



The Excel Academy Program



Mission

The Excel Academy is a personalized learning program designed to accelerate learning and achievement of students who have not met success in a traditional classroom.

Distinctive Features

- The Excel Academy is a “Program”— not a “School.”
- Low student to teacher ratio
- The program currently serves students in grades 5-6
- Transportation is provided for students in the program.
- Specialized training and professional development has been provided to teachers and staff.
- Emphasis is on personalized learning
- 11-month Intervention Specialist positions (3 teachers and 1 TA position)

Instructional Model

- Emphasis on accelerating student learning in reading and math by providing increased reading and math instruction each day.
- Cross-curricular integration of science, social studies, math and literacy
- Competency-based progression of learning and continuous monitoring of progress toward goals.
- Robust educational technology resources to support personalized instruction and monitoring of student progress.
- Differentiated instruction and flexible grouping of students.

Enrollment Process

- Principals identified students who were eligible and referred those students to the program.
- Eligibility for the program included the following academic risk factors:
 - Number of retentions, success rate on SOLs, reading level, math level, student grades and attendance
- An SAO admissions committee reviewed applications and selected students for the program.
- 28 students were enrolled in the program

Excel Academy Program Positives

- Some students made significant gains in the program through the time of school closure
- Growth in STAR is reported as a Student Growth Percentile (SGP). The SGP score compares a student's growth from one period to another with that of his or her academic peers nationwide.
- 75% of students (with sufficient data) met growth expectations. (40% exceeded the reading growth expectations).
- Four students had a reading SGP of 90 or above.
- 62% of students (with sufficient data) met the math growth expectations (29% exceeded the math growth expectations)

Excel Academy Program Positives

- Strong rapport and positive teacher-student relationships
- Program has helped students develop confidence and increased engagement in learning
- Teachers have been able to uncover the students' deficits and meet them where they are
- Supportive, creative and collaborative teaching team
- Students have received additional SEL supports:
 - Weekly guidance groups
 - Therapeutic day treatment services

Excel Academy Program Supports

- Provided a wide range of instructional resources, lesson plans, hands on activities, manipulatives for small group instruction
- Created vertical achievement records to monitor competency-based progression of priority skills and for continuous monitoring of progress toward goals.
- Conducted walkthroughs and provided feedback and support
- Behavior specialist provided support with behavior interventions
- Provided specialized furniture (flexible seating), interactive whiteboards and modifications to the physical space
- Provided new structured literacy program
- Provided new instructional technology resource (iReady)
- Provided professional development in literacy

Challenges & Opportunities for Growth

- Faced significant challenges with attendance. A significant number of students missed more than 10% of the school year.
- Very high referral and suspension rates attributed to high absences.
- Challenges with scheduling and engaging students in broader school community.
- Class size and having students together all day was a challenge with discipline and maintaining focus in the classroom.
- Academic gains were inconsistent. Some students made significant progress while school was in session; while some had insufficient data or did not make adequate progress.
- Difficulty engaging students after school closure.

Challenges	Recommendation	Details and Next Steps
Faced significant challenges with attendance. A significant number of students missed more than 10% of the school year	Relocate the program to JFK and KFM	Most of the students are zoned for these schools. This will help with transportation, attendance, family engagement etc.
Very high referral and suspension rates attributed to high absences	Add Behavior Support Position & Training in SEL	Reclassify open Excel position as a Behavior Support Specialist and increase training and support in SEL to address behavior and attendance challenges.
Challenges with scheduling and engaging students in broader school community. Having students together all day was a challenge with discipline and maintaining focus in the classroom.	Personalized scheduling approach	Create multiple program scheduling options to meet the needs of individual students. All students will take English in the program, but other courses will be scheduled based on student need and grade level. Students will participate in general middle school courses for other core subjects whenever possible.
Academic gains were inconsistent. Some students made significant progress while school was in session; while some had insufficient data or did not make adequate progress.	Increase literacy support	Moving the programs to JFK and KFM will allow the program to take advantage of added support from the literacy foundations teachers and will allow the program to serve students in smaller groups for literacy.
Difficulty engaging with some parents and challenges keeping students connected after school closures.	Assign school social workers to provide support. Increase initiatives to promote family engagement	School social workers will be assigned to assist teachers in making connections with families and ensuring families are receiving the wraparound supports needed to help their children succeed in school.

Rebrand as the new The SPS Success Program

With the revised program model, we are recommending that the program be rebranded the **SPS Success Program**. In summary, the new program will include the following features:

- Located at JFKMS and KFMS
- Two 11-month Intervention Specialist positions and 1 Behavior Specialist
- Low student to teacher ratio (max. of 15 year 1 students per site)
- Will serve year 1 students in grade 6 with instruction from the Excel teacher in literacy and math and scheduled with peers for all other courses to the extent possible. Year 2 students in grades 7-8 will receive a modified program that incorporates literacy foundations and Excel wraparound supports.
- Students can be transported to school with their peers; decreased time on buses
- Continued emphasis is on personalized learning, differentiated instruction and continuous monitoring of progress on priority skills.
- Increased support with technology and digital learning resources
- Added incentives and resources for family engagement
- Increased resources, support and PD in PBIS and SEL strategies

