

## Executive Summary

An evaluation was conducted of Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School's first year of operating under a Modified School Calendar (MSC) during the 2004-2005 school year. The evaluation used existing data supplemented by observations and purposefully collected information via five questionnaires, each designed for a particular group. This report describes the calendar, compares student performance in MSC's first year to performance in prior years, and describes the experiences and opinions of members of the Tucker Community – teachers, staff, and parents – and of the Alexandria City Public Schools' Central Office staff. Tucker Elementary School successfully completed the first year with the MSC as measured by a number of indicators.

First, it met or surpassed all of the Anticipated Outcomes presented to the Virginia Board of Education in its request to start the school year before Labor Day.

Second, Tucker continued its pattern of performance at or above that of other elementary schools in the division of Alexandria City Public Schools and there was evidence of improvement. In fact, both parents and teachers thought that students performed better in 2004-2005, and diverse evidence supported this sentiment: The percentage of students retained at the end of the 2004-2005 school year decreased from the previous year from 6.5% to 5.3%, and the percentage of those who were conditionally promoted decreased from 6.9% to 5.8%. Performance on Virginia Standards of Learning improved in Spring 2005 compared to Spring 2004:

- Tucker's unadjusted SOL pass rates increased 2-6 percentage points in all subtests.
- Pass rates for Disabled students increased by 43 percentage points in English: Reading, 21-23 in Mathematics and in Science, and 5 in History/Social Studies.
- Black students, who represented 42% of Tucker's 2004-2005 population, had increased pass rates of 8-13 percentage points in all subtests.
- Black students in third grade truly improved their SOL scores, which were significantly greater in 2005 compared to 2004, and they were significantly greater than that of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students attending the other elementary schools.

Third, participation in the three intersessions averaged 78% of enrolled students (school-level estimates were above 80%), a *de facto* implication of families' acceptance of the new calendar, and registered students' attendance rate was equal to the attendance rate during the regular sessions. As a result of the high level of participation and the ethnic make-up of Tucker, more than double the number of non-white students participated in the remediation and enrichment courses of the intersessions than participated in the last summer school (2003), which had the greatest number of Tucker students attending in three years.

Satisfaction, or, at least, tolerance, with the new calendar was evidenced by both parents and staff. Ninety-seven percent of 221 respondents to the parent's questionnaire indicated acceptance of the MSC; however, 3% stated that the MSC should be terminated. No staff suggested returning to a traditional calendar, although they did suggest improvements.

The report offers fourteen recommendations to improve the MSC at Tucker Elementary School and Alexandria City Public Schools. Monitoring of all aspects of the MSC will be continued to identify overall strengths and weaknesses of this new academic program.