the class sizes observed at the Project X-CD sites were also lower than the class size cap of 15 students.
- Administrators and teachers across the program sites indicated that Project X-CD classrooms were characterized by more hands-on and small-group activities for students. They also indicated that students received more individualized attention and instruction and teachers engaged in more monitoring, redirection, and review in class.
- Teacher survey results revealed that more than 80 percent of the teachers at each of the program sites agreed or strongly agreed that the program provides students with a flexible learning environment. At Larkspur and Plaza, 80 percent or more of the teachers agreed that the program offers more hands-on activities to students compared to approximately 67 percent of the teachers at Corporate Landing.
- Based on comments made during interviews with central office and school-based administrators, the Project X-CD program appears to have evolved into a school-based program with less central office oversight than when the program was initially implemented.

Administrative teams at two of the three program sites expressed the perception that central office support (i.e., attention and resources) for the program had decreased over time and more oversight was required to ensure consistency between Project X-CD sites.

- A large majority (>80 percent) of the teachers at each of the three school sites agreed that they had participated in professional development that helped to prepare them to teach students in the Project X-CD program. Lower percentages (<70 percent) of the teachers at Corporate Landing and Larkspur agreed or strongly agreed that they participated in professional development that enabled them to better meet students' needs or that the amount of professional development received was sufficient compared to Plaza teachers who all agreed to these items.
- There was evidence to suggest that lower ratings observed for some of the professional development survey items may have resulted because teachers were either unaware of the availability of alternative education professional development course offerings or were expressing dissatisfaction over the lack of opportunities to meet with other Project X-CD teachers from across the division.
- When asked whether they believed parents were aware of the program's goals and expectations, approximately 33 percent of the teachers at Corporate Landing, 60 percent of the teachers at Larkspur, and 29 percent of the teachers at Plaza responded yes. These findings align with the parent response rates observed for each of the program sites with Larkspur evidencing the highest parent response rate (25 percent) and Plaza evidencing the lowest parent response rate (12 percent).

Students Served	Expectations
Less than capacity (under 90% of program's capacity) while serving targeted student population.	Partially Met
<u>Rationale for Rating:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of the fall of 2007, each of the three program sites were operating below capacity. The program capacity ranged from approximately 78 percent at Plaza to 86 percent at Corporate Landing. • Administrative teams at two of the program sites indicated that they experienced difficulty identifying 60 students per grade level for the program either because of the limited number of recommendations received from elementary feeder schools or because only general education students and nondisruptive students were considered for the program which reduced the number of potential candidates. • Relative to the characteristics of all middle school students in 2007-08, a larger percentage of the Project X-CD students were African American and economically disadvantaged compared to the middle school student body. 	

- The student selection process used by the program sites appeared to identify students who could benefit from the program. A review of the **prior** academic characteristics of Project X-CD students revealed that students in the program had lower passing rates by more than 30 percentage points and lower scale scores on the standardized tests that differed from their peers by more than 30 points. In addition, nearly three-quarters of the students in the Project X-CD program had earned a final English grade or final math grade of a C or lower in the year prior when compared to other students at the program sites. In addition, a higher percentage of the Project X-CD students were overage when compared to other general education students at each of the program sites.

Outcomes	Expectations
No measurable goals or objectives available for the program.	N/A

Rationale for Rating:

- The program had three broadly stated goals; however, there were no measurable objectives associated with the program. For the purposes of this evaluation, goal-related outcomes were identified and used to assess the extent to which the program had a positive effect (see “Program Effects”).

Program Effects	Expectations
Mixed evidence that the program is having a positive effect (i.e., goal-related outcomes are attributable to the program).	Partially Met

Rationale for Rating:

Sixth-Grade Achievement

- The results observed at the sixth-grade level with respect to SOL passing rates and end-of-course grades suggested that the program was effective in accelerating student achievement. Overall, higher percentages of Project X-CD students passed the SOL assessments and earned a final course grade of C or higher when compared to other peers from across the school division who were academically similar initially, but did not participate in the program.
- Comparisons across individual program sites revealed that Project X-CD students at Larkspur and Plaza outperformed their peers in the comparison groups with respect to pass rates on each of the three grade 6 SOL assessments (i.e., reading, mathematics, and history) and end-of-course grades in each of the core content areas. Sixth-grade Project X-CD students at Corporate Landing outperformed their comparison group peers in all but one SOL assessment (i.e., History) and all but one core content area (i.e., English).
- The sixth-grade SOL passing rates for Project X-CD students in the area of mathematics, while higher than the passing rates observed for the comparison group, were generally low and ranged from 47 percent at Larkspur to 69 percent at Plaza.

Seventh-Grade Achievement

- The results observed at the seventh-grade level with respect to SOL passing rates and end-of-course grades provided support that the program was effective in accelerating student achievement. Overall, higher percentages of Project X-CD students passed the SOL assessments and earned a final course grade of C or higher when compared to similar other peers who did not participate in the program.
- Comparisons across individual program sites revealed that seventh-grade Project X-CD students at Corporate Landing and Plaza outperformed their peers in the comparison groups with respect to pass rates on each of the three SOL assessments, while Project X-CD students at Larkspur outperformed their comparison group peers on only one of the SOL assessments (i.e., History). However, it should be noted that the passing rate for Project X-CD students at Corporate Landing in the area of mathematics, while higher than the passing rates observed for the comparison group, was 40 percent.
- Seventh-grade Project X-CD students at Corporate Landing and Larkspur outperformed their comparison group peers with respect to end-of-course grades in each of the four core content areas, while Project X-CD students at Plaza outperformed the comparison group in science and history.

Eighth-Grade Achievement

- The achievement-related results observed at the eighth-grade level provided mixed support that the program was effective in accelerating student achievement. Overall, the grade 8 SOL passing rates observed for Project X-CD students were lower than the passing rates observed for students in the comparison group.
- Comparisons across individual program sites revealed only a few instances in which the eighth-grade Project X-CD students outperformed their comparison group peers with respect to SOL performance. In addition, an examination of the passing rates observed for students at Plaza who were previously in the program as sixth or seventh graders suggested that their passing rates were in line with the rates observed for currently enrolled Project X-CD students in all but one area.
- The results observed with respect to end-of-course grades at the eighth-grade level were more positive for students currently enrolled in the program as eighth graders at Corporate Landing and Larkspur. With the exception of English at Larkspur, a higher percentage of the Project X-CD students earned an end-of-course grade of C or higher when compared to their comparison group peers. This pattern was not observed among students who were formerly enrolled in the program at Plaza.

Attendance

- There was very little evidence that participation in the Project X-CD program increased student attendance. Smaller percentages of the sixth- and seventh-grade Project X-CD students evidenced improved attendance compared to other students in their school. However, at the eighth-grade level, more of the Project X-CD students demonstrated improved attendance when compared to other students at the program sites.
- The percentage of Project X-CD students evidencing improved attendance ranged from approximately 36 percent in sixth grade to approximately 54 percent in eighth grade. The percentage of non-Project X-CD students from within each program site evidencing improved attendance ranged from 41 percent in sixth grade to 47 percent in seventh grade.

Behavior

- There was limited evidence that participation in the Project X-CD program modified or prevented inappropriate student behavior. Relative to other students in the same school, a higher percentage of Project X-CD students received at least one referral during the course of the year. The percentage of Project X-CD students receiving a referral ranged from approximately 30 percent in grade 6 to 49 percent in grade 7. The percentage of other students at the program sites receiving referrals ranged from 24 percent in grade 6 to 33 percent in grade 7. In addition, although there was some evidence that Project X-CD students, overall, were less likely to be repeat offenders, examination by program site yielded more mixed results.

Goal-Related Outcomes Overall

- Across the three grade levels, Project X-CD students performed better than students in the given comparison group on approximately 69 percent of the goal-related outcomes. An examination by grade level revealed that Project X-CD students at the six- and seventh-grade levels performed better than students in the given comparison groups on 80 percent of the goal-related outcome measures. At the eighth-grade level, Project X-CD students demonstrated better performance than the given comparison groups on approximately 50 percent of the outcome measures.
- An examination of the goal-related outcomes by program site revealed that across the grade levels in the program, the percentage of comparisons favoring Project X-CD students was approximately 57 percent at Larkspur, 66 percent at Corporate Landing, and 70 percent at Plaza.

Stakeholders' Perceptions	Expectations
<p>Inconsistent and/or mixed perceptions regarding effectiveness and satisfaction levels (e.g., some positive and some less positive perceptions regarding key program elements).</p>	<p>Partially Met</p>
<p>Rationale for Rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall response rate for the parent survey was approximately 18 percent following the second mailing and ranged from 12 percent to 25 percent across the three program sites. During the course of administering the parent survey, several parents contacted the Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (REA) concerning the survey and their child's participation in the program and indicated that they were not familiar with the program. • Across the three sites, approximately 69 percent of the Project X-CD teachers provided an effectiveness rating of a 4 or higher on a five-point scale in response to the goal of accelerating students to grade-level competency. For the remaining two goals (i.e., increasing attendance and modifying or preventing misbehavior), approximately 58 percent of the teachers provided an effectiveness rating of a 4 or 5. Plaza was the only program site where more than 80 percent of the teachers provided effectiveness ratings of a 4 or higher in response to program goals. • As part of the teacher focus groups, teachers were asked whether they thought the Project X-CD program at their school was effective, with respect to achieving the program goals, and to provide evidence supporting their view. For the most part, teachers at each grade level and at each program site indicated that the program at their school was effective and cited a variety of evidence to support their view. Many of the examples focused on individual student accomplishments (i.e., making the honor roll, entering an academy program in high school, or transitioning out of the program). Some teachers indicated that it was difficult to tell if the program was effective because they do not receive formal feedback on the students once they leave the middle school and enter high school. Teachers at each of the program sites expressed the belief that without the program, the outcomes for students would be very negative (i.e., lower achievement, dropping out, misbehavior). Nearly all of the evidence cited focused on achievement-related outcomes as opposed to attendance or behavior. • When asked to indicate whether their grades, attendance, and behavior had improved, worsened, or stayed the same, higher percentages of students indicated improvements in the area of grades as compared to the areas of attendance and behavior. The percentage of students indicating that their grades had improved since being in a smaller class setting ranged from 57 percent at Larkspur to 71 percent at Corporate Landing. The percentage of students reporting increased attendance ranged from 43 percent at Larkspur to 51 percent at Corporate Landing. The percentage of students reporting improved behavior ranged from 34 percent at Plaza to 45 percent at Corporate Landing. 	

- When asked to indicate whether their child's grades, attendance, and behavior had improved, worsened, or stayed the same, higher percentages of parents indicated improvements in the area of grades as compared to the areas of attendance and behavior. The percentage of survey respondents who indicated that their child's grades had improved since being in the program was very similar across the three program sites and ranged from 79 percent at Corporate Landing to 82 percent at Larkspur. The percentage of survey respondents reporting that their child's attendance had improved ranged from 30 percent at Corporate Landing to 70 percent at Plaza. The percentage of survey respondents indicating that their child's behavior had improved because of the program ranged from 45 percent at Corporate Landing to 50 percent at Plaza.
- Across the program sites, more than 92 percent of the Project X-CD teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the program benefited students academically. The percentage of agreement observed among teachers ranged from approximately 89 percent at Corporate Landing to 100 percent at Plaza.
- Across the three program sites, more than 91 percent of the parents responding to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that the program benefited their child academically. An examination of the results by program site revealed that 75 percent of the survey respondents at Corporate Landing, 97 percent of the survey respondents at Larkspur, and 100 percent of the survey respondents at Plaza agreed or strongly agreed to the item.
- Across the three sites, more than 88 percent of the Project X-CD teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the program increased students' self-confidence. The percentage of agreement observed among teachers ranged from approximately 78 percent at Corporate Landing to 100 percent at Plaza.
- Across the three program sites, more than 67 percent of the parents responding to the survey indicated that their child's self-confidence had increased as a result of the program. An examination of the results by program site revealed that 56 percent of the survey respondents at Corporate Landing, 73 percent of the survey respondents at Larkspur, and 67 percent of the survey respondents at Plaza noted improvements in this area.
- With the exception of students at Plaza, a majority of the Project X-CD students at each program site reported increased self-confidence. A majority of students at the three sites also reported participating in classroom activities more since being in a small-class setting.
- With the exception of the content areas of reading and writing at Plaza, more than 80 percent of the Project X-CD students at each site agreed or strongly agreed that they received high-quality instructional services in each of the core content areas.
- More than 83 percent of the Project X-CD students at each program site agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers cared about how well they did in school, provided them with extra help when needed, and let them know what they could do to improve.

- More than 92 percent of the Project X-CD students at each program site agreed or strongly agreed that they knew what behavior was expected of them and that they knew the consequences for misbehaving.
- For each of the program sites, more than 80 percent of the parents responding to the survey expressed agreement to the item addressing satisfaction with the program. The percentages observed ranged from 80 percent at Corporate Landing to 95 percent at Larkspur.
- When asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the Project X-CD program, the responses from the administrative teams were mixed, but were generally positive.
- Teachers at multiple sites indicated that commitment on the part of the teachers was critical to the success of the program and that only the best teachers should be part of the program. They also suggested that Project X-CD teachers have the opportunity to meet as a group across the division and share lessons learned and effective strategies. Teachers at multiple sites also stressed the importance of removing or prohibiting chronically disruptive students from the program. Other suggested improvements to the program included developing a means of transitioning academically successful students out of the program, increasing parent accountability, and offering more professional development focused on serving at-risk students.
- Administrators at each of the program sites made several suggestions for improving the Project X-CD program. Many of the suggestions focused on recruiting and training teachers for the program. Two of the sites indicated that teachers should receive more training on working with at-risk students and be provided with opportunities to meet divisionwide.
- When asked for suggested improvements to the program, the most frequently cited suggestion from parents focused on increased communication and keeping parents updated and informed about the program (n=5).

Cost	Expectations
No proposed budget available.	N/A
<u>Rationale for Rating:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no school-board approved budget specific to the program. 	

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One:

Continue the Project X-CD program at Corporate Landing, Larkspur, and Plaza middle schools with modifications. (Department of School Administration, Department of Curriculum and Instruction - Alternative Education, school administrators at Project X-CD program sites)

Rationale:

The recommendation to continue the Project X-CD program at each of the three middle schools was based on the evaluation finding that Project X-CD students performed better than students in the given comparison group on approximately 69 percent of the goal-related outcomes associated with the program. At the sixth- and seventh-grade level, Project X-CD students performed better than students in the given comparison group on 80 percent of the goal-related outcome measures reported. At the eighth-grade level, Project X-CD students demonstrated better performance than the given comparison groups on approximately 50 percent of the outcome measures.

Recommendation Two:

Use the information gathered for the current evaluation to define measurable goals and objectives for the program and refine the program's purpose and operation. Program operation elements that require refinement include the process for placing students in and exiting students from the program, staffing and hiring practices, communication about the program, and program monitoring. As part of this process, clearly identified roles and responsibilities of central office and building-level administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers should be articulated. (Department of School Administration, Department of Curriculum and Instruction - Alternative Education, school administrator and teacher representatives from the Project X-CD program sites, Department of Media and Communications Development)

Rationale:

The recommendation to define measurable goals and objectives and refine the program's purpose and operation was based on a number of the evaluation findings reported in this comprehensive evaluation. It is recommended that the program goals be revisited to ensure that they are aligned with the purpose of the program and the manner in which students are selected for the program. More specifically, the program goal of modifying or preventing inappropriate student behavior did not appear to be in alignment with the student selection matrix or the intent to offer an alternative education program focused primarily on students with academic difficulties. In addition, the goals of the program, as currently stated, are broad and should be revised to include measurable objectives.

The recommendation to revisit the student selection matrix and identification process was based on the findings that the program sites used a modified version of the student selection matrix, reported that it was difficult to reach the program capacity with the matrix, and indicated that flexibility was required when placing students. This recommendation was made with the goal of ensuring consistency across the program sites and increasing utilization of the program. Given that there appeared to be little documentation or guidance for deciding when a student should be exited from the program, it was also recommended that clear criteria be defined for these decisions.

Administrators and teachers across the program sites indicated that commitment and motivation on the part of the teachers in the program was critical to its success. In addition, the

coordinator of alternative education indicated that the program has experienced high teacher turnover which negatively affected the quality of the program. For this reason, it is recommended that strategies for encouraging highly-motivated teachers to agree to teach in the program for multiple years be pursued and that highly-skilled teachers expressing a willingness to teach in the program be given priority.

Based on the low parent survey response rates, and many teachers' perceptions that parents were unaware of the program, it is recommended that the Office of Alternative Education, in conjunction with the Department of Media and Communications Development, and the program sites develop a communication plan to inform parents and students of the purpose and intended benefits of the program. Improving communications about the program could increase parent involvement and support of the program as well as reduce the stigma associated with the program that was referenced by various stakeholders.

Based on the findings that administrators and some teachers expressed lack of program monitoring as a weakness of the Project X-CD program, it was recommended that a program monitoring process be developed that ensures the program enrollment for students is accurately reflected in the student data warehouse and assists in determining the extent to which the program is achieving its goals. Developing this process would involve identifying key indicators of program success aligned to the goals of the program. The intent of this recommendation is to develop a feasible and meaningful process for monitoring the program over time.

Implementing these recommendations would require coordination among various central offices and the program sites to ensure consistency. For this reason, it is recommended that clearly identified roles and responsibilities of central office and building-level administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers be articulated.

Recommendation 3:

Provide an update on the Project X-CD program in the fall of 2009 to include actions taken in response to the recommendations; changes made to the program's purpose, goals, and operation; information on the extent to which the program is achieving its goals; and plans for continued monitoring and oversight from the central office. (Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment)

Rationale:

The results of the first comprehensive evaluation of the Project X-CD program yielded generally positive results in favor of the program, but were based on the results observed within a single school year. Therefore, additional monitoring is recommended. The recommendation to continue monitoring was also based on the finding that the effectiveness of the program appeared to vary by grade level. At the sixth- and seventh-grade levels, Project X-CD students performed better than students in the given comparison group on 80 percent of the goal-related outcome

measures reported. At the eighth-grade level, Project X-CD students demonstrated better performance than the given comparison groups on approximately 50 percent of the outcome measures. In addition, the recommendation for continued monitoring was based on the assumption that any actions taken in response to the recommendations during the 2008-09 school year would likely not begin to take full effect until the 2009-10 school year.