

Response to Questions on the FY 2010 County Lines of Business & Schools Program Review Processes Fall 2008

Request By: Supervisor Hudgins

Response By: FCPS Office of the Superintendent

Question: How will proposed program redesigns impact at-risk students? Would redesigns impact outcomes such as narrowing the achievement gap?

Response: The following response is provided by Fairfax County Public Schools:

The two major redesign projects that would impact at-risk students are Project EXCEL (Elementary) and merging the College Partnership Program, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Pathways to the Baccalaureate, and Early Identification Programs.

I. Project EXCEL (Elementary)

The 20 Project EXCEL schools were identified based on achievement data from the late 1990s. Since that time, both student demographic data and student achievement in many of these schools have changed, and the model for providing support will be revisited. The Tier 1 budget represents a 10 percent cut to this program, and the Tier 2 budget a 20 percent reduction. Since this program was implemented, FCPS has adjusted its staffing formula to provide additional teachers to schools with the greatest need. Through our research, we have examined 13 factors that exist in schools throughout the nation that are closing achievement gaps, and the only factor that may be impacted by these cuts would be the loss of two hours per week of additional instructional time if Excel schools revert back to a half-day for students on Mondays. However, these half-days for students can be used to bolster some of the other factors, such as teacher analysis of student assessments in order to provide appropriate intervention for students who are not learning.

II. College Access Programs

In Tiers 1, 2, and 3, there is an approximate 10 percent reduction to the combined budgets of these four programs. Each of these programs has a similar goal--to provide the information and skills necessary for admission to and success in college. These programs begin in middle school and extend support through the community college level. Efficiencies gained through bringing these programs under one umbrella may mitigate any reduction of services to students and their families.