

Date: November 13, 2012

For ACTION _____

For INFORMATION X

Board Agenda: Yes X

No _____

FROM: Clinton Page, Interim Executive Director, Department of Accountability

THROUGH: Morton Sherman, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Sheryl Gorsuch, Chair, and Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: 2011-2012 T.C. Williams Transformation Process Report

BACKGROUND:

In March 2010, the Virginia Department of Education named T.C. Williams as one of the state's Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA) schools. This action proved to be a watershed moment for the Alexandria City Public Schools as a division, and uniquely for T.C. Williams as a school, as the transformation process was begun.

The 2011-2012 T.C. Williams Transformation Process Report is broken into two sections. The first section, "Introduction to T.C. Williams and Progress Update," is meant to capture key elements of the transformation process from its inception, as well as provide the reader with key summative data points over the past three to five years for the high school. The second section, "Key Components of T.C. Williams' Transformation Process," utilizes data collected in fall 2012 from student and staff surveys, as well as focus groups. The data collected are used to measure the progress, perceptions, and perceived efficacy of the key components of the transformation process including: Individual Achievement Plans (IAPs), Professional Learning Plans (PLPs), Monitoring Individual Student Achievement, School Support Structures, and various other programmatic and procedural initiatives.

The state support of two million dollars for each of three years for the T.C. Transformation ends June 30, 2013. The transformation model included additional mathematics and English teachers, additional counselors, and additional support positions.

This report was commissioned by the ACPS Superintendent of Schools to gain an objective perspective on the emerging success of the transformation model so that decisions about ongoing funding for positions and programs can be made as part of the

FY 2014 budget process, which has already begun and which will be presented to the ACPS School Board in late January, 2013.

RECOMMENDATION:

Review the 2011-2012 T.C. Williams Transformation Process Report for possible planning, procedural, programmatic, and/or budgetary considerations.

CONTACT PERSON:

Clinton Page

2011-12 TC Williams Transformation Process

Prepared for Alexandria City Public Schools

December 2012



The following document provides an overview of the transformation process at TC Williams (TC) High School during the 2011-12 academic year. The first section revisits TC's designation as a persistently low-achieving (PLA) school, summarizes the transformation model adopted in response, and describes the five key components of the reform process. Progress made by the school during the past few years, as evidenced by federal accountability benchmarks and other measures is also documented. The second section discusses programs and initiatives implemented during the transformation, organized around the transformation's five key components. Where possible, budgetary, participation, and achievement data is referenced to determine efficacy. The views of teachers, staff, and students, as expressed in fall 2012 surveys and focus groups, is also incorporated into the second section.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The following document combines two reports prepared by Hanover Research as part of the second-year evaluation of the ongoing transformation process at TC Williams. In **Section I: Introduction to TC Williams and Progress Update**, we summarize TC Williams' designation as a persistently low-achieving (PLA) school in 2010. Next, we describe the main features of the transformation model, the approach to school improvement adopted by Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) and TC Williams following the PLA designation. As part of that discussion, we introduce and summarize the five key components of the transformation process, as uniquely envisioned and implemented by ACPS and TC Williams: Individual Achievement Plans (IAPs), Professional Learning Plans (PLPs), Student Achievement Goals, School Support Structures, and External Partners. Finally, using student achievement data, we document the progress made by TC Williams during the first two years of the transformation.

In **Section II: Review of Key Components of the Transformation Process**, we examine in greater detail the programs introduced as part of the transformation. We organize the analysis around the five key components listed above. To the extent possible, we use budgetary, participation, and achievement data to assess the efficacy of specific initiatives. In Sections I and II, where appropriate, we incorporate the viewpoints of teachers, other personnel, and students, as expressed in recent surveys and focus groups conducted by Hanover Research.

KEY FINDINGS

- In March 2010, the Virginia Department of Education officially named TC Williams as one of the state's persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) schools. The **PLA designation** reflected the fact that Standards of Learning (SOL) test achievement data from the two previous years placed TC Williams among the lowest-achieving 5 percent of Title I-eligible schools in Virginia.
- In response, ACPS chose the **transformation model** to reform and revitalize the school. The model's core elements include: replacing the principal and taking steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; instituting comprehensive instructional reforms; increasing learning time; creating community-oriented schools; and providing operational flexibility and sustained support.
- When implementing the transformation model, TC Williams emphasized **five key components**. First, every student will receive an Individual Achievement Plan (IAP). The IAP includes a set of goals in the areas of English and mathematics that provide a foundation for long-term success in college, career, and life in general. Second, all staff will develop understanding and expertise in crucial areas of content, pedagogy,

and relationships through the development of Professional Learning Plans (PLPs). Third, the school will rely on various methods of data collection to monitor individual student achievement. Fourth, TC Williams will maintain multiple school support structures to facilitate teaching and learning. Prominent examples of the school's efforts to assist students include separate Writing and Mathematics Centers, increased online-learning opportunities, extended school learning options, Titan Time advisory and remediation, and the International Academy. Meanwhile, TC Williams offers incentives, Mini Grants and Titan Transformer Awards, to recognize teachers, counselors, and staff making exceptional contributions to the school's mission. Lastly, several external partners lend support to transformation efforts at the Division and school levels. Such outside expertise supports and reinforces the reforms undertaken by the Superintendent, central office personnel, and school-based administrators and instructional staff.

- Over the past two school years (2010-11 – 2011-12), TC Williams made tremendous progress in fulfilling Principal Suzanne Maxey's vision of creating "the best high school in the nation."¹ **In each of the past two school years, TC Williams met the federal achievement benchmarks in English** for all students as well as for all key subgroups of students, including ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students with limited proficiency in English. **Last year, for the first time, TC Williams also met all federal benchmarks for all students and all key subgroups in mathematics.** Two years earlier, the school only satisfied 8 of the 14 benchmarks. Given the crucial role played by state test scores in TC Williams' PLA designation, **the improvement in the school's SOL performance over the past two years warrants recognition.**
- Over the past few years, a growing share of TC Williams' students sat for **Advanced Placement (AP) tests**. Roughly 37 percent of students in grades 10-12 took at least one AP test in 2012, compared to 26 percent in 2007. Performance improved dramatically over the same period as well. Nearly 60 percent of the tests administered earned a score of 3 or higher in 2012, compared to 45 percent in 2007.
- The percentage of seniors taking the **SAT** rose for the second consecutive year, from 58 percent in 2010 to 64 percent in 2011 and to 65 percent in 2012. In 2012, the school's graduating seniors scored higher in reading, writing, and mathematics compared to 2011. When comparing 2007 and 2011 ACT participation, the number of graduating seniors who took the **ACT** also grew dramatically. In 2011, 175 students took the ACT, a 307 percent increase over 2007. When comparing 2007 and 2011 ACT scores, the average in all subjects, as well as on the composite measure, rose. In addition, the percentage of students meeting the ACT's college readiness benchmarks grew in every subject except English.

¹ "TC Williams High School Transformation 2010-2013." Alexandria City Public Schools.
<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw-transformation/>

- **TC Williams succeeded in reducing dropout rates for all students, as well as for students in most of the school's key subgroups.** Between 2008 and 2011, the dropout rate for all students decreased by 0.52 percentage points from 3.49 percent to 2.97 percent. Black and Hispanic students still drop out at a higher rate than white students. Students with disabilities, limited proficiency in English, or economic disadvantage also appear more likely to leave school prior to graduation. However, dropout rates for the following subgroups of students decreased noticeably between 2008 and 2011, helping to narrow such gaps: Hispanic students (a 1.67 percent decrease); students with limited proficiency in English (1.36 percent); and students who were economically disadvantaged (1.05 percent).²
- **TC Williams recorded even larger gains in raising on-time graduation rates.** The rate for all students reached 82 percent in 2012, 5 percentage points higher than the rate observed in 2008. Though rates for black and Hispanic students remained lower than those reported for their white peers, both groups made notable progress, and the respective gaps began to narrow. Between 2008 and 2012, on-time graduation rates increased by 6 percentage points (to 82 percent) for black students and 12 percentage points (to 70 percent) for Hispanic students. Students with limited proficiency in English and students who are economically disadvantaged also recorded substantial increases.

²"School Dropout Statistics." Virginia Department of Education.
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/dropout_statistics/index.shtml

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION TO TC WILLIAMS AND PROGRESS UPDATE

In the first section, we provide an overview of the transformation process at TC Williams and the progress made to date. To begin, we note the primary motivation for reform, namely TC Williams' designation as a persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) school in 2010. Then, we describe the main features of the transformation model, the approach to school improvement chosen by ACPS in response to TC Williams' PLA designation. As part of that discussion, we introduce the five key components of the transformation process, as implemented by TC Williams: Individual Achievement Plans (IAPs), Professional Learning Plans (PLPs), student achievement goals, school support structures, and external partners. To conclude, we document the school's progress in raising student achievement during the past two school years.

PLA DESIGNATION

In March 2010, the Virginia Department of Education officially named TC Williams as one of the state's persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) schools.³ Virginia, in compliance with federal standards, defines a Tier II PLA school as:⁴

a secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that is among the lowest-achieving five percent of schools based on the academic achievement of the 'all students' group in reading/language arts and mathematics combined and the school has not reduced its failure rate in reading/language arts and/or mathematics by 10 to 15 percent each year for the past two years.

When announcing the designation, the Department referenced the Standards of Learning (SOL) test achievement data presented in Figure 1.1.⁵ Such results placed TC Williams among the lowest-achieving 5 percent of Title I-eligible schools.

Figure 1.1: TC Williams SOL Passage Rates (in percent)

SCHOOL	READING		MATHEMATICS	
	2008	2009	2008	2009
TC Williams	82.03	84.42	78.50	76.65

Source: Alexandria City Public Schools

³ "2010 Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA) Designation." Alexandria City Public Schools.
<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw-transformation/pla.php>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

THE TRANSFORMATION MODEL

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) authorized **four models of school improvement: turnaround, restart, school closure, and transformation**. Research indicates that each of the models has contributed to successful outcomes in districts throughout the country. Continued eligibility of federal funding requires that schools with PLA designations select one of the four approved methods of school restructuring and improvement. We summarize the four models below and note that TC Williams decided to adopt the **transformation model**.⁶

- **Turnaround Model:** Replace the principal and rehire no more than 50 percent of the staff. Grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (in staffing, calendars, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.
- **Restart Model:** Convert or close and reopen the school under a charter school operator, charter management organization, or education management organization selected through a rigorous review process.
- **School Closure Model:** Close the school and enroll the students in other higher-achieving schools in the district.
- **Transformation Model:** Implement each of the following strategies: replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; institute comprehensive instructional reforms; increase learning time and create community-oriented schools; and provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

A March 2012 report issued by the Center on Education Policy indicates that **the transformation model remains the most popular choice of school districts**.⁷ The model's popularity reflects the fact that transformation typically proves the least disruptive of the four school reform options.⁸ Apart from replacing the principal, other adjustments commonly associated with the transformation model include introducing a longer school day, designing more effective teacher evaluations, and changing curricular and professional development.

Following TC Williams' designation as a persistently lowest-achieving school, Dr. Morton

⁶ "Applications Now Available for \$3.5 Billion in Title I School Improvement Grants to Turn Around Nation's Lowest Achieving Public Schools." U.S. Department of Education, December 3, 2009. <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/12/12032009a.html>

⁷ "State Implementation and Perceptions of Title I School Improvement Grants under the Recovery Act: One Year Later." 2012. Center on Education Policy, p. 2. http://www.cep-dc.org/cfcontent_file.cfm?Attachment=McMurrerMcIntosh%5FReport%5FPerceptionsofSIG%5F3%2E20%2E12%2Epdf

⁸ "Transformation: Most Popular School Improvement Model." *Education Week*, July 9, 2010. http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2010/07/transformation_the_fourth_of_the.html

Sherman, Alexandria City Public Schools' Superintendent, recommended the adoption of the transformation model. The U.S. DOE requires schools implementing the transformation model to adopt measures aligned with the four elements of the model listed above.⁹ First, the school must increase teacher and leader effectiveness by:

- Replacing the principal;
- Using rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that:
 - Take into account data on student growth and other factors such as multiple, observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduation rates; and
 - Are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement;
- Identifying and rewarding school leaders, teachers, and other staff who have raised student achievement and high school graduation rates and identifying and removing those who have not;
- Providing staff with ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff; and
- Implementing such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that help to recruit, place, and retain staff.

Second, the school must **implement instructional reform strategies** that use student data to identify and develop a research-based curriculum. The instructional program should be vertically aligned between grades and adhere to state academic standards. Schools using the transformation model must promote the continuous use of student data to inform and differentiate instruction.

Third, schools must **increase learning time** by developing and implementing schedules and strategies that provide added instructional support. The school will require a longer day, week, or yearly schedule to accommodate additional time for instruction in core and other academic subjects and participation in enrichment activities. In addition, the school will provide more time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and participate in professional development activities. The school also must become **more community-oriented**. Mechanisms for family and community involvement should be introduced to encourage wider participation in school events and increase understanding of school activities and programs.

⁹ "Rolling Faculty Meeting: June 15, 2011." Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw-transformation/20110615-maxey.pdf>

Finally, the school must **provide operational flexibility and sustained support** by granting administrators the power to make decisions regarding staffing, calendars and time, and budgeting to advance the comprehensive transformation in the most effective manner. Additionally, the school must receive **ongoing, intensive technical assistance** and related support from the district, the state, or a designated external lead partner organization.

TC WILLIAMS' ADOPTION OF THE TRANSFORMATION MODEL

ACPS began plans to transform TC Williams after receiving the PLA designation. A school-wide faculty meeting was held to discuss detailed student achievement data, as well as preliminary strategies for engaging key stakeholders, including staff, parents, students, and community members. From the start, ACPS central office and external partners guided the transformation process at TC Williams. The transformation began with the **restructuring of the administration** at TC Williams. In spring 2010, Superintendent Sherman and the executive staff seized control of the school. In the process, the Superintendent created an office on the main campus and established a transformation center next door. In the initial stages of the transformation, the school replaced or retired all but three members of the administrative staff. All remaining and any newly-hired personnel committed fully to the transformation model.

The school quickly established a **PLA Steering Committee** composed of school and central office personnel. At the same time, the TC Williams **Vision and Action Committee** (VAC), established in 2009 and operating under the leadership of the executive associate principal, began to incorporate the transformation model into ongoing planning for school operations and programs. The group assumed responsibility for developing and overseeing a long-term vision for the school and committed to meeting regularly over the course of the transformation process. The group also adopted a **Tripod model** that considers the importance of and the linkages among content, instruction, and relationships in the student learning process. In implementing the Tripod model, the school surveyed all students and gathered opinions and attitudes toward faculty and instruction.

The two committees established **nine goals for the TC Williams transformation process**, including:¹⁰

1. Embracing the purpose of public schools as the creation of literate, participating, and productive citizens in our democracy;
2. Equipping every learner with 21st century skills through a fundamental shift in how we think about student learning and how we work;

¹⁰ Taken verbatim from: "TC Williams Transformation." Alexandria City Public Schools, May 27, 2010.
<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw-transformation/transformation-plan-20100527.pdf>

3. Operating with a shared vision and drive committed to ensuring the success of every learner;
4. Embodying the core belief that all students can learn by providing a useful, meaningful curriculum and exceptional instruction with immediate and long term benefits;
5. Creating clearly articulated policies, behaviors, and organizational practices that maximize student achievement;
6. Moving from a teacher-centered to a student-centered learning community that promotes rigor and efficacy for every student;
7. Reorganizing the school as a consensus-driven learning organization;
8. Building a well-articulated and explicit commitment to a Pre-K-12 learning environment that is personalized, customized, engaging, and which advocates for each student; and
9. Embodying the concepts and goals outlined in the ACPS Strategic Plan and Education Plan, resulting in a coordinated K-12 plan for a world-class school system.

The school also partnered with two of ACPS' external partners to facilitate conversations with instructional staff about the challenges and opportunities associated with transformation. **Suzanne Maxey**, an experienced administrator with significant reform experience at other schools, became the new principal of TC Williams in May 2010, and the School Board unanimously approved the full plan in June 2010.

FIVE KEY COMPONENTS OF TC WILLIAMS' TRANSFORMATION

TC Williams espouses **five key components of a unified system of reform and transformation**.¹¹ First, every student will receive an **Individual Achievement Plan**, or IAP.¹² The IAP includes a set of goals in the areas of English and mathematics that provide a foundation for long-term success in college, career, and life in general. Counselors serve as case managers for students' IAPs, aided by a reduced student-counselor ratio. English and mathematics teachers participate as well, encouraging and enabling students to achieve in the core subjects at the highest possible levels. In recognition of the added responsibilities associated with IAPs, the school reduced each English and mathematics teacher's class load to four sections.

¹¹ "Five Focus Areas." Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw-transformation/focus-areas.php#plp>

¹² Ibid.

Next, all staff will develop understanding and expertise in crucial areas of content, pedagogy, and relationships through the implementation of **Professional Learning Plans**, or PLPs.¹³ After reflecting on existing competencies through a process of careful self-assessment, teachers work with administrators to form strategies that promote further growth and professional learning. In annual portfolios, staff record the progress made in executing the strategies and indicate the ways in which such efforts contribute to student achievement. In addition, staff use the results of formal evaluations to inform future professional development choices.

Third, the school will **monitor individual student achievement**.¹⁴ Monthly tracking occurs through the ISTAR computerized adaptive testing program, as required by the state. Additional standardized assessments include: criterion-referenced tests (CRTs); Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) tests; the PSAT, SAT, and ACT; and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. In the areas of mathematics and reading, TC Williams uses several proven methods to measure and monitor student proficiency. The Scholastic Math Inventory and Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test assess skill levels in mathematics, while the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Empower3000, and Istation serve a similar purpose with respect to reading. In general, the school focuses assessment efforts on the evaluation of students' college readiness as evidenced by the capacity to: write across content areas; comprehend and interpret reading passages; and collect, analyze, and interpret data and other evidence.

Fourth, TC Williams will introduce various **school support structures** to ensure effective teaching and learning.¹⁵ Programs implemented in the initial phase of the transformation include: Writing and Mathematics Centers; expanded online learning opportunities; extended school learning options; continuation of the Titan Up tutoring initiative; and other programs such as the International Academy, dual enrollment, and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Program (MYP). TC Williams has reinforced academic initiatives through administrative restructuring (e.g. the addition of academic principals and grade-level deans) and awarding grants to staff involved in innovative program development. A number of committees continue to supervise and contribute to the transformation process, including the Steering Committee, TC Williams Vision and Action Committee, Staff Leadership Committee, Professional Learning Communities, and the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee.

Finally, several **external partners** lend expertise to TC Williams' transformation efforts. Dr. Bena Kallick and Dr. Marty Brooks provide oversight, attending all Steering Committee meetings. Dr. Fran Prolman and Dr. Jon Saphier advise the school on pedagogy and curriculum design. Dr. Prolman, for example, conducts the Skillful Teacher and Skillful Leader programs. Dr. Ron Ferguson assisted efforts to strengthen student-teacher relationships. To that end, he supervised administration of the Tripod questionnaire to students.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS MADE TO DATE

FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY BENCHMARKS (AYP/AMOs)

Figure 1.2 indicates the extent to which TC Williams met federal benchmarks in **English** from 2008-2009 onward, based on student performance on the Virginia SOLs. In the table, “RN” signifies that the school reduced the failure rate for a given category of students by at least 10 percent. In 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, TC Williams fulfilled 13 of the 14 federal benchmarks in English. In both 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, the school met all federal benchmarks.

As seen in the table, after rising for two consecutive years, the English passage rate for all TC Williams students declined by 4 percentage points to 91 percent in 2011-2012. With the exception of white students, all other subgroups of students saw passage rates fall in 2011-2012 in comparison to the preceding year. Nevertheless, passage rates for all subgroups remain noticeably higher than in 2008-2009 and, as noted above, proved sufficient to meet the federal benchmarks.

Figure 1.2: Federal Accountability Benchmarks in English¹⁶

ANNUAL MEASUREABLE OBJECTIVE		2008-2009		2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-2012	
		TESTING RATE	MET	TESTING RATE	MET	TESTING RATE	MET	TESTING RATE	MET
Participation	All	97	Y	98	Y	100	Y	99	Y
	Black	98	Y	96	Y	100	Y	100	Y
	Hispanic	96	Y	99	Y	100	Y	97	Y
	White	98	Y	98	Y	100	Y	100	Y
	Students with Disabilities	96	Y	92	N	100	Y	97	Y
	Economically-Disadvantaged	97	Y	98	Y	100	Y	98	Y
	LEP	99	Y	97	Y	100	Y	98	Y
ANNUAL MEASUREABLE OBJECTIVE		2008-2009		2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-2012	
		PASSING RATE	MET	PASSING RATE	MET	PASSING RATE	MET	PASSING RATE	MET
Performance	All	84	Y	90	Y	95	Y	91	Y
	Black	79	N	87	Y	91	Y	89	Y
	Hispanic	82	Y	85	Y	95	Y	90	Y
	White	95	Y	99	Y	98	Y	98	Y
	Students with Disabilities	55	Y	66	RN	84	RN	73	Y
	Economically-Disadvantaged	81	Y	84	Y	93	Y	87	Y
	LEP	85	Y	90	Y	96	Y	89	Y
Benchmarks Met		13		13		14		14	

Source: Virginia Department of Education

¹⁶ The Virginia Department of Education utilized Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks through 2010-2011. Starting in 2011-12, Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) replaced AYP benchmarks.

The mathematics SOLs changed substantively in 2011-2012. More aligned with the Common Core, the more rigorous mathematics SOLs proved much more difficult for students across Virginia. As such, the state emphasizes that mathematics passage rates embarked on a new trajectory in 2011-2012, complicating comparisons with results from prior years.¹⁷ The state adjusted schools' 2011-2012 performance benchmarks in mathematics to reflect the altered testing environment. Accordingly, despite the declining passage rates, TC Williams fulfilled all federal benchmarks last year. In the case of all students and students with disabilities, the school met benchmarks based on an average of the last three years' results (3YR).

Figure 1.3 provides federal benchmark information with respect to **mathematics**. In mathematics, TC Williams faced a much greater challenge than in the case of English, given that the school satisfied only 8 of the 14 benchmarks in 2008-2009. That year, only one subgroup, white students, met the targeted passage rate. In 2009-2010, the school still only fulfilled 8 benchmarks. The 2010-2011 school year, however, saw dramatic improvements in performance, enabling TC Williams to meet 13 of the 14 benchmarks. As seen in Figure 1.3, all subgroups of TC Williams' students recorded double-digit decreases in mathematics passage rates in 2011-2012. The sharp declines in passage rates observed for TC Williams mirror trends statewide.

¹⁷ "2011-2012 Math SOL Results Begin New Trend Line." Virginia Department of Education, August 14, 2012.
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2012/aug14.shtml

Figure 1.3: Federal Accountability Benchmarks in Mathematics¹⁸

ANNUAL MEASUREABLE OBJECTIVE		2008-2009		2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-2012	
		TESTING RATE	MET	TESTING RATE	MET	TESTING RATE	MET	TESTING RATE	MET
Participation	All	97	Y	96	Y	100	Y	99	Y
	Black	96	Y	95	Y	100	Y	100	Y
	Hispanic	95	Y	95	Y	100	Y	98	Y
	White	97	Y	98	Y	100	Y	100	Y
	Students with Disabilities	94	Y	92	N	100	Y	98	Y
	Economically-Disadvantaged	96	Y	95	Y	100	Y	99	Y
	LEP	96	Y	96	Y	100	Y	99	Y
ANNUAL MEASUREABLE OBJECTIVE		2008-2009		2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-2012	
		PASSING RATE	MET	PASSING RATE	MET	PASSING RATE	MET	PASSING RATE	MET
Performance	All	77	N	75	N	83	RN	60	3YR
	Black	71	N	69	N	79	RN	52	Y
	Hispanic	71	N	73	N	81	RN	55	Y
	White	93	Y	89	Y	93	Y	79	Y
	Students with Disabilities	50	N	59	RN	61	N	23	3YR
	Economically-Disadvantaged	70	N	69	N	79	RN	53	Y
	LEP	75	N	75	N	82	RN	59	Y
Benchmarks Met		8		8		13		14	

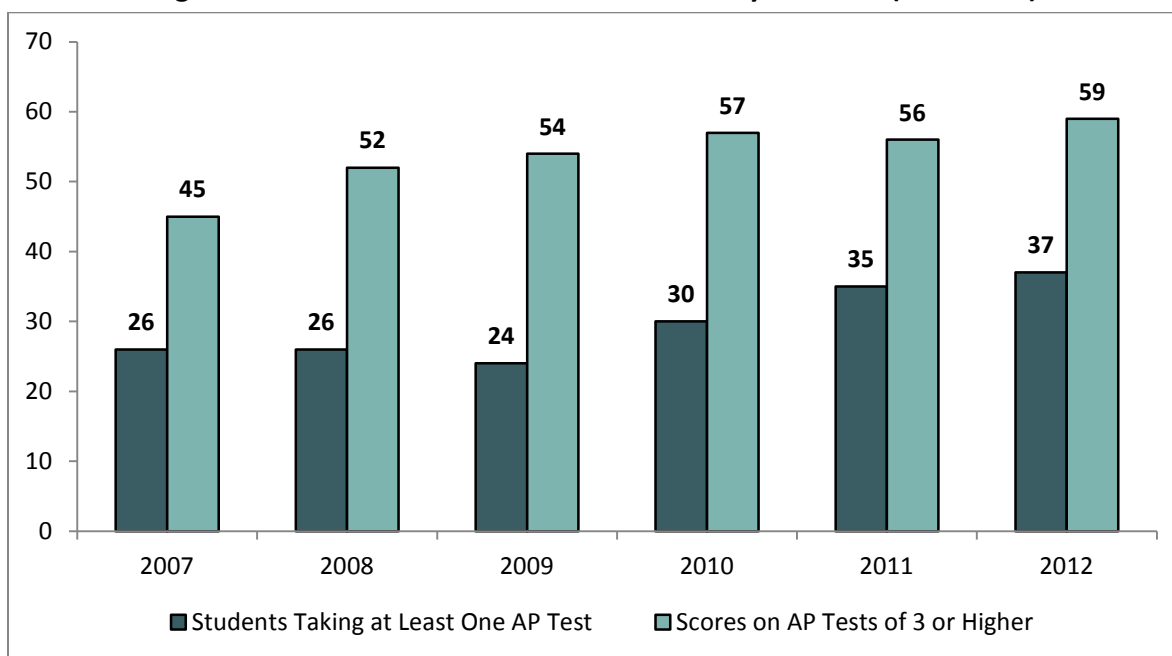
Source: Virginia Department of Education

¹⁸ The Virginia Department of Education utilized Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks through 2010-2011. Starting in 2011-12, Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) replaced AYP benchmarks.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP)

Figure 1.4 displays summary statistics indicating the participation of TC Williams' students in **Advanced Placement (AP)** courses.¹⁹ The data refers to students in grades 10, 11, and 12. As seen in the graph, over the past six years, a growing percentage of students completed AP tests. Approximately 37 percent of students took at least one AP test in 2012, compared to 26 percent in 2007. Performance improved markedly over the same period as well. More than half, or 59 percent, of AP test scores equaled 3 or higher in 2012.

Figure 1.4: ACPS Advanced Placement Summary Statistics (in Percent)



Source: Alexandria City Public Schools

¹⁹ "2011 AP Report." 2011. Alexandria City Public Schools, Department of Accountability. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/mes/ap/2011-ap-report.pdf>

SAT AND ACT

Figure 1.5 shows the **average SAT scores** for ACPS graduating seniors from 2007 to 2012.²⁰ After declining for the past three years, average scores rose in 2012. Compared to 2011, average scores in reading, writing, and mathematics increased by 8, 5, and 4 points respectively. Nearly two-thirds, or 65 percent, of ACPS seniors took the SAT in 2012. The participation rate rose between 2010 and 2011 and between 2011 and 2012, a welcome trend following the decline in participation observed from 2007 through 2009.

Figure 1.5: Average ACPS SAT Scores

SUBJECT	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Reading	490	494	482	482	477	485
Writing	481	490	482	475	469	474
Mathematics	491	489	472	479	473	477
Percent of Seniors Taking the SAT	65%	63%	56%	58%	64%	65%

Source: Alexandria City Public Schools

Figure 1.6 provides **average ACT scores** for ACPS graduating seniors.²¹ From 2007 to 2011, the number of graduating seniors taking the ACT rose dramatically. A total of 175 students sat for the ACT in 2011, a 69.9 percent increase from 2010 (103 test takers) and a 307 percent rise from 2007 (57 test takers).²² Between 2007-2011 period, average scores improved in all subjects, as well as with respect to the composite measure. The gains ranged from a minimum of 0.3 point in English to 0.9 point in both reading and mathematics.

Figure 1.6: Average ACPS ACT Scores

SUBJECT	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
English	19.0	21.7	20.8	19.6	19.3
Mathematics	19.8	21.3	20.0	20.7	20.7
Reading	19.6	22.6	21.1	20.3	20.5
Science	19.5	20.6	20.3	19.8	20.2
Composite	19.7	21.7	20.7	20.2	20.3

Source: Alexandria City Public Schools

As seen in Figure 1.7, over the past five years, the share of ACPS students meeting the **ACT's college readiness benchmarks** rose in every subject with the exception of English.²³ Mathematics recorded the greatest improvement, with 42 percent of ACT test takers considered college ready in 2011, compared to only 33 percent in 2007. In spite of recent declines, English still represented the subject with the largest share of college-ready ACPS students, with 58 percent meeting the benchmark in 2011.

²⁰ "2011 SAT Digest." 2011. Alexandria City Public Schools, Department of Accountability.
<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/mes/sat/2011-sat-digest.pdf>

²¹ Ibid.

²² "ACT Profile Report: Graduating Class 2011" 2011. Alexandria City Public Schools, Department of Accountability.
<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/mes/act/2011-act-report.pdf>

²³ Ibid.

Figure 1.7: ACPs ACT Test Takers Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks (in percent)

SUBJECT	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
English	60	68	68	56	58
Mathematics	33	48	35	37	42
Reading	37	56	54	50	45
Science	23	27	24	24	26
All Four Subjects	19	25	19	21	23

Source: Alexandria City Public Schools

DROPOUT RATES

As demonstrated in Figure 1.8, **TC Williams succeeded in reducing dropout rates for all students, as well as for students in most of the school's key subgroups.**²⁴ Between 2008 and 2011, the dropout rate for all students decreased by 0.52 percentage points from 3.49 percent to 2.97 percent. Among the school's key subgroups, the following demographics experienced the largest declines: Hispanic students (a 1.67 percentage point decrease); students with limited proficiency in English (-1.36); and students who were economically disadvantaged (-1.05). In comparison, the dropout rate for students with disabilities fell by only 0.2 percentage points between 2008 and 2011, and the dropout rates for white and black students remained essentially unchanged.

Figure 1.8: TC Williams Annual Dropout Rates (in percent)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	DIFFERENCE, 2008 TO 2011
All Students	3.49	4.12	2.01	2.97	-0.52
Black	3.49	3.79	1.19	3.44	-0.05
Hispanic	5.30	6.95	4.72	3.63	-1.67
White	2.00	1.76	---	1.94	-0.07
Students with Disabilities	3.64	3.66	---	3.43	-0.20
Limited English Proficient	5.50	6.20	4.48	4.15	-1.36
Economically Disadvantaged	4.64	4.87	2.90	3.59	-1.05

Source: Virginia Department of Education

GRADUATION RATES

TC Williams made even greater progress in raising on-time graduation rates, as seen in Figure 1.9. The rate for all students reached 82 percent in 2012, 5 percentage points higher than the rate observed four years earlier. The rate for white students rose by 5 percentage points over the same period to 93 percent. Though rates for black and Hispanic students remained lower than those reported for their white peers, both groups made notable progress, and the respective gaps began to narrow. Between 2008 and 2012, four year on-time graduation rates increased by 6 percentage points (to 82 percent) for black students and 12 percentage points (to 70 percent) for Hispanic students. Students with limited proficiency in English and students who were economically disadvantaged also achieved

²⁴ "School Dropout Statistics." Virginia Department of Education.
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/dropout_statistics/index.shtml

marked gains, however students with disabilities saw on-time graduation rates decline from 76 percent in 2008 to 72 percent in 2011.

Figure 1.9: Four Year Cohort On-Time Graduation Rates (in percent)

TC WILLIAMS	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	DIFFERENCE, 2008 TO 2012
All Students	77	78	79	79	82	5
Black	76	79	79	80	82	6
Hispanic	58	65	69	67	70	12
White	88	87	86	90	93	5
Students with Disabilities	76	85	81	77	72	-4
Limited English Proficient	71	68	68	72	80	9
Economically Disadvantaged	70	78	76	77	81	11

Source: ACPS

SECTION II: KEY COMPONENTS OF TC WILLIAMS' TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

The following sub-sections assess the progress made in 2011-2012 toward fulfilling the main objectives related to the five key components of the transformation process: Individual Achievement Plans (IAPs), Professional Learning Plans (PLPs), Student Achievement Goals, School Support Structures, and External Partners. Much of the content reflects information provided to Hanover Research by Alexandria City Public Schools and administrators at TC Williams. However, the section also includes additional insight from TC Williams' students and staff obtained through surveys and focus groups conducted in September 2012. When alluding to such feedback, we will refer to either the "fall 2012 survey" or the "fall 2012 focus groups."

When considering the results of the fall 2012 survey, we note that the survey did not capture the opinions of students who graduated from TC Williams in spring 2012 or staff who no longer work at TC Williams. Moreover, the results only represent the opinions of the staff and students who chose to participate. Overall, 49.8 percent of invited students and 50.5 percent of invited staff completed at least part of the survey. While the sample of students surveyed generally reflects the larger population of students invited, we note the following differences between the two groups:

- Minnie Howard campus students were slightly overrepresented (33.5 percent of survey participants compared to 29.8 percent of invited students).
- The distribution of participants by grade generally reflects that of all invited students, though a slightly lower percentage of 10th grade students and a slightly higher percentage of 11th grade students responded.
- Female students proved slightly more likely to participate, making up 51.0 percent of survey participants compared to 49.4 percent of all invited students.
- Survey participants included a slightly higher share of Asian and white students, whereas while black and Hispanic students were slightly underrepresented.
- Survey participants included lower concentrations of both special education students and students with limited proficiency in English (LEP) relative to all invited students.
- Relative to the total population of invited students, students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches comprised a smaller share of survey participants (61.1 percent of all invited students compared to 54.5 percent of participating students).
- Survey participants also generally performed better academically than non-participants, as measured by 2011-2012 student grade point averages (3.01 GPA compared to 2.65 GPA).

We offer additional description of the methodology involved in the staff survey and a full analysis of all questions in Appendix A. A similar description and analysis of the student

survey appears in Appendix B. Appendix B also includes a more detailed comparison of survey respondents with the total population of invited students with respect to key demographic variables. Lastly, Appendix C outlines the procedures followed when conducting the focus groups.

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT PLANS (IAPs)

As part of the transformation process, TC Williams aims for each student to receive an Individual Achievement Plan (IAP). **The IAP represents a “personalized plan that captures the student’s unique interests, aspirations, learning strengths, and challenges.”**²⁵ When appropriately developed, the IAP satisfies three criteria. First, the IAP sets short-term and long-term goals. In the short-term, the IAP emphasizes annual objectives in the areas of English and mathematics, including content to master and skills to develop. In the long-term, the IAP focuses on ensuring that each student graduates from TC Williams fully-equipped to succeed in college, work, and life. Second, the IAP includes an action plan stating the steps needed to achieve each goal. Third, all stakeholders—students, parents, counselors and teachers—monitor and document the progress made. **TC Williams reported that roughly 85 percent of students finished an IAP in 2011-2012.**²⁶ It should be noted that a small proportion of special education students with existing math and English goals in their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) did not receive IAPs. This policy has been changed for the 2012-13 school year. Additional discussion of this new policy can be viewed at the end of the section. Of the student IAP meetings held, 66 percent included at least one parent. A mathematics teacher or an English teacher attended 67 percent and 68 percent, respectively.²⁷

STUDENT SURVEY

Among the students surveyed by Hanover Research in fall 2012, approximately 62 percent of students reported having a completed IAP in 2011-2012. The discrepancy between the IAP completion rate reported by TC Williams (roughly 85 percent) and the results of the fall 2012 survey merits further review. The next figure indicates the degree to which respondents agreed with various statements pertaining to IAPs. We provide a full analysis of related results disaggregated by grade level in Figures B.12-B.26 of Appendix B.

Based on the responses presented below, IAPs appeared most useful in enabling students to work with counselors (69 percent agreed or strongly agreed), understand areas to improve (62 percent agreed or strongly agreed), make progress toward long-term objectives (58 percent agreed or strongly agreed), and achieve short-term goals (56 percent agreed or strongly agreed). With respect to the impact on performance in core subjects, 35 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that IAPs helped academically in mathematics, 14 percentage points more than the share of students expressing some degree of

²⁵ “Connecting It All: Understanding the IAP Process.” Alexandria City Public Schools.
<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/middle-schools/iap/iap-process.pdf>

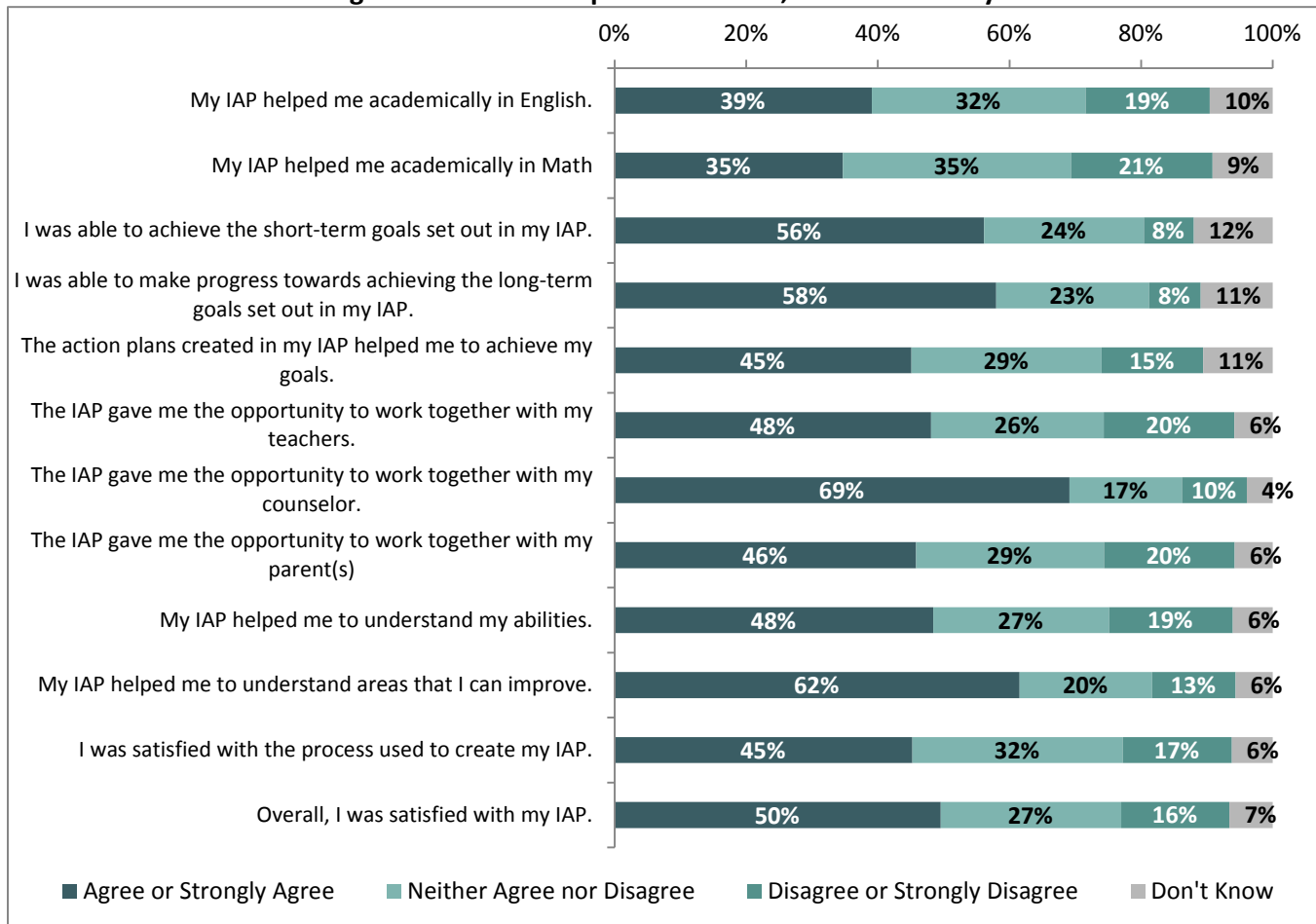
²⁶ “TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update.” Alexandria City Public Schools. TC Williams Transformation- Year 2 Update (6-19 revision).ppt

²⁷ Ibid.

disagreement. An even higher percentage, 39 percent, agreed or strongly agreed that IAPs helped academically in English (more than twice the share of students who disagreed).

Roughly half of students appeared satisfied with IAPs overall, though fewer (45 percent) found the process satisfactory. In terms of usefulness as a resource for improving academic success, however, only one-third of students rated IAPs as above average or excellent. Slightly less than half (47 percent) considered IAPs average, while nearly one-fifth (19 percent) viewed IAPs as below average or very poor.

Figure 2.1: Student Opinions on IAPs, Fall 2012 Survey



STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND IAP PERCEPTIONS

In an attempt to gain additional insight into the factors motivating student perceptions of IAPs, we examined the extent to which attitudes vary among TC Williams' key demographic subgroups. The following figure indicates differences in reported rates of IAP completion according to gender, ethnicity, LEP status, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches, and need for special education services. Slightly more female students (62.2 percent) reported completing an IAP in 2011-2012 than male students (60.9 percent). More than two-thirds

(68 percent) of white students completed an IAP last year, 5 percentage points more than Asian students, 6.7 percentage points more than black students, and 14.4 percentage points more than Hispanic students. **We found especially wide disparities in reported completion rates, however, based on free or reduced-price lunch, LEP, and special education status.** More specifically, the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches that completed IAPs was 15.9 percentage points lower than non-eligible students. Meanwhile, the completion rate for LEP students was 22.6 percentage points lower than non-LEP students. The widest gap, however, occurred with respect to special education status. Only 40.8 percent of responding special education students reported completing an IAP last year compared to 63.6 percent of non-special education students, a 22.8 percent difference.

Figure 2.2: IAP Completion by Student Demographic

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE	CATEGORY	NUMBER	DID NOT COMPLETE	COMPLETED
ALL STUDENTS	All Students	1,087	38.4%	61.6%
GENDER	Female	556	37.8%	62.2%
	Male	530	39.1%	60.9%
ETHNICITY	Black	380	38.7%	61.3%
	Hispanic	291	46.4%	53.6%
	White	300	32.0%	68.0%
	Asian	73	37.0%	63.0%
LEP STATUS	No	924	35.1%	64.9%
	Yes	163	57.7%	42.3%
FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH ELIGIBILITY	No	494	29.8%	70.2%
	Yes	593	45.7%	54.3%
SPECIAL EDUCATION STATUS	No	989	36.4%	63.6%
	Yes	98	59.2%	40.8%

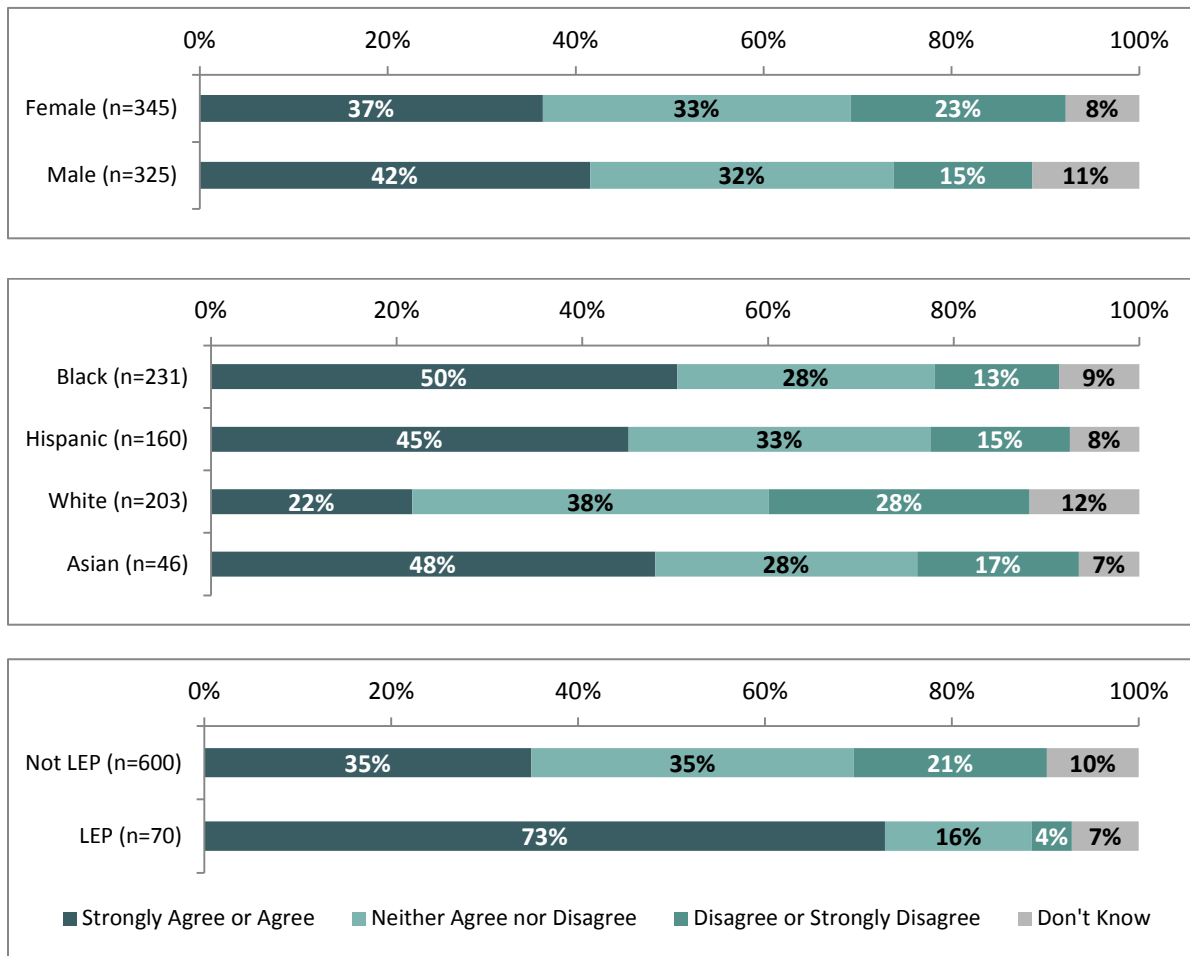
We also sought evidence of differences in response patterns to five crucial IAP-related survey questions by demographic subgroup. The five questions considered included: the helpfulness of IAPs in English; the helpfulness of IAPs in mathematics; satisfaction with the process used to create IAPs; overall satisfaction with IAPs; and overall rating of IAPs as an academic resource. We present a series of figures illustrating degrees of agreement by demographic subgroup on the next few pages. Interestingly, **in general, higher rates of completion did not translate into more positive perceptions of IAPs.** For instance, despite a slightly lower completion rate, males expressed higher percentages of agreement than females for all five questions. With respect to ethnicity, despite reporting the highest completion rate, white students consistently reported lower levels of agreement. Asian students proved the most positive when evaluating the usefulness of IAPs in mathematics, assessing the process of IAP creation, and assigning an overall rating. Asian and black students expressed the most satisfaction with IAPs overall. Black students, in turn, found IAPs most helpful in English.

Meanwhile, **students eligible for free or reduced-prices lunches agreed noticeably more with the IAP-related questions studied than non-eligible students.** In all cases, the difference in the percentage of students agreeing or strongly agreeing exceeded 15 percent, ranging from a minimum of 15.5 percent (when expressing satisfaction with IAPs overall) to

a maximum of 23.1 percent (when assessing IAPs' helpfulness in English). Moreover, the proportion of students who rated IAPs as excellent or above average was 19.1 percentage points higher than for non-eligible students. **We detected even wider disparities in the views of LEP and non-LEP students, with the former far more inclined to view IAPs positively than the latter.** In fact, the percentage of LEP students who found IAPs helpful in English and mathematics proved more than double the percentage of non-LEP students. In addition, the share of LEP students rating IAPs as an excellent or above-average academic resource greatly exceeded that of non-LEP students, at 60.9 percent compared to 30.1 percent.

The impact of a student's special education status depended on the nature of the question asked. On the one hand, special education students viewed IAPs more positively by sizable margins in the context of the plans' helpfulness in both English and mathematics. On the other hand, non-special education students appeared more satisfied with IAPs overall and were more likely to assign IAPs an excellent or above average rating.

Figure 2.3: "My IAP helped me academically in English" (by student demographic)



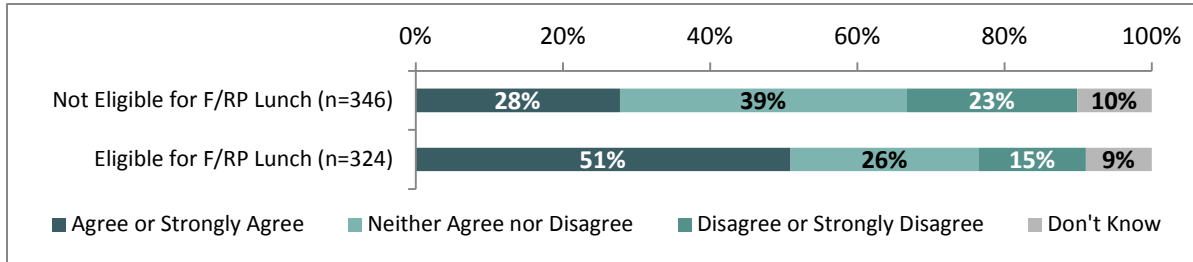
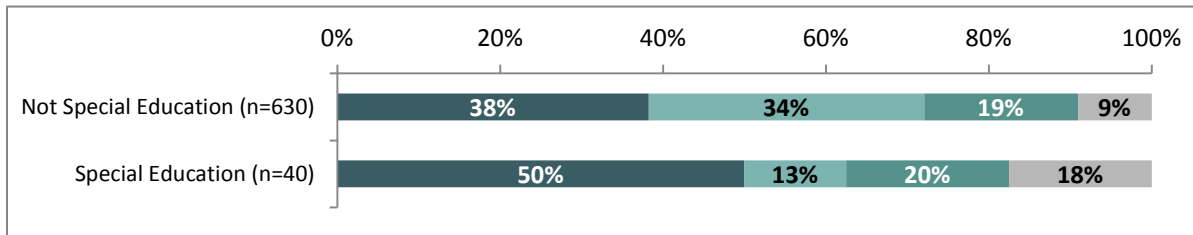
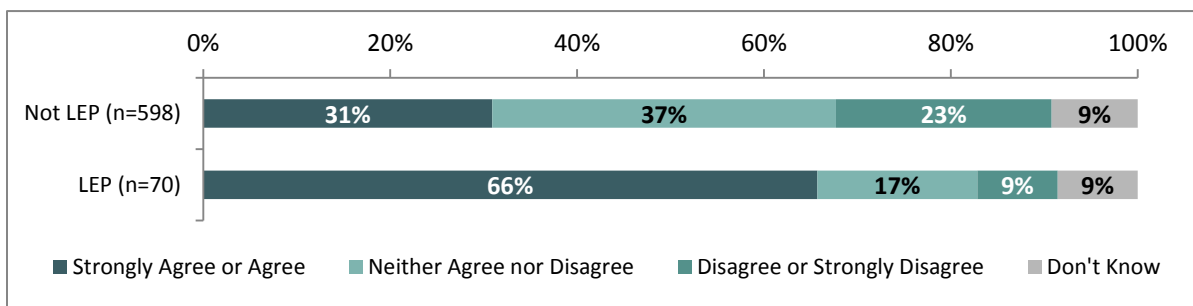
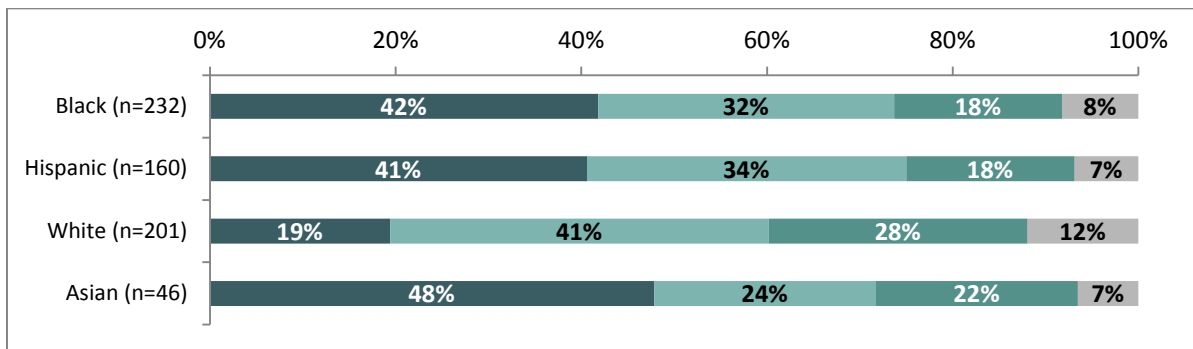
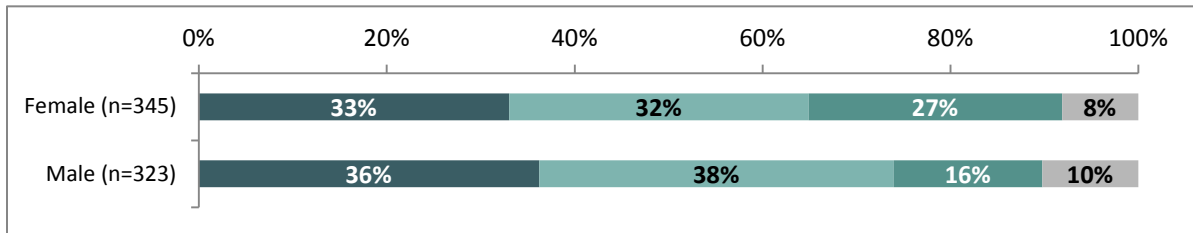


Figure 2.4: "My IAP helped me academically in Math" (by student demographic)



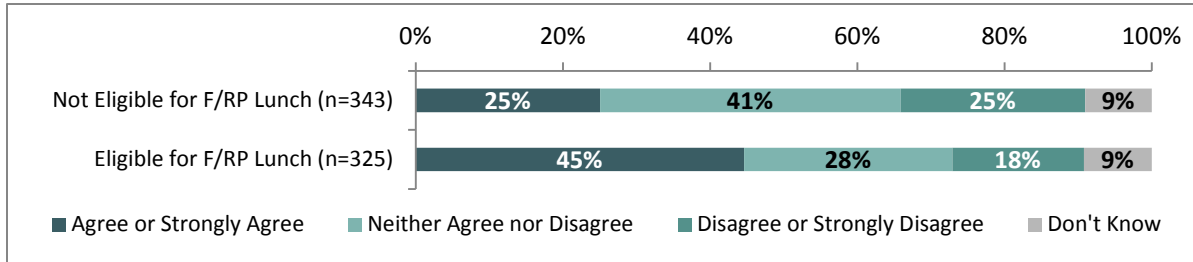
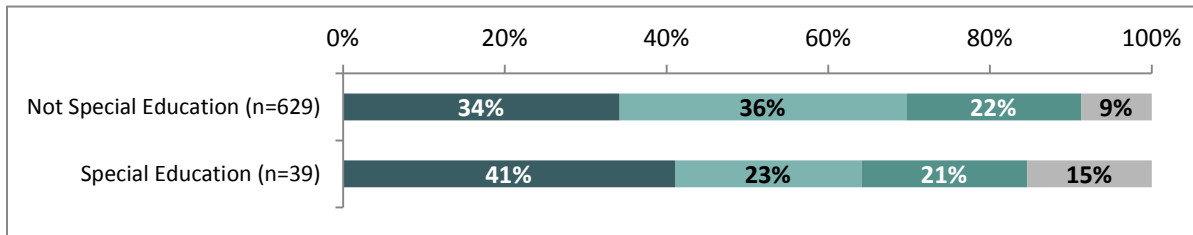
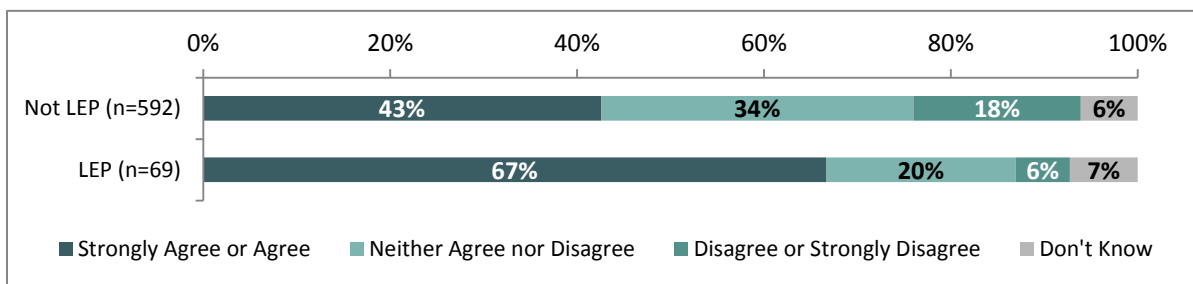
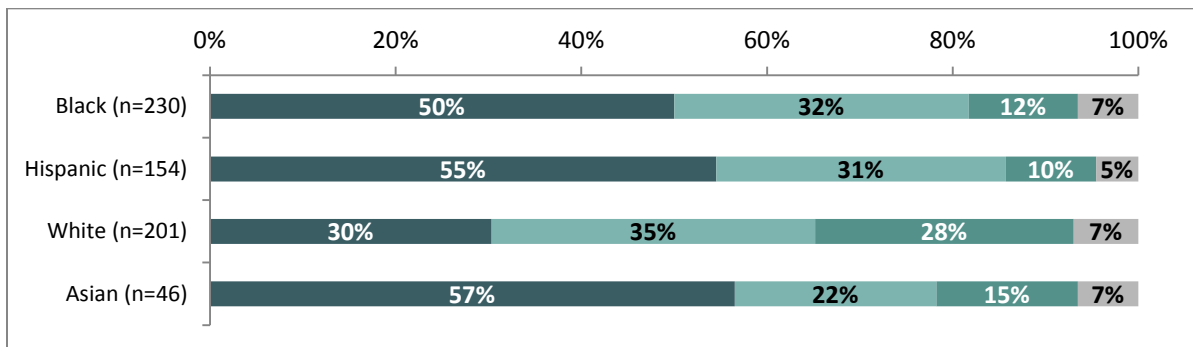
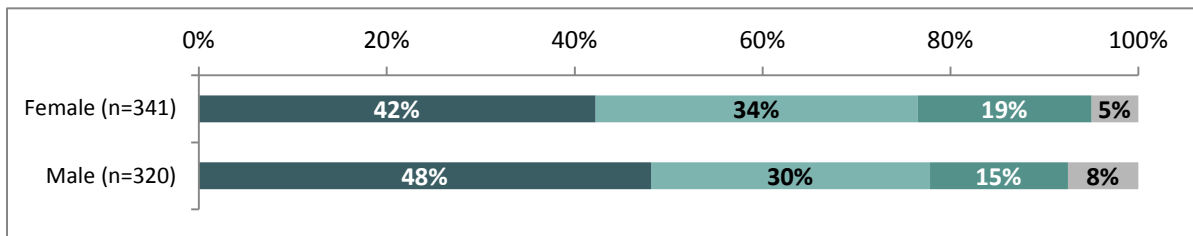


Figure 2.5: “I was satisfied with the process used to create my IAP”
(by student demographic)



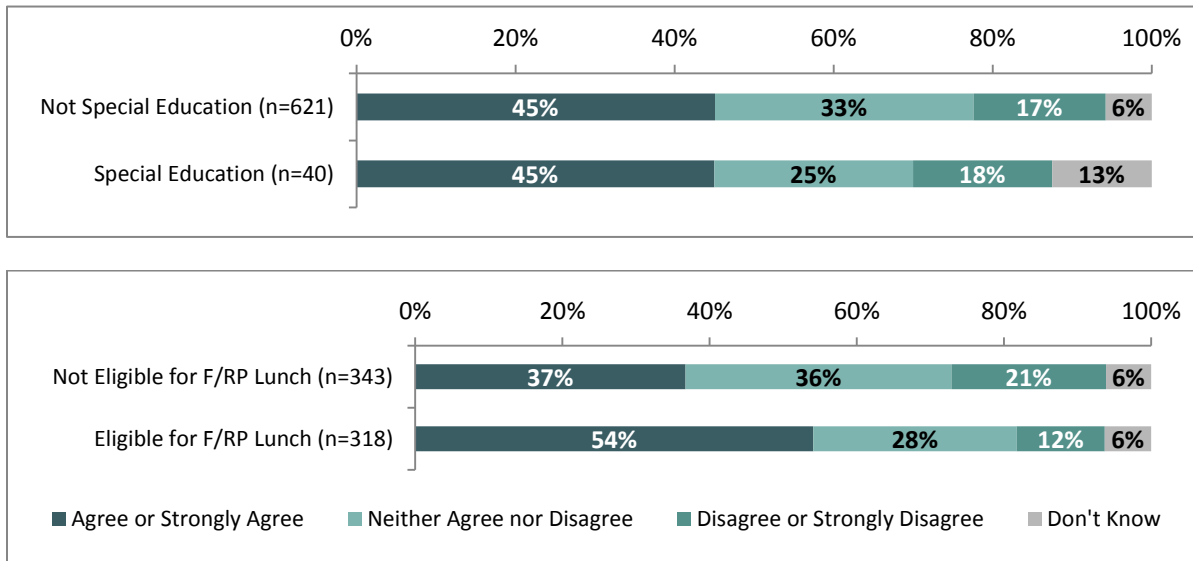
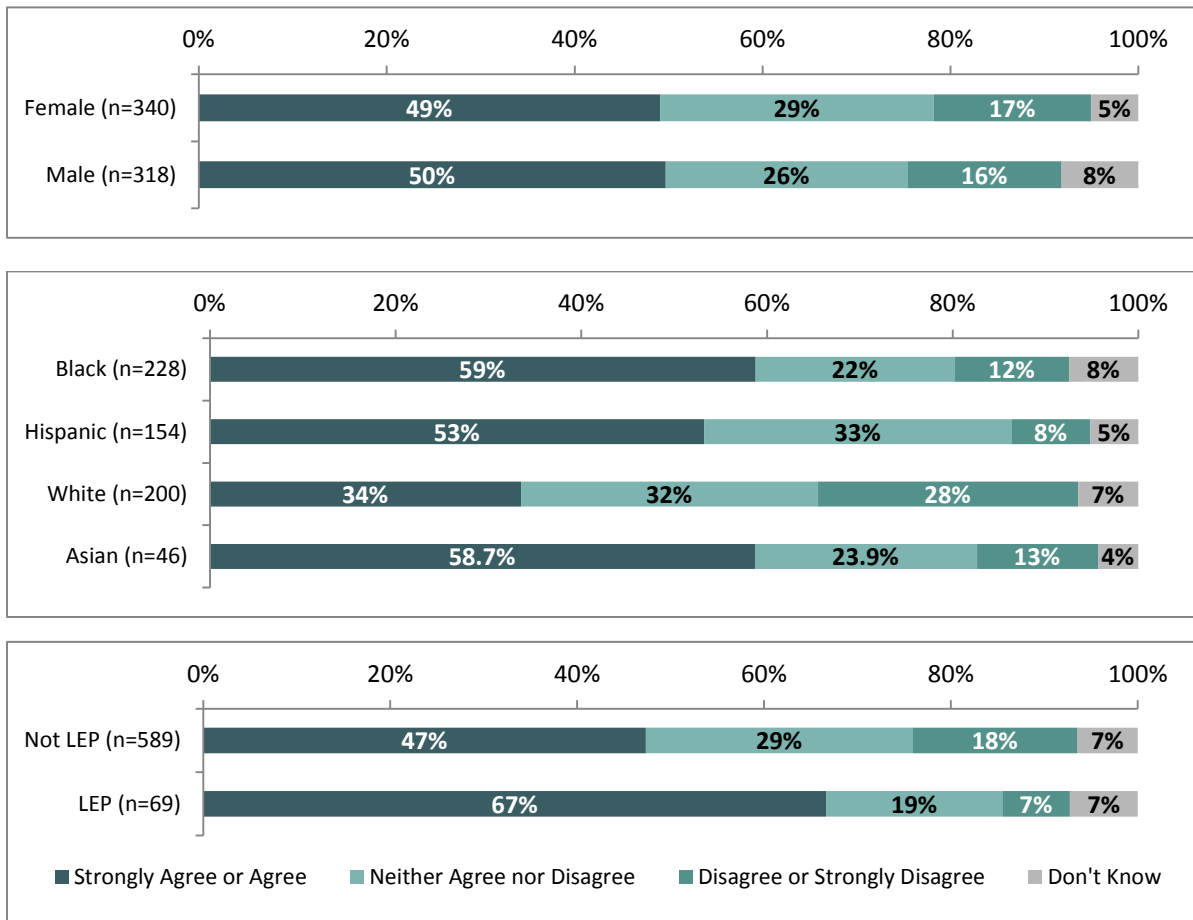


Figure 2.6: “Overall, I was satisfied with my IAP” (by student demographic)



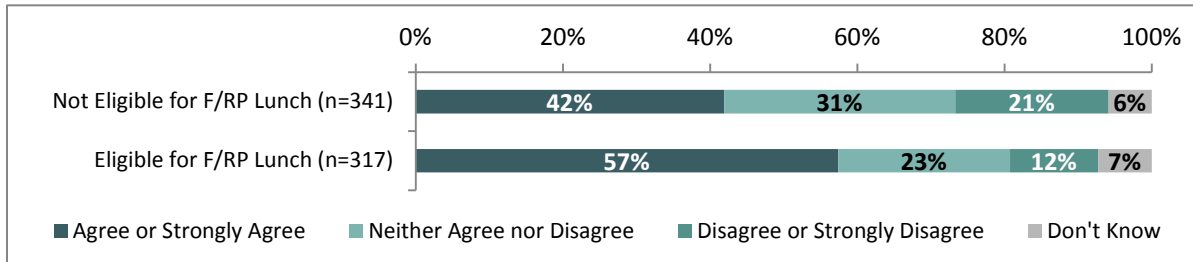
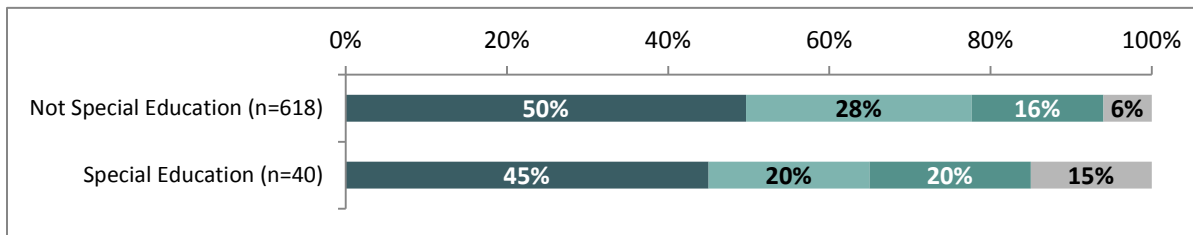
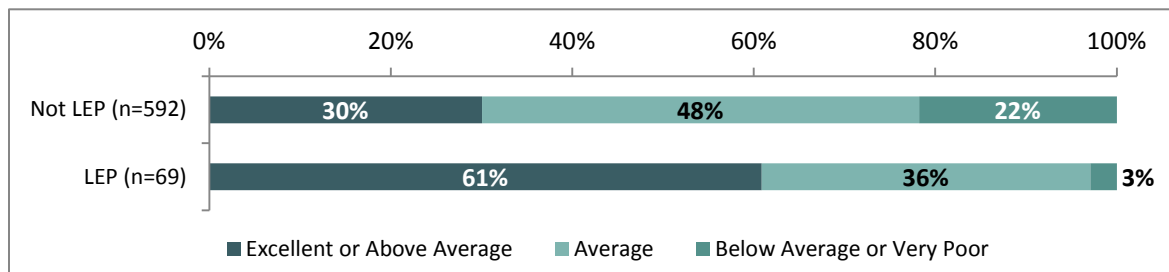
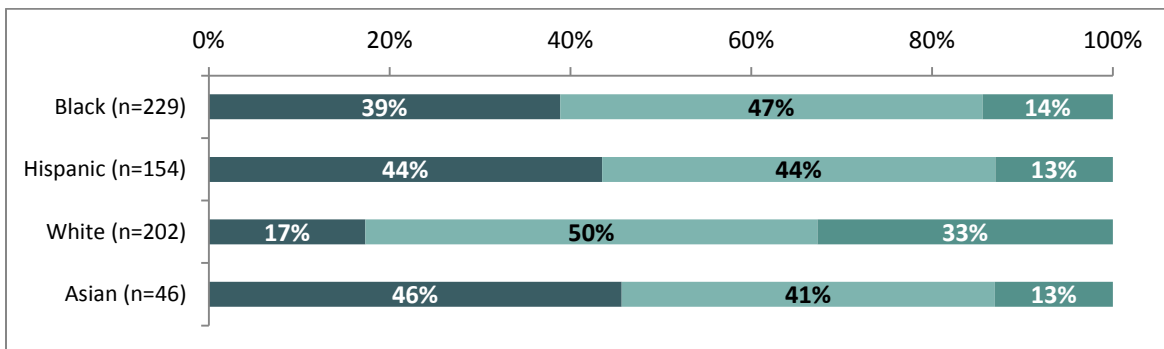
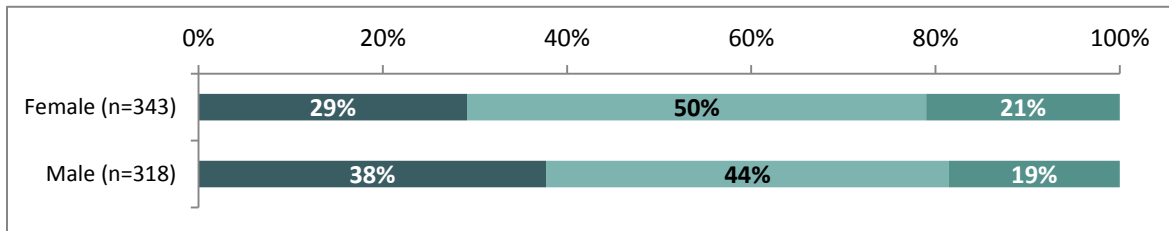
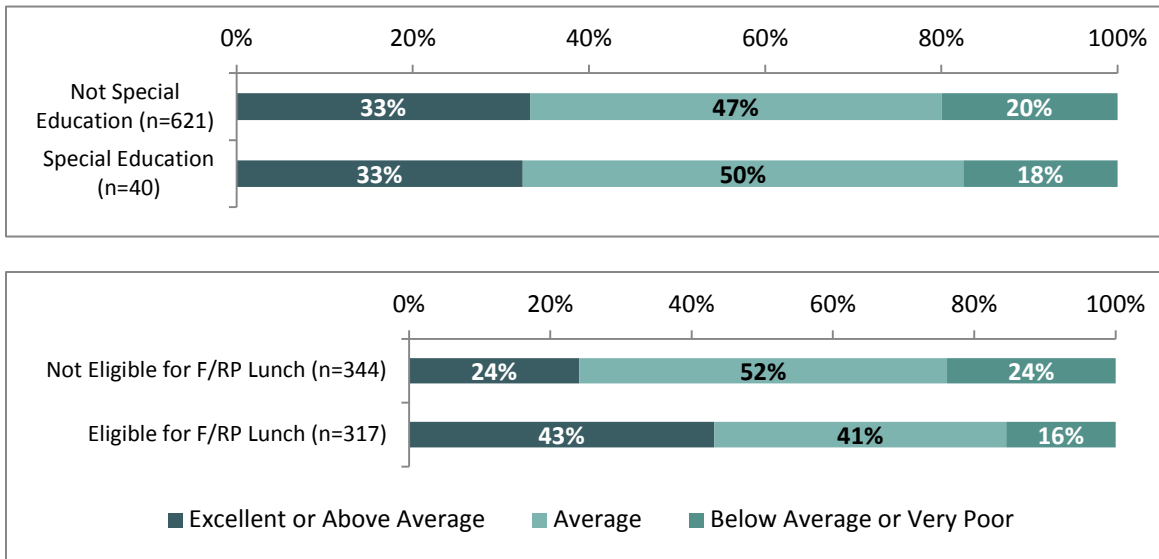


Figure 2.7: “Overall, how would you rate the quality of the IAP as a resource for improving your academic success” (by student demographic)





STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND IAP PERCEPTIONS

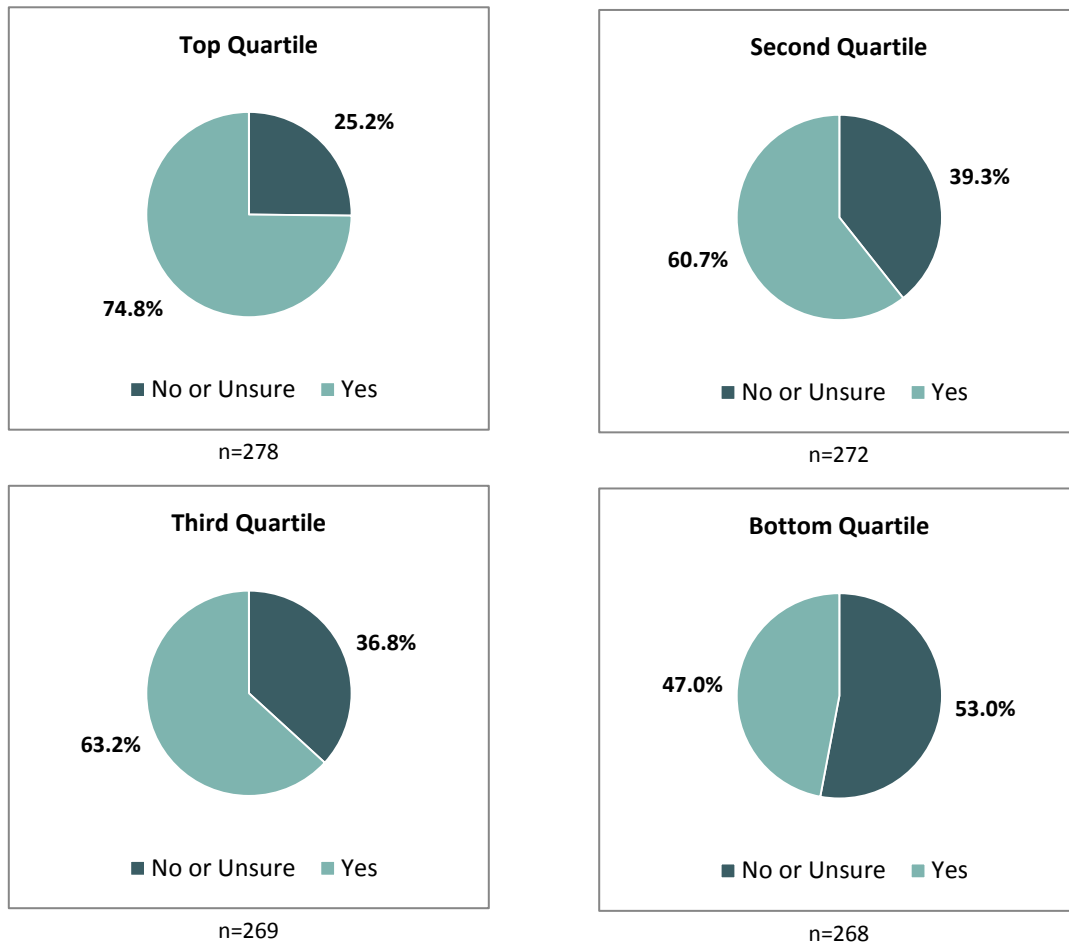
We also explored whether or not attitudes toward IAPs varied consistently with a student's level of academic achievement, as measured by his or her 2011-2012 grade point average (GPA). We placed each student into one of four quartiles, based on his or her 2011-2012 GPA ranking. We define the GPA quartiles and indicate the number of students included as follows.

- **Top Quartile:** GPA ≥ 3.71 (279 students)
- **Second Quartile:** $3.07 \leq \text{GPA} < 3.71$ (274 students)
- **Third Quartile:** $2.37 \leq \text{GPA} < 3.07$ (273 students)
- **Bottom Quartile:** GPA < 2.37 (274 students)

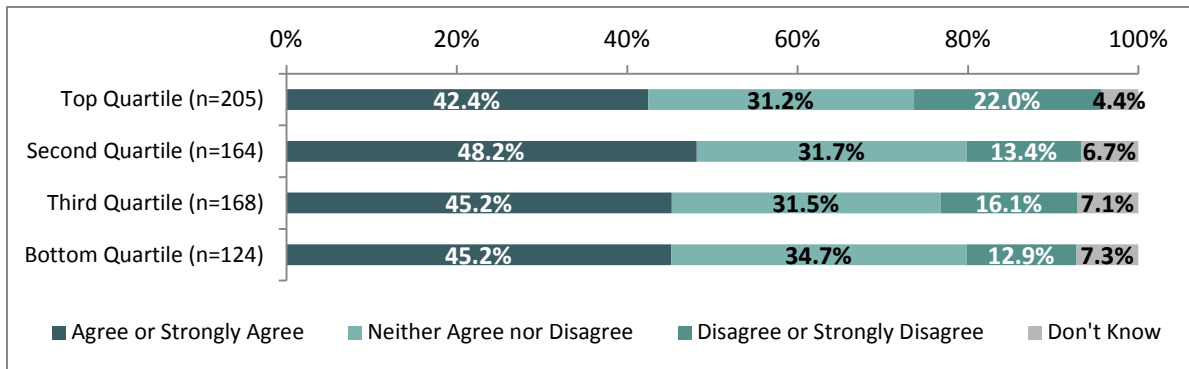
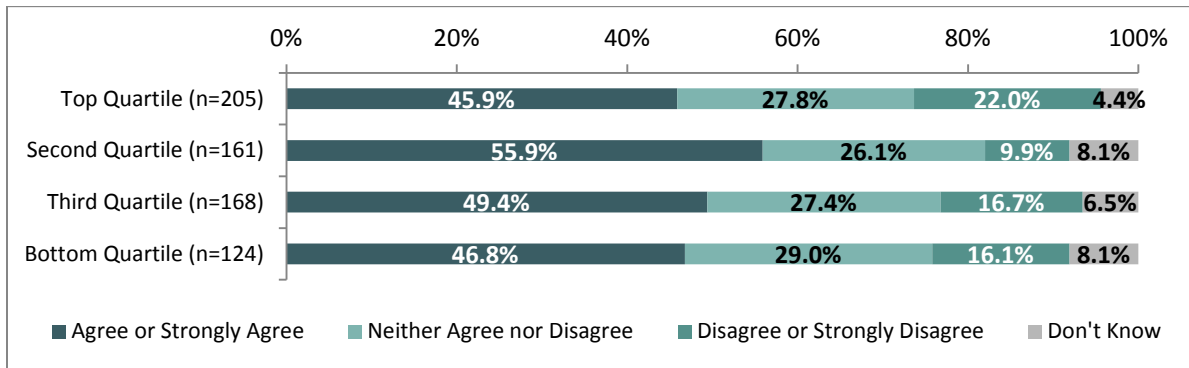
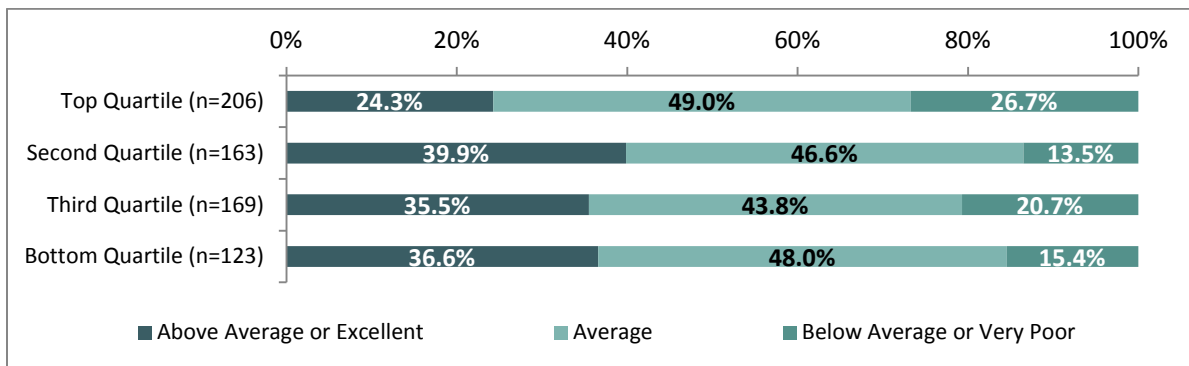
According to ACPS' secondary grading scale for standard classes, the four quartiles roughly correspond to the following overall letter grades²⁸ - A minus or higher for the top quartile; B through B plus for the second quartile; C plus to B for the third quartile; and C plus or lower for the bottom quartile. Figure 2.8 reveals reported rates of IAP completion for each of the four quartiles. As seen in the figure, **the reported rate of IAP completion appeared noticeably higher among respondents in the top quartile.** Nearly three-quarters (74.8 percent) of such students reportedly completed an IAP, compared to 60.7 percent of students in the second quartile, 63.2 percent of students in the third quartile, and only 47 percent of students in the bottom quartile.

²⁸ "ACPS Secondary (6-12) Grading Scale." Alexandria City Public Schools.
<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/technology/aaa/grading-guidelines-6-12.pdf>

Figure 2.8: “Did you have an IAP during the 2011-2012 school year?”
 (Students categorized by 2011-2012 grade point average)



As illustrated in the following figures, **higher levels of academic achievement did not necessarily translate into more positive perceptions of IAPs**. In fact, students in the top quartile appeared least satisfied with both IAPs in general and the creation process. Students in the second quartile, however, did express higher degrees of satisfaction in both respects than their peers in the third and bottom quartiles. In terms of overall ratings, students in the top quartile also proved less likely to refer to IAPs as above average or excellent than students in other quartiles.

Figure 2.9: “I was satisfied with the process used to create my IAP” (by 2011-2012 GPA)**Figure 2.10: “Overall, I was satisfied with my IAP” (by 2011-2012 GPA)****Figure 2.11: “Overall, how would you rate the quality of the IAP as a resource for improving your academic success” (by 2011-2012 GPA)**

Additional analysis looking at student growth in GPA between 2010-11 and 2011-12 can be viewed in Appendix B, Figures B.109-B.112.

IAPs AND COUNSELORS

The IAP process assigns significant roles to both counselors and teachers. Counselors act as case managers, scheduling pre-conferences that foster relationships and encourage students to assume ownership of academic and personal goals. Then, counselors hold

formal IAP conferences with students. Whenever possible, parents and teachers also attend. Afterwards, counselors monitor students' progress, offering support and, if necessary, recommending interventions. To prevent individuals from becoming overburdened, **TC Williams hired five additional counselors**—four to work with students in grades 9 through 12 (at a total cost of \$310,933 in Fiscal Year 2012) and one to assist ELL students in the newly-created International Academy (at a cost of \$65,757).²⁹ The school hoped to keep each counselor's caseload to fewer than 200 students. As shown in the following figure, in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, average caseloads remained below 200 in every grade level. Despite increasing slightly for grades 9 and 12, the average case load actually declined by more than 10 percent for counselors assigned to grades 10 and 11.

Figure 2.12: Average Case Load for Counselors (By Grade Level)

GRADE	2010-2011 ³⁰	2011-2012 ³¹	ANNUAL CHANGE	
			NUMBER	PERCENT
9	172	179	7	4.1
10	181	158	-23	-12.7
11	177	158	-19	-10.7
12	152	154	2	1.3
ELL	---	166	---	---

Source: Alexandria City Public Schools

In the fall 2012 staff survey conducted by Hanover Research, 45 percent of the 11 responding counselors acknowledged having a reduced caseload in 2011-2012. At the same time, roughly 18 percent of respondents did not experience a decline in caseload, and an equivalent share (18 percent) remained uncertain as to any change in caseload over the past year. When asked to comment on changes in caseloads, several counselors clearly welcomed the reduction in students served, emphasizing that fewer cases results in more attention paid to individual students. A few counselors, however, voiced frustration that meetings and administrative tasks continue to demand a significant amount of time, distracting from the mission of advising students.

In 2011-2012, the school also welcomed an **assistant director of counseling**. The assistant director, who earned \$126,990 in Fiscal Year 2012, oversaw programs to engage parents and reach out to the community.³² A few of the events involving parents included: orientation for rising ninth and tenth graders, back to school night, college testing information night, college fair, financial aid workshop, and recognition programs for students, in general, and seniors, in particular.³³ Some community-related initiatives consisted of facilitating learning exchanges between TC students and students from

²⁹ "PLA Budget Revised." Alexandria City Public Schools. July 24, 2012. PLA Budget Revised 6.19.12.pdf

³⁰ "Counselor to Student Ratio (as of December 2010)." Alexandria City Public Schools.

<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw-transformation/counselor-ratio-2010.php>

³¹ "TC Williams High School Counselor Caseloads 2011-2012." Alexandria City Public Schools.

<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw-transformation/counselor-ratio-2011.pdf>

³² "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

³³ "Initial End of Year Report on School Counseling Transformation Implementation." 2012. Alexandria City Public Schools. 2012 EOY Counseling Transformation Report.doc

Scotland (in collaboration with the Alexandria Sister Cities Committee) and Sweden (in collaboration with the Office of the Mayor of Alexandria) and partnering with the City of Alexandria Gang Task Force, Tenants and Workers United, the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, the School Counseling Leadership Team, and the Youth Services Coordinating Council.³⁴

IAPS AND TEACHERS

As noted above, **mathematics and English teachers** make important contributions to IAPs as well. Teachers collect and analyze achievement data in order to identify each student's strengths and weaknesses in a given content area. Teachers also participate in IAP conferences. An end-of-year survey conducted by the mathematics department reveals that a conference typically requires between 20 minutes and an hour of a teacher's time.³⁵ In the meetings, teachers assisted students with goal setting and the formation of action plans. Although the teachers also kept track of the students' progress after the conferences, such monitoring occurred on an ad hoc or informal basis, as opposed to in formal meetings. Mathematics teachers, for instance, referred to casual conversations with counselors, efforts to inform parents of student progress, and records of students receiving additional instruction after school.³⁶ Members of the English department, meanwhile, noted that "[m]onitoring generally took place as part of daily teacher-student interaction."³⁷

STAFF SURVEY

In the fall 2012 staff survey conducted by Hanover Research, approximately one-third of the 196 respondents participated in the creation of a student IAP during 2011-2012. Participation rates varied, based on a respondent's role. For example, 75 percent of counselors participated, compared to 86 percent of English teachers and 100 percent of mathematics teachers. When asked whether or not the school provided sufficient time for staff to work on IAPs, 89 percent of mathematics teachers and 78 percent of English teachers agreed. In contrast, only 22 percent of counselors found the allotted time sufficient.

The following figure indicates the extent to which all participating staff agreed with a series of statements regarding IAPs. A full analysis of the responses appears in Figures A.20-A.37 of Appendix A. As seen in the figure, staff viewed IAPs much less positively than students. None of the statements elicited a combined rate of agreement in excess of 30 percent. With that in mind, staff appeared most satisfied with the IAP's ability to facilitate collaboration with other counselors (30 percent agreed or strongly agreed), help students understand areas requiring improvement (28 percent agreed or strongly agreed), and create opportunities to work alongside parents (26 percent agreed or strongly agreed). Meanwhile,

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Hall, P., Cohen, M., Kaput, S., and Munson, D. 2012. "End of Year Report on Transformation Implementation - Math." Alexandria City Public Schools. End of Year Report.Math.pdf

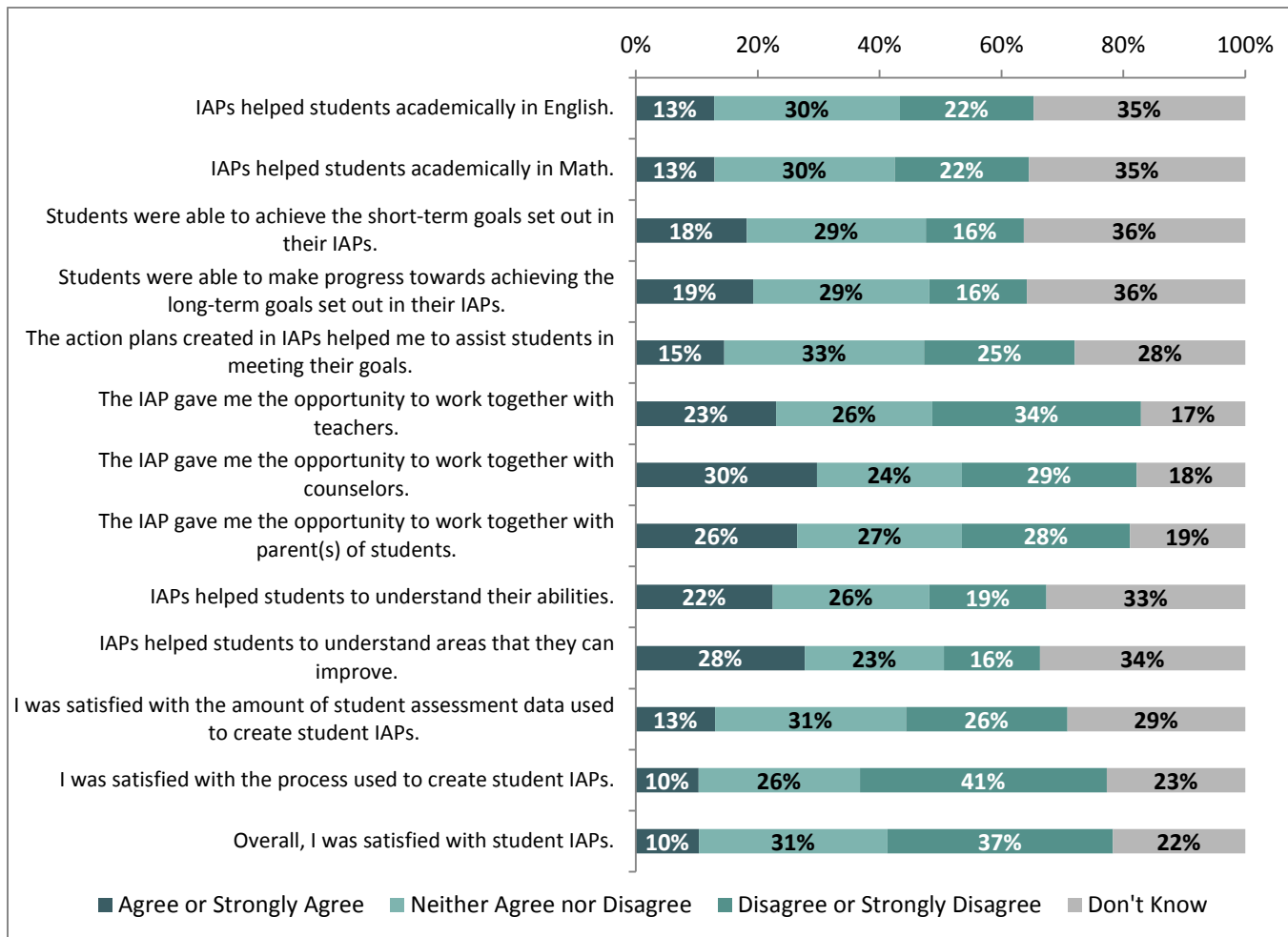
³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Taylor, K. and Eaton, M. 2012. "End of Year Report on Transformation Implementation." Alexandria City Public Schools. Report.pdf

only 13 percent of staff expressed satisfaction with the use of student data in the creation of IAPs. Thirteen percent also viewed IAPs as helping students academically in English and mathematics. Overall, only 10 percent of staff felt satisfied with the process of creating IAPs, with an equal percentage satisfied with IAPs in general.

When asked to reflect on IAPs in an open-ended question, multiple staff members noted that students did not take the documents seriously. Staff also mentioned that little formal monitoring of student progress occurs and that students face no consequences for failing to comply with an IAP's provisions. Such views proved consistent with the opinions expressed by students, teachers, and counselors in the fall 2012 focus groups moderated by Hanover Research. Despite appreciating the opportunity to meet and connect with counselors, students generally did not re-visit the IAP after the initial meetings. Counselors also valued the one-on-one sessions with students and welcomed the chance to get to know students individually, adding that the students enjoyed sharing personal interests and receiving encouragement.

Figure 2.13: Staff Opinions on IAPs, Fall 2012 Survey



In an attempt to gain greater insight into the perception of IAPs among staff, we examined the extent to which opinions of IAPs differed with the length of a staff member's tenure at TC Williams. More specifically, we placed each staff member into one of four groups based on his or her length of service at the school: five years or less; six to ten years; 11 to 15 years; and more than 15 years. The questions studied align with the items discussed previously in the context of student demographics and GPA growth, namely: helpfulness of IAPs in English; helpfulness of IAPs in mathematics; satisfaction with the process of IAP creation; satisfaction with IAPs in general; and overall rating of IAPs as an academic resource. The following five figures illustrate how levels of agreement or rating varied with staff tenure.

In the case of the first four figures, we note that, irrespective of tenure, the percentage of staff expressing disagreement generally exceeded the percentage in agreement. With respect to the usefulness of IAPs in English and mathematics, the gap between the shares in agreement and disagreement typically ranged between 10 and 13 percent. In the context of satisfaction with the process of IAP creation and the plans in general, the gap widened to between 29 and 37 percent.

We did, however, detect a few deviations from such patterns worth noting. Among staff with more than 15 years of experience at TC Williams, a greater share agreed than disagreed that IAPs help students academically in English and mathematics. Such staff members also viewed the process of IAP creation and the plans in general somewhat less negatively than others with less tenure. Although a greater share of staff members with 15 years or more at the school expressed dissatisfaction than satisfaction in both cases, the differences proved much narrower than those observed with fewer years. In fact, the gap equaled 12 percentage points in the case of IAP creation and 8 percentage points in the case of IAPs in general, compared to gaps of roughly 30 percentage points found for other staff members.

Overall ratings of IAPs echoed the trends noted in the preceding paragraphs. In particular, a larger percentage of staff in all four categories referred to IAPs as either below average or very poor than above average or excellent. The gap ranged from 26 percentage points for staff with 5 or fewer years at the school to 33 percentage points for staff with 11 to 15 years. However, once again, staff with 15 years or more at TC Williams evaluated IAPs less negatively than their less-tenured peers. More specifically, 19 percent of staff with 15 years or more rated IAPs as above average or excellent compared to 31 percent who described IAPs as below average or very poor—a gap of only 12 percentage points, significantly lower than the differences found for staff with fewer years at TC Williams.

Figure 2.14: Staff Tenure at TC Williams and Agreement with “IAPs helped students academically in English”

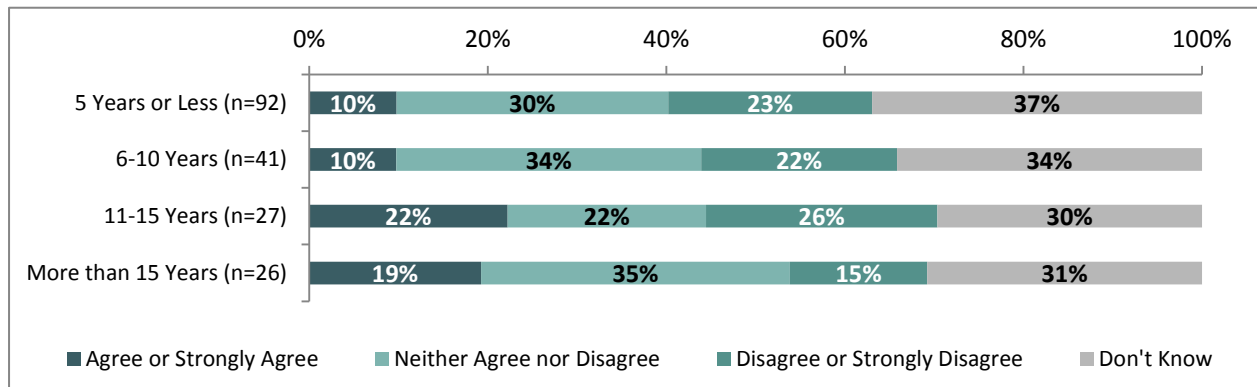


Figure 2.15: Staff Tenure at TC Williams and Agreement with “IAPs helped students academically in Math”

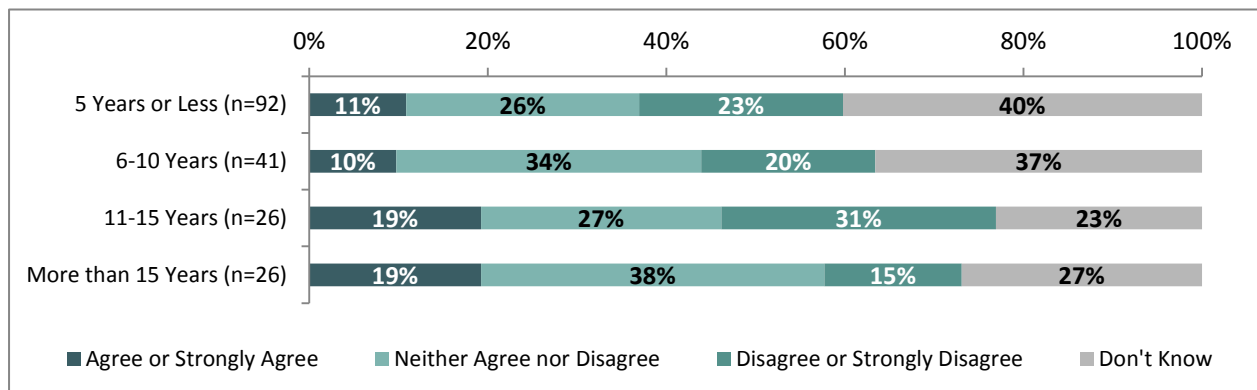


Figure 2.16: Staff Tenure at TC Williams and Agreement with “I was satisfied with the process used to create student IAPs”

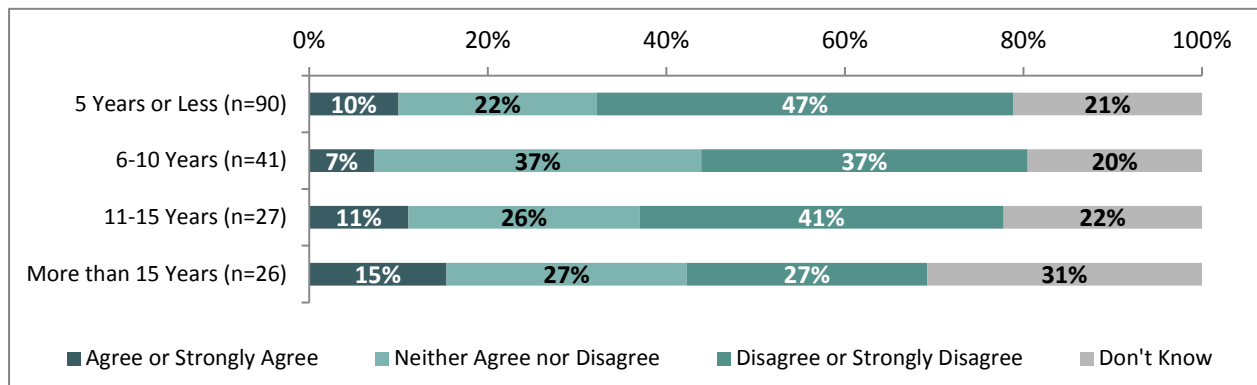


Figure 2.17: Staff Tenure at TC Williams and Agreement with “Overall, I was satisfied with student IAPs”

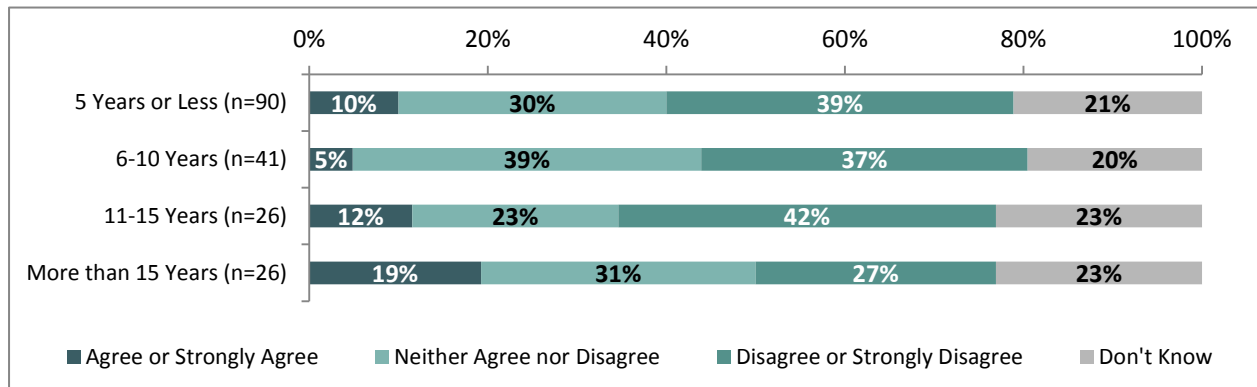
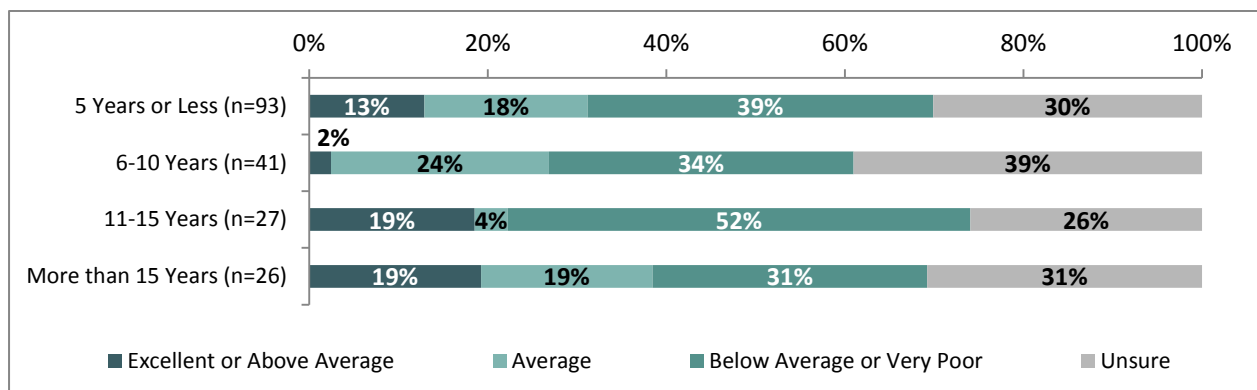


Figure 2.18: Staff Tenure at TC Williams and Overall Rating of IAPs as an Academic Resource



IAPs only represented the first step in the implementation process, however, and TC Williams' commitment to reaching all students warrants commendation. In 2012-2013, the school will replace IAPs with **Individual Career and Academic Plans**, or ICAPs. To facilitate a completion rate of 100 percent, the school will incorporate an advisory program into the weekly calendar, adding the period to the Titan Time program (discussed in further detail in the sub-section related to School Support Structures). During the first quarter, advisory periods will focus on the plans, providing students with opportunities to prepare goals. Each ICAP will identify a post-secondary path, based on the student's talents and interests.³⁸ To assist the student in fulfilling his or her college and career aspirations, the ICAP will establish academic goals in related content areas. Any student identified as at-risk will receive an "intervention plan" as well.³⁹

³⁸ "Alexandria City Public Schools Middle School Annual Report." 2012. Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://eboard.acps.k12.va.us/attachments/a658cdf5-bdaf-4291-b0a5-64f66385bf7b.pdf>

³⁹ "TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update." Op. cit.

FIFTH PERIOD

As with counselors, **TC Williams increased the number of teachers** to account for the substantial time commitment associated with IAPs. In 2010-2011, the school hired five additional teachers in both mathematics and English. In Fiscal Year 2012, the additional personnel cost the mathematics and English departments \$317,808 and \$373,838, respectively.⁴⁰ As the number of instructors grew, each teacher benefitted from a reduced course load. Thus, mathematics and English teachers gained access to a non-instructional planning period, also known as the **“Fifth Period.”**⁴¹ An end-of-year departmental survey noted that mathematics teachers used the Fifth Period for a variety of purposes, including: developing IAP goals, attending IAP conferences, participating in subject area meetings, writing common assessments, analyzing achievement data, and providing support and remediation to students.⁴² In 2012-2013, mathematics teachers aim to focus Fifth Period efforts on providing “push-in” support to students in Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry.⁴³

In an end-of-year departmental report, English teachers said that IAP responsibilities featured prominently in the use of the Fifth Period. Yet, some teachers, especially those who work primarily with seniors, had fewer IAP-related duties to complete. Such teachers tended to spend the Fifth Period engaged in “grading, planning, collaborating, and communicating.”⁴⁴ Respondents also mentioned that the Fifth Period enabled teachers to devote greater attention to the evaluation of student writing, an opportunity for which several instructors appeared truly appreciative.⁴⁵

The fall 2012 survey administered by Hanover Research offers additional insight into the usage of Fifth Period. For both English and mathematics teachers, “lesson planning” represented the most common activity. In fact, roughly 86 percent of English teachers and 83 percent of mathematics teachers reported that Fifth Period always or often involved lesson planning. “Grading” constituted the second most frequent usage for both sets of teachers. However, English teachers used Fifth Period to evaluate student work noticeably more than mathematics teachers. A larger percentage of English teachers also used Fifth Period for “analyzing student assessment data.” Interestingly, only 35 percent of English teachers and 39 percent of mathematics teachers claimed that “creating IAPs” always or often occurred during Fifth Period. “Other” uses of Fifth Period included meeting and collaborating with colleagues, observing other teachers in the classroom, preparing for assessments (e.g., AP and SOLs), and conducting professional development.

When given an opportunity to discuss Fifth Period in an open-ended question, a number of teachers expressed appreciation for the additional time. Fifth Period enabled the teachers to prepare IAPs and hold related meetings with students, parents, and counselors. Several

⁴⁰ “PLA Budget Revised.” Op. cit.

⁴¹ “Fifth Period” refers to time in the school day that teachers otherwise would have used to teach a fifth class.

⁴² Hall, et. al. Op. cit.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Taylor and Eaton. Op. cit.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

teachers also felt that Fifth Period enhanced instruction by offering additional time to plan lessons, give more detailed and personalized feedback on graded work, and work individually with struggling students. Some teachers, however, seemed less enthusiastic and noted that, although Fifth Period contributed to fewer classes, the remaining classes contained more students.

The following figure illustrates the ways in which the 20 English teachers who responded to the fall 2012 survey typically utilized the Fifth Period. A similar figure for the 18 mathematics teachers who replied appears immediately thereafter. For a more detailed presentation of teachers' responses with respect to Fifth Period, please refer to Figures A.38-A.44 in Appendix A.

Figure 2.19: English Teachers' Use of Fifth Period (Fall 2012 Survey)

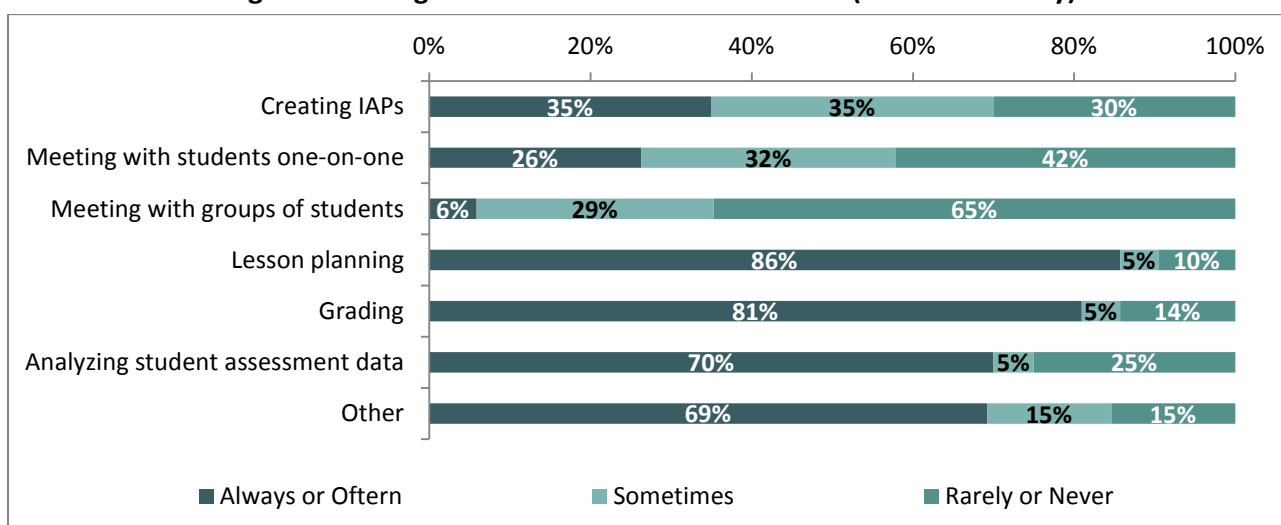
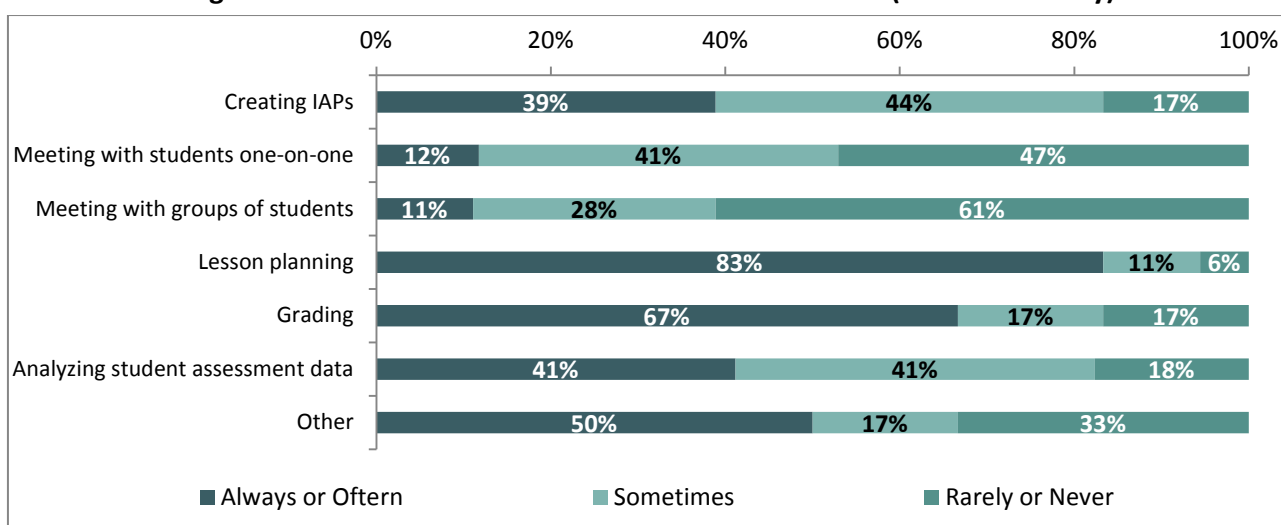


Figure 2.20: Mathematics Teachers' Use of Fifth Period (Fall 2012 Survey)



In the next set of graphs, we relate the frequency with which English and mathematics teachers reportedly used Fifth Period for IAP creation and teachers' perceptions of IAPs as captured in the five key survey questions examined previously – helpfulness of IAPs in English; helpfulness of IAPs in mathematics; satisfaction with the process of IAP creation; satisfaction with IAPs in general; and overall rating of IAPs as an academic resource. The following graphs combine responses from English and mathematics teachers. We provide separate results for each set of teachers in Figures A.46-A55 of Appendix A.

The following graphs indicate **no consistent relationship between usage of Fifth Period time for IAP creation and the degree to which teachers view such plans positively**. Irrespective of the time allocated to IAPs, the percentage of teachers disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the IAP-related statements greatly exceeds the percentage expressing at least some level of agreement. If we focus solely on the shares of teachers in agreement, however, we find limited evidence that greater attention paid to IAPs in Fifth Period resulted in more positive perceptions in two instances: IAPs' usefulness in mathematics and overall levels of satisfaction with the plans. Fifth Period time spent also appeared to impact teachers' IAP ratings. None of the teachers who reportedly rarely or never spent Fifth Period time on IAPs rated the plans as excellent or above average. In contrast, 7.1 percent of those who sometimes and 14.3 percent of those who always or often used Fifth Period for IAPs referred to the plans as excellent or above average.

Figure 2.21: Relationship between Use of 5th Period for IAP Creation and Agreement with “IAPs helped students academically in English”

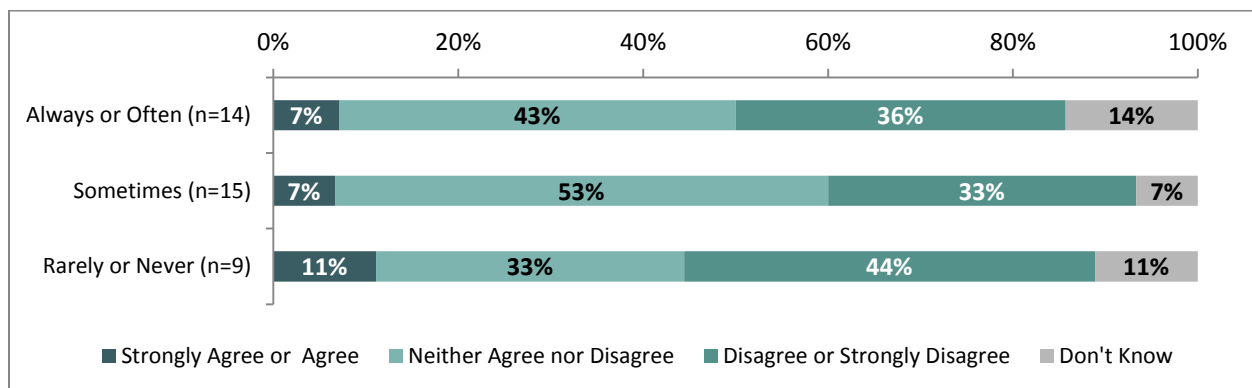


Figure 2.22: Relationship between Use of 5th Period for IAP Creation and Agreement with “IAPs helped students academically in Math”

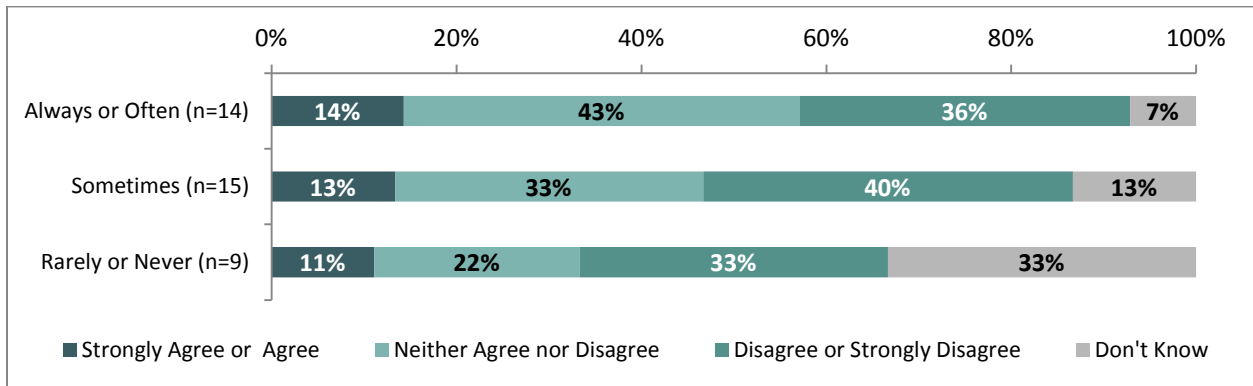


Figure 2.23: Relationship between Use of 5th Period for IAP Creation and Agreement with “I was satisfied with the process used to create student IAPs”

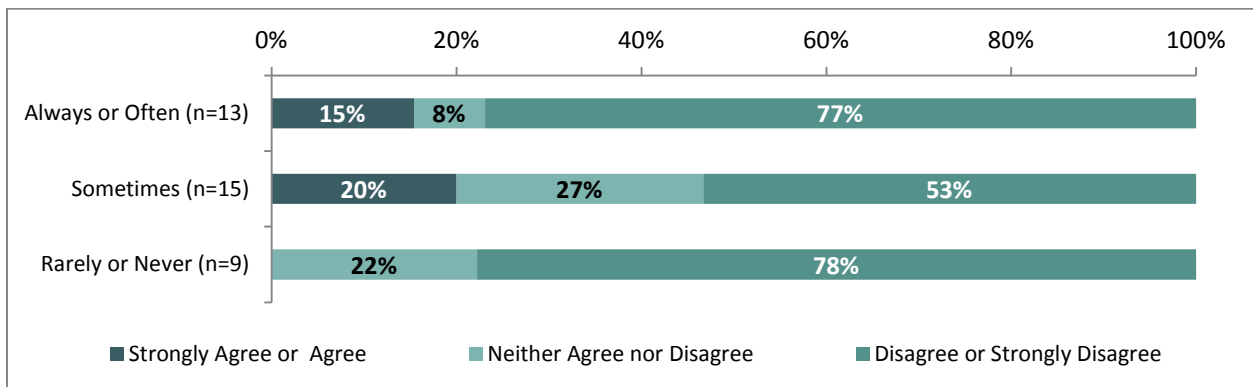


Figure 2.24: Relationship between Use of 5th Period for IAP Creation and Agreement with “Overall, I was satisfied with student IAPs”

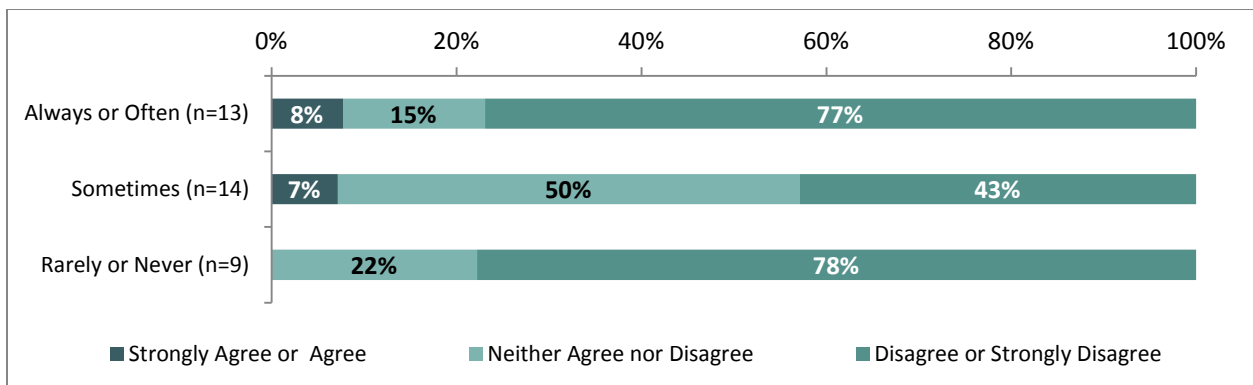
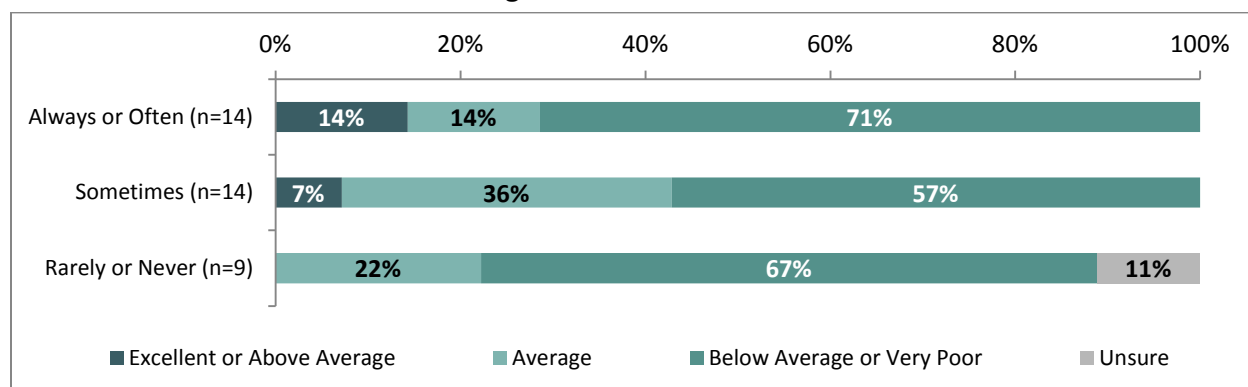


Figure 2.25: Relationship between Use of 5th Period for IAP Creation and Overall Rating of IAP as an Academic Resource



OTHER STAFF ADDITIONS

The School Improvement Grant provided one-year funding for the salaries of three other staff members in 2011-2012.⁴⁶ The first, an ELL teacher, assisted students as TC Williams launched the International Academy. Similar efforts to establish a more inclusive learning environment for individuals with special needs led to the decision to add a teacher to work with special education students. In both cases, the teachers provided direct academic support and contributed to a further reduction in student-teacher ratios. The ELL and special education teachers resulted in expenditures of \$70,164 and \$78,899, respectively.⁴⁷ A third staff member, a social worker, ensured that students enrolled in the Interim Education Program received necessary support services. Students participate in the program temporarily, in most cases while removed from the school for behavioral or disciplinary reasons.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANS (PLPs)

In 2011-2012, all staff at TC Williams completed a Professional Learning Plan (PLP).⁴⁸ Seen as a tool to promote growth, each PLP contains two goals. One goal relates to student achievement, while the second goal involves 21 hours of activities conducted in the context of a Professional Learning Team (PLT). According to the mathematics department's end-of-year report, the PLP enabled teachers to obtain training in new instructional methods and approaches to collaboration. In terms of the impact on students, teachers found that students appeared more supportive and formed more consistent expectations.⁴⁹ Instructional techniques featured prominently in the PLPs of English teachers, as well. Some of the methods explored included mastery objectives and essential questions.⁵⁰ With respect to the PLTs, members of the English department found the activities useful.⁵¹

⁴⁶ "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update." Op. cit.

⁴⁹ Hall, et. al. Op. cit.

⁵⁰ Taylor and Eaton. Op. cit.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Mathematics teachers concurred, stating that the PLTs created opportunities to work collectively when implementing the new curriculum, developing transfer tasks, and exploring different instructional methods.⁵²

Lastly, three instructional coaches, costing a combined \$289,815, assisted teachers in implementing the school's new curriculum.⁵³ Teachers surveyed at the end of the year by the mathematics department, however, believed that the module training had “little to no impact” on instructional practices, due largely to the delivery method (referred to as “sit and get”).⁵⁴ The teachers suggested that the coaches consider differentiating the training provided to reflect both the content and types of students taught. In 2012-2013, the school will retain only two instructional coaches at a total cost of \$182,571, or \$107,244 less than in 2011-2012.⁵⁵

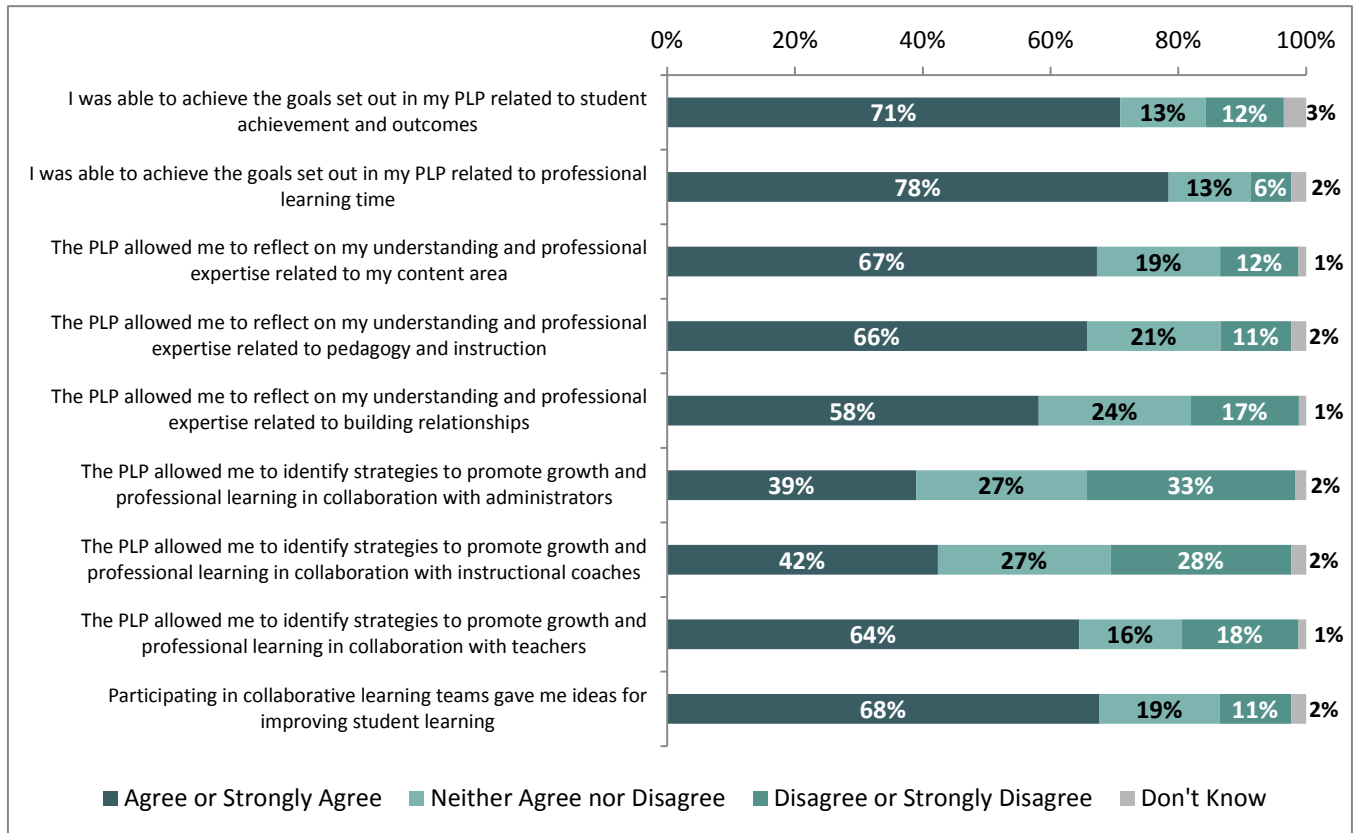
In the fall 2012 survey administered by Hanover Research, 92 percent of the 189 respondents completed a PLP in 2011-2012. On average, respondents spent approximately 43 hours on professional learning. The following figure indicates the extent to which responding staff members agree with statements regarding PLPs. Figures A.57-A.65 in Appendix A reveal levels of agreement for counselors, English teachers and mathematics teachers. Among all staff, respondents agreed or strongly agreed most with the ability to fulfill PLPs goals relating to professional learning time (78 percent) and student achievement (71 percent). In contrast, only a minority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that collaboration with administrators or instructional coaches assisted in the identification of strategies to promote growth and professional learning.

⁵² Hall, et. al. Op. cit.

⁵³ “PLA Budget Revised.” Op. cit.

⁵⁴ Hall, et. al. Op. cit.

⁵⁵ “PLA 2012-13 Planning Budget Revised.” Alexandria City Public Schools. July 24, 2012. PLA 2012-13 Planning Budget Revised 7.19.12.pdf

Figure 2.26: Staff Opinions of PLPs, Fall 2012 Survey

When prompted by an open-response question, respondents noted that the PLP process appeared somewhat front-loaded, with greater emphasis on the purely administrative requirements related to PLP creation and submission. Several respondents voiced frustration that the administration provided minimal feedback on the contents of PLPs and made little effort to monitor implementation. In fact, a few respondents expressed a desire for administrators to meet with staff periodically to discuss PLP-related activities conducted to date. Such opinions echoed the sentiments expressed in the fall 2012 focus group conducted by Hanover Research. Staff noted that the PLP process seems predominantly teacher-focused, meaning that the sessions often lacked content directly-applicable to counselors' responsibilities, for example. As such, the counselors advocated for a separate program more reflective of their needs.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOALS

The transformation process requires careful accounting and monitoring of student performance to ensure continual improvement in achievement. To that end, students complete a variety of assessments during the school year. **With respect to reading, three research-proven tools allow TC Williams to measure proficiency levels: Empower3000, the**

Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), and Istation.⁵⁶ Empower3000 and the SRI only assessed students once during the school year (in the fall and spring, respectively). Istation, however, permits monthly evaluations in four reading domains: word analysis, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.⁵⁷ Based on the results, each student gets placed into an instructional tier: 1 (performing at grade level), 2 (performing moderately below grade level and in need of intervention), or 3 (performing seriously below grade level and in need of intensive intervention).⁵⁸ Thus, Istation facilitates alignment of progress monitoring and instructional interventions. As of the end of November, 2011, 120 students on the state's reading "watch list" tested as either Tier 2 or Tier 3.⁵⁹ The school directed the students toward extended learning opportunities, including the Writing Center and the Saturday Learning Academy. Roughly 85 percent of the watch list students showed signs of progress, as evidenced by movement toward a higher achievement tier.⁶⁰ In 2011-2012, Istation cost the school \$6,500 to implement.⁶¹

With respect to math, the school relies on the Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) and Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test (ARDT) to gauge proficiency levels during the school year.⁶² Students completed the SMI in late October, the first time TC Williams administered the test. Earlier that month, students took the ARDT pre-test. Though students only sit the ARDT twice in a given school year (in the fall and the spring), the test serves a similar purpose for mathematics instruction as the Istation assessment does for reading. In particular, ARDT identifies students in the greatest need of intervention. As of the end of November, 2011, ARDT results suggested that 95 percent of TC Williams' students on the state's mathematics "watch list" fell below the intervention standard.⁶³ When appropriate, teachers referred students to the Mathematics Center and the Saturday Learning Academy. The school expected 60 to 80 students to obtain additional mathematics instruction after school through the 8th Period program.⁶⁴ The school spent \$3,500 on ARDT in Fiscal Year 2012.⁶⁵

Teachers used two computer-based programs to provide supplemental instruction to struggling mathematics students: Apangea and HELP Math. For example, roughly 200 students, enrolled in ELL Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, accessed Apangea.⁶⁶ The students logged a total of 129 days, 15 hours, 26 minutes, and 28 seconds. Case studies incorporating Apangea into an ELL Algebra course and HELP Math into an ELL Algebra Readiness course, however, found "no direct correlation between improvement in grades

⁵⁶ "TC Williams 2011-2012 Testing Schedule." 2011. Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw/testing-calendar.pdf>

⁵⁷ "ISIP Advanced Reading." Istation. <http://www.istation.com/Assessment/ISIPAdvancedReading>

⁵⁸ "ISIP and Istation Reading User's Guide." 2009. Istation. <http://tcoles-rpsitrt.pbworks.com/f/getFile.pdf>

⁵⁹ "November Quarterly Form: TC Williams High School." 2011. Alexandria City Public Schools. Quarterly report Q1.pdf

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

⁶² "TC Williams 2011-2012 Testing Schedule." Op. cit.

⁶³ "November Quarterly Form: TC Williams High School." Op. cit.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

⁶⁶ Hall, et. al. Op. cit.

and computerized intervention program use.”⁶⁷ The school decided against continuing Apangea in 2012-2013.

TC Williams evaluated students in other ways as well. Students taking courses linked to SOL assessments completed **criterion-referenced tests (CRTs)** in late January.⁶⁸ CRTs track student progress and achievement within the new ACPS curriculum. Teachers discussed the possibility of creating incentives to encourage students to take CRTs more seriously in the future, such as linking performance to second-quarter course grades. As noted in Section I, the **SOL tests** represent the most prominent means of assessing achievement levels, particularly in the core subjects of reading and mathematics. Students enrolled in **Advanced Placement (AP)** courses typically opt to sit for the examinations in mid-May. Students interested in post-secondary education also sit for the **PSAT** as sophomores and either the **SAT** or the **ACT** as juniors and seniors.

TC Williams understands the need to **analyze the data produced by multiple assessments accurately and effectively** in order to inform instruction. The testing coordinator, David Serensits, assumed the additional responsibilities associated with serving as the school’s primary data analyst. In recognition of his efforts, he earned an additional \$10,765 in compensation.⁶⁹ In addition to coordinating all testing and managing the Istation process, he collected, analyzed, and interpreted key metrics for the Transformation and Leadership committees. In 2012-2013, TC Williams will train all personnel to access student data using Schoolnet.⁷⁰ Moreover, the weekly advisory period incorporated into Titan Time will enable teachers to analyze data and discuss results with individual students.

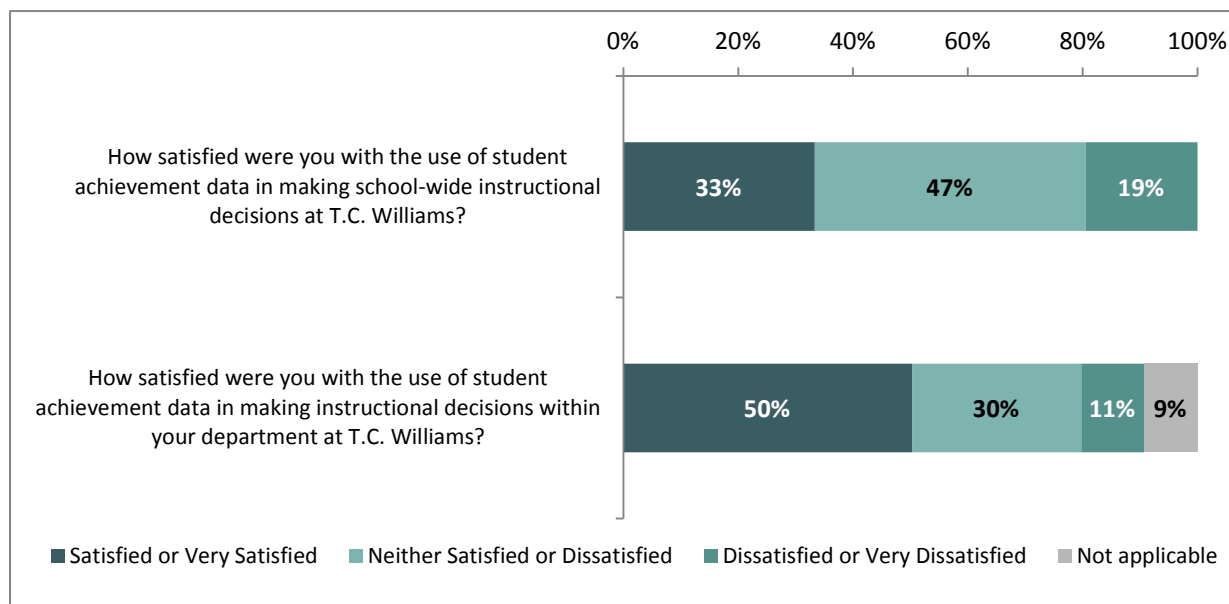
The fall 2012 survey administered by Hanover Research asked TC Williams staff to rate the extent to which various assessments (e.g., SRI) contributed to an understanding of student progress and achievement during the 2011-2012 school year. The results appear in Figures A.68-A.84 of Appendix A. The following figure reveals levels of staff satisfaction with the use of student achievement data in school-wide and departmental decision-making. Only one third of respondents felt satisfied or very satisfied with school-wide efforts to incorporate student achievement data into the decision-making process. Departmental efforts inspired more confidence, with half of respondents expressing satisfaction. Nevertheless, relatively low satisfaction rates suggest substantial room for improvement.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

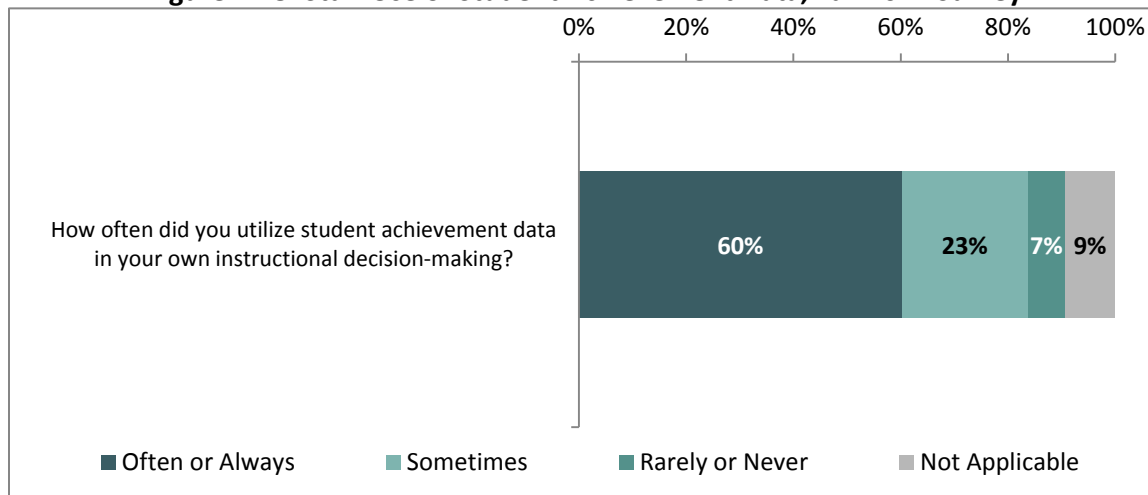
⁶⁸ “TC Williams 2011-2012 Testing Schedule.” Op. cit.

⁶⁹ “PLA Budget Revised.” Op. cit.

⁷⁰ “TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update.” Op. cit.

Figure 2.27: Staff Opinions of Student Achievement Data Use, Fall 2012 Survey

In the following figure, we reveal staff responses to a query about the frequency with which student achievement data influenced instructional choices on a personal level. As seen in the graph, 60 percent of respondents acknowledged that student achievement data often or always informed instruction. A further 23 percent also referred to student data when making decisions, albeit on a less regular basis. Only 7 percent rarely or never used student data. When asked in an open-response question to discuss the role of data in decision-making, multiple staff members noted that, in 2011-2012, teachers frequently lacked access to student scores. Other issues mentioned by several respondents included opportunities to provide students with more substantive feedback such as areas for improvement.

Figure 2.28: Staff Use of Student Achievement Data, Fall 2012 Survey

SCHOOL SUPPORT STRUCTURES

WRITING AND MATHEMATICS CENTERS

TC Williams invites students to use **Writing and Mathematics Centers** for both remediation and enrichment purposes. The **Mathematics Center** set four goals for 2011-2012: targeting the students in greatest need of support; enabling students to master areas of deficit; helping students to understand subjects in current mathematics courses; and building the skills needed to succeed in class and on SOL tests.⁷¹ The Center welcomes students before school, during lunch, and after school. Teachers staff the Center along with Math Fellows, or peer tutors.⁷² Though the school allows students to visit the Center voluntarily, students often attend when assigned by a teacher as part of an IAP or for additional instruction. When surveyed by the department at the end of 2011-2012, mathematics teachers stated that students who used the Center received help and support.⁷³ Though a “great resource,” teachers noted that the Center remains “extremely underutilized.”⁷⁴

With respect to the **Writing Center**, a departmental end-of-year survey of 20 English teachers and related staff revealed wide enthusiasm for the facility.⁷⁵ Teachers reportedly used a variety of methods to encourage attendance, such as giving additional credits to students who sought feedback on projects. The Writing Center documented 634 visits in 2011-2012, with 85 students obtaining assistance on more than one occasion.⁷⁶ According to the Fiscal Year 2012 budget, stipends paid to teachers staffing the Writing and Mathematics Centers totaled \$9,689.⁷⁷

Of the 1,080 students surveyed by Hanover Research in fall 2012, approximately 31 percent visited either the Writing Center or the Mathematics Center in 2011-2012. The average number of visits to the Writing Center was 5.9, lower than the average of 8.3 visits reported to the Mathematics Center. In Figures B.27-B.40 in Appendix B, we present detailed results of the student responses regarding both Centers. The next figure indicates students’ level of agreement with several statements related to the usefulness of the Writing Center. An equivalent figure pertaining to the Mathematics Center follows immediately thereafter.

Though students viewed both Centers positively, opinions appeared slightly stronger with respect to the Writing Center. For instance, 91 percent of students considered the Writing Center easily accessible, 3 percentage points more than in the case of the Mathematics Center. Similarly, 89 percent of students visiting the Writing Center received the help required, compared to 82 percent of Mathematics Center visitors. Based on past experience, 76 percent of students plan to continue using the Writing Center during 2012-

⁷¹ “TC Williams Math Center.” Alexandria City Public Schools. Math Center.pdf

⁷² “TC Williams High School Math Center: Math Assistance and Tutoring Help.” Alexandria City Public Schools. Math Center Plan.pdf

⁷³ Hall, et. al. Op. cit.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Taylor and Eaton. Op. cit.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “PLA Budget Revised.” Op. cit.

2013, an intended return rate 8 percentage points higher than that reported for the Mathematics Center. The trend persisted when students assigned overall ratings to both facilities. Whereas 73 percent of students rated the Writing Center as above average or excellent, 64 percent of students applied the same rating to the Mathematics Center. Such opinions match the sentiments expressed by the students during the fall 2012 focus groups moderated by Hanover Research. Students spoke with great enthusiasm about prior experiences with the Writing Center, emphasizing that teachers often noticed a significant change in the quality of student work after such visits.

Figure 2.29: Student Opinions on the Writing Center, Fall 2012 Survey

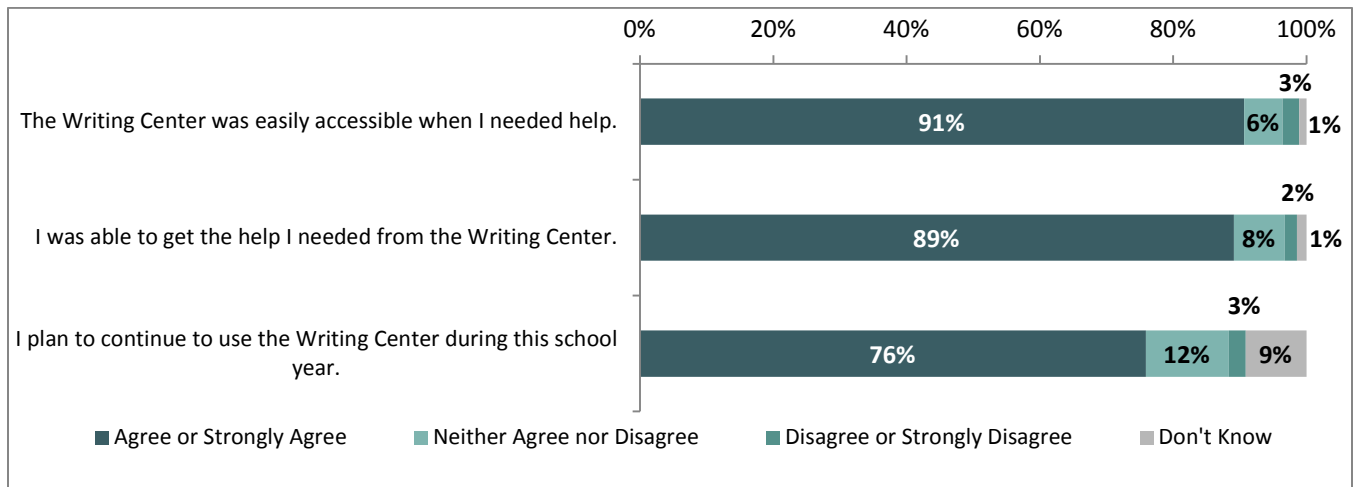
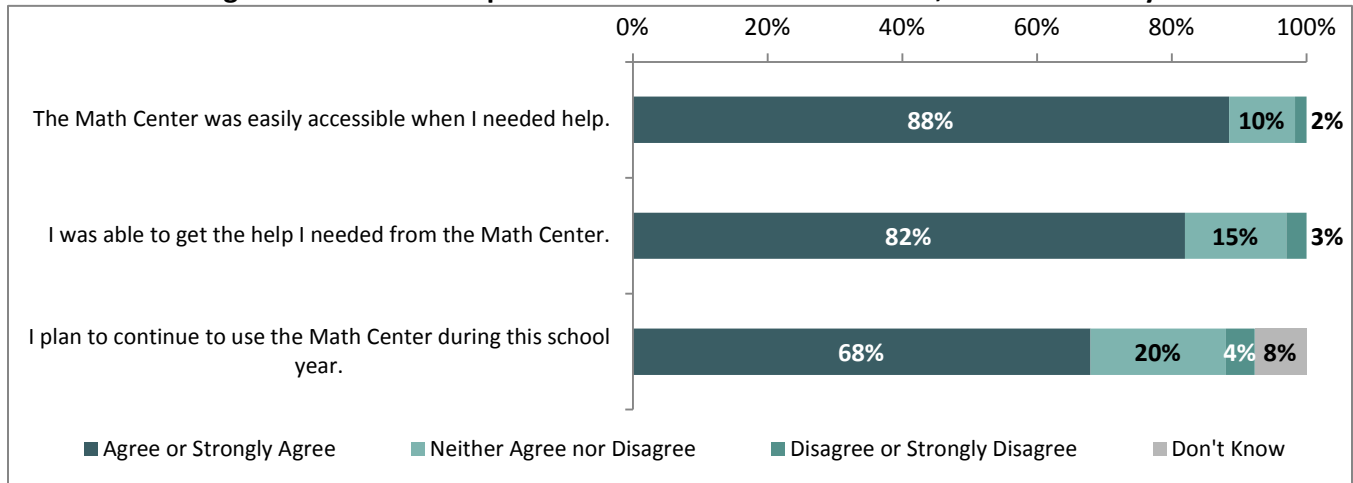


Figure 2.30: Student Opinions on the Mathematics Center, Fall 2012 Survey



In open-response questions, many of the students who used neither facility in 2011-2012 noted a preference for working with their own teachers. Several students also mentioned a lack of information about the services available, while other students referred to insufficient time to visit.

Hanover Research used student responses from the fall 2012 survey and achievement data supplied by ACPS to study the relationship between academic performance and professed usage of the two Centers. Prior to discussing the results, we re-state a few limitations to the analysis. First, as the survey only included students currently enrolled at TC Williams, we lack any means of linking Center usage to the academic outcomes of the 2011-2012 graduating class (i.e., last year's seniors). Second, by necessity, we rely on student self-reporting when identifying the Centers' users. As a result, the accuracy of students' recollections represents another caveat. Third, the survey asked students the following question: "Have you utilized the Writing Center or Mathematics Center at TC Williams?" Thus, to determine whether a student sought assistance from the Writing Center, the Mathematics Center, or both Centers, we referred to the student's estimated number of visits. For example, we classified a student as having used the Writing Center in 2011-2012 if his or her approximate number of visits exceeded zero.

As illustrated in Figure 2.33, **the mean 2011-2012 grade point average (GPA) for students who visited at least one of the Centers exceeded that of students who did not (or could not recall) visiting.** In the case of the Writing Center, the 0.16 point, or 5.5 percent difference proved statistically significant at the 1 percent level. The 0.11 point, or 3.8 percent difference observed for the Mathematics Center, however, did not. Next, we also explored whether or not SOL scores differed significantly with Center usage. The following table reveals mean SOL scores for Center users and non-users in five subjects: Writing, Reading, Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry. As shown in the table, students who visited the Writing Center scored 12.3 points higher in Writing. In contrast, Reading performance proved generally unaffected by Writing Center visitation, with less than one point separating the average scores for users and non-users. With respect to the Mathematics Center, the impact on student performance appeared mixed. On the one hand, users scored 9.6 points higher on average in Algebra 1. On the other hand, non-users scored higher on average in Algebra 2 and Geometry—by 26.7 points and 16.1 points, respectively. The aforementioned results, however, only proved statistically significant in the case of Algebra 2.

Figure 2.31: Writing and Mathematics Center Use and Mean 2011-2012 GPA

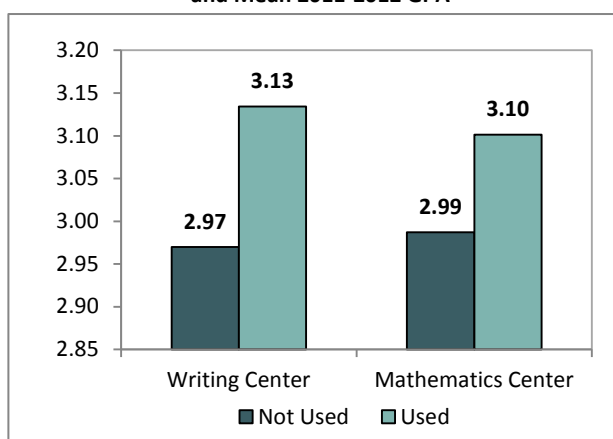
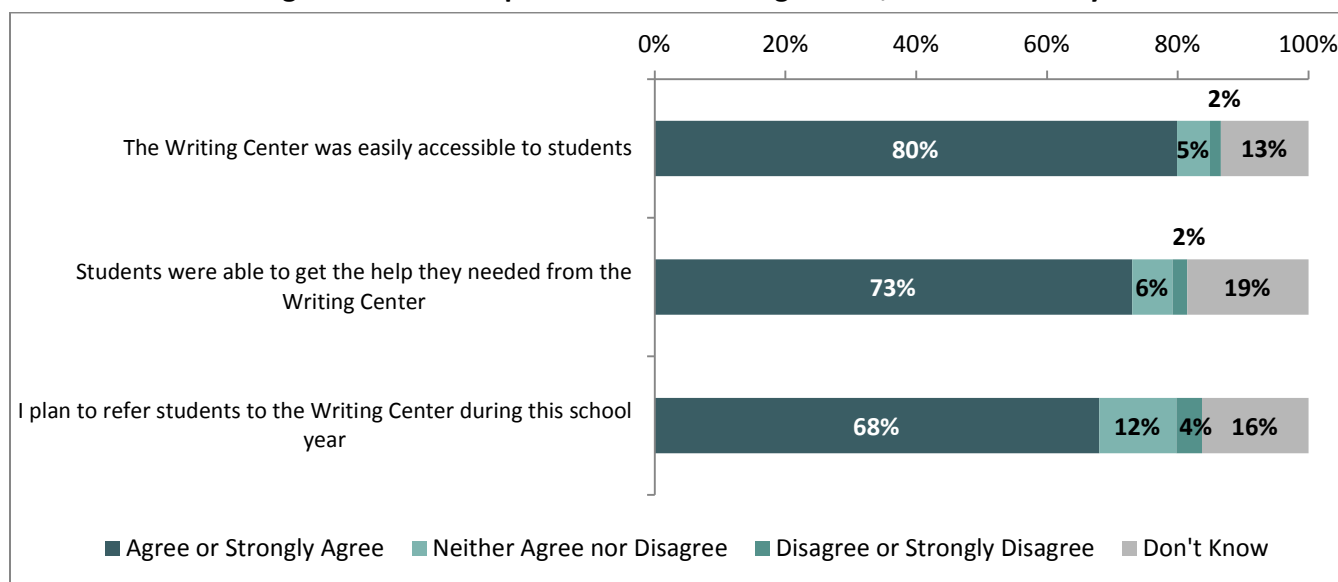


Figure 2.32: Writing and Mathematics Center Use and 2011-2012 SOL Scores

SUBJECT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS		MEAN SOL SCORE		
	DID NOT USE OR DON'T KNOW	USED	DID NOT USE OR DON'T KNOW	USED	DIFFERENCE
WRITING CENTER					
Writing	190	136	487.2	499.5	12.3
Reading	192	136	496.5	496.1	-0.4
MATHEMATICS CENTER					
Algebra 1 ⁷⁸	184	22	396.6	406.2	9.6
Algebra 2	235	80	429.5	402.9	-26.7*
Geometry	298	70	419.7	403.5	-16.1

*denotes statistical significance at the 1 percent level

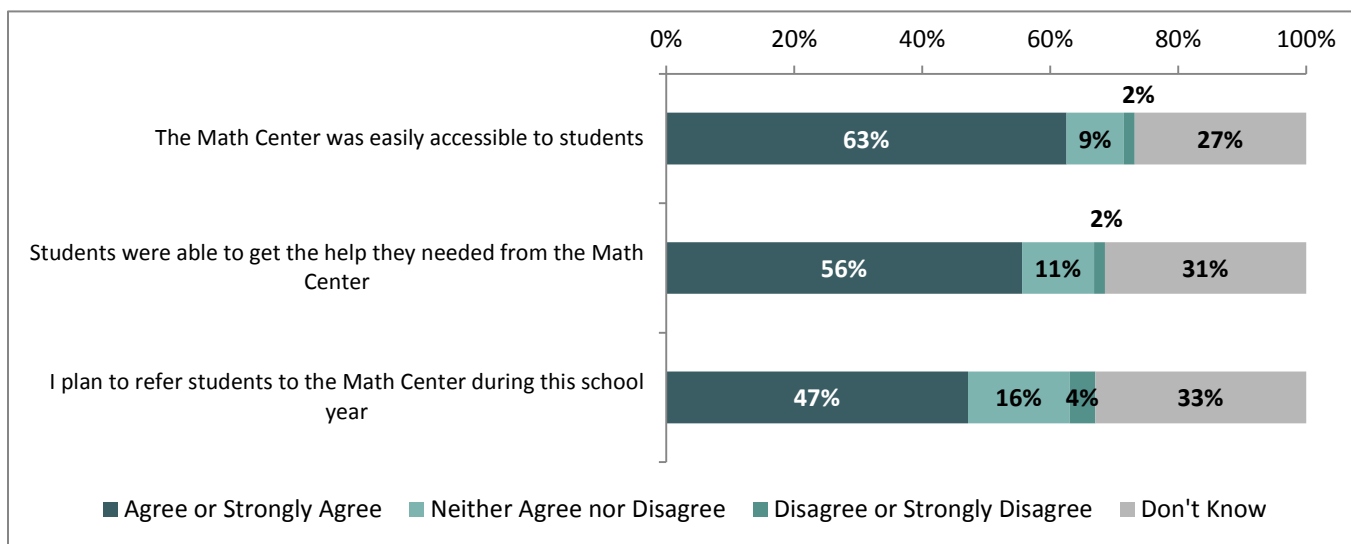
Of the staff surveyed by Hanover Research in fall 2012, roughly 31 percent participated in one of the Centers in 2011-2012. Whereas no counselors participated, roughly equal shares of English teachers (76 percent) and mathematics teachers (78 percent) participated. In Figures A.85-A.97 of Appendix A, we include a full set of results from the portion of the staff survey addressed to the Writing and Mathematics Centers. The following figure indicates levels of agreement with several statements pertaining to the Writing Center. An equivalent figure for the Mathematics Center follows.

Figure 2.33: Staff Opinions on the Writing Center, Fall 2012 Survey

⁷⁸ In reference to students who took the standard form of the Algebra I test: 17 visited the Mathematics Center, scoring 405.5 on average; 138 did not visit or could not recall visiting the Mathematics Center, scoring 397.4 on average. The 8.1-point difference did not prove statistically significant. In reference to students who took the Plain English Algebra test: 5 visited the Mathematics Center, scoring 408.8 on average; 46 did not visit or could not recall visiting the Mathematics Center, scoring 394.2 on average. The 14.6-point difference did not prove statistically significant.

As with the students, the staff perceives the Writing Center more favorably than the Mathematics Center. Approximately 80 percent of staff considered the Writing Center easily accessible, 17 percentage points more than in the case of the Mathematics Center. Moreover, 73 percent of staff felt that students who visited the Writing Center received the help required, compared to 56 percent of Mathematics Center visitors. Based on past experience, 68 percent of staff planned to refer students to the Writing Center during 2012-2013, an intended referral rate 21 percentage points higher than that reported for the Mathematics Center. Overall ratings of the two Centers reflected a similar disparity. Whereas 71 percent of staff rated the Writing Center as above average or excellent, slightly more than half (54 percent) felt the same in reference to the Mathematics Center.

Figure 2.34: Staff Opinions on the Mathematics Center, Fall 2012 Survey



A series of open-ended questions solicited feedback from staff in reference to the Writing and Mathematics Centers. With respect to the Writing Center, respondents referred to the Center as an excellent resource that both reinforces content taught in the classroom and provides individualized support for struggling students. However, a few staff members noted that the Writing Center remains underutilized, especially by underachieving students. Comments in reference to the Mathematics Center also proved generally supportive. Staff members appreciated the availability of an additional support structure and, in particular, applauded the use of peer tutoring. Yet, as with the Writing Center, several respondents lamented the fact that use of the Mathematics Center does not appear more widespread. Moreover, some staff members cited the need to include teachers qualified to assist students with disabilities or special needs. However, based on the responses provided, a major challenge facing both Centers remains many teachers' preference to work with their own students.

BEN CARSON READING ROOM

On January 13, 2012, TC Williams celebrated the opening of the **Ben Carson Reading Room**.⁷⁹ Students enjoy access to the Reading Room during class breaks and after school. A \$10,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation supports both the Reading Room and a Carson Scholars Fund Scholarship.⁸⁰ The Fund's D.C. Metro Chapter helped to secure the award. A groundbreaking initiative, the Reading Room represents the first facility sponsored by the Fund in a high school and the first to feature "assistive technologies" such as e-readers, tablet computers, and interactive whiteboards.⁸¹

As of April 30, 2012, the Reading Room documented 501 visits from 147 different students, or 17 percent of the student body.⁸² Roughly 27 percent of the visits focused primarily on class assignments or homework. The school encouraged visits by awarding prizes to the two students who spent the most minutes in the Reading Room each month.⁸³ In addition, one grand prize winner for the year received a Kindle Fire and a gift card. Reading Room visits proved academically beneficial for students. Whereas 43 percent of tested students recorded gains in reading levels between fall 2011 and spring 2012, 57 percent of Reading Room students saw their scores improve. In fact, almost half of those students earned increases of more than 100 Lexile points, compared to average growth of 25 points for most high school students.⁸⁴

EXPANDED ONLINE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the transformation process, TC Williams encourages students to access additional learning resources online. The school enables students to use an online tutoring program, **Brainfuse**.⁸⁵ Through the site's 24/7 Center, students communicate with live tutors on any academic subject. The site also features two virtual labs. The Writing Lab allows students to upload writing samples and receive constructive feedback, while the Language Lab assists foreign-language learners. In addition to expert assistance, Brainfuse offers several study tools, such as interactive learning games and practice tests. Moreover, the site encourages collaborative learning by permitting students to organize live study sessions with peers or teachers. According to administrators, Brainfuse recorded over 1,500 hours of use by students, including more than 1,600 sessions in mathematics.⁸⁶ TC Williams budgeted \$50,000 for Brainfuse in Fiscal Year 2012.⁸⁷

⁷⁹ "First High Tech Ben Carson Reading Room Unveiled at T. C. Williams High School." Alexandria City Public Schools. January 13, 2012. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/news2012/nr2012011301.php>

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² "Carson Room Reading Data 1/13/12-4/30/12." Alexandria City Public Schools. Carson Reading Room Data.pdf

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ "Brainfuse Short Guide for Students." 2011. Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/technology/olp/brainfuse-student-guide.pdf>

⁸⁶ "TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update." Op. cit.

⁸⁷ "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

TC Williams also facilitates enrollment in **online courses**. In 2011-2012, more than 150 students participated in an online course.⁸⁸ The ACPS Online Learning Program allows students to take Advanced Placement, elective, credit recovery, and foundational courses online.⁸⁹ Students earn a half credit for an elective and a full credit for a foundational course. For students needing credit recovery, the school contracted with Aventa Learning to provide various courses online at a total cost of \$68,564 in the Fiscal Year 2012 budget.⁹⁰

In the fall 2012 survey administered by Hanover Research, roughly one-quarter of 1,072 responding students reported using Brainfuse at least once during 2011-2012. A full report of student responses related to Brainfuse appears in Figures B.41-B.52 of Appendix B. The following table offers insight into both the types of activities for which students relied on Brainfuse and an estimated frequency of use in general. Nearly half (48 percent) of past Brainfuse users reported relying on the service for live tutoring. In comparison, 15 percent of users logged on to complete practice tests, 11 percent engaged in live study sessions, and 10 percent accessed the writing lab. In terms of frequency of use, approximately 44 percent of students used Brainfuse once a month or less, while 20 percent visited the site two to three times per month.

Figure 2.35: Student Brainfuse Activities and Frequency of Use, Fall 2012 Survey

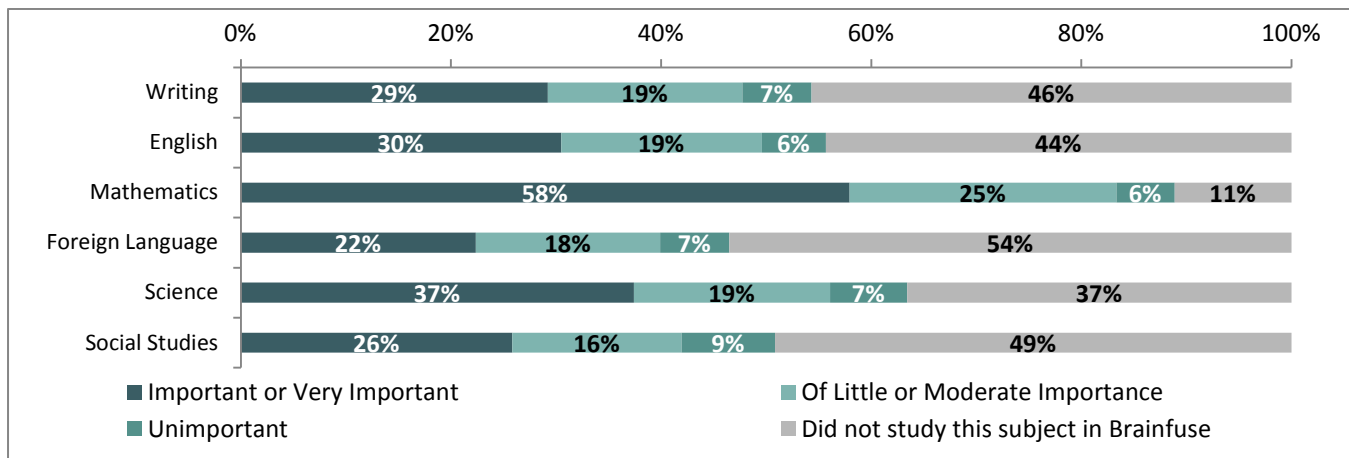
ACTIVITY	PERCENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Writing Lab	10%	Once a month or less	44%
Language Lab	5%	2-3 times per month	20%
Interactive Learning Games	6%	About once a week	14%
Practice Tests	15%	2-3 times per week	14%
Live Tutoring	48%	4-5 times per week	5%
Live Study Sessions	11%	Every day	4%
Other (Please specify)	5%		

The following figure indicates how important students found Brainfuse for academic achievement in individual subject areas. Fifty-eight percent of users considered Brainfuse an important or very important factor for academic success in mathematics. More than one-third of students felt that Brainfuse offered important or very important assistance in science. Less than one-third of responding students viewed Brainfuse similarly in reference to all other subjects, including English (30 percent), writing (29 percent), social studies (26 percent), and foreign language (22 percent).

⁸⁸ "TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update." Op. cit.

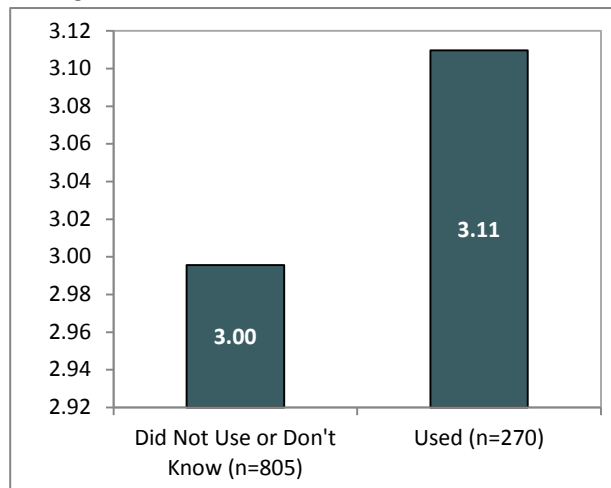
⁸⁹ "2012-2013 Program of Studies." Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/guidehs/program-of-studies.pdf#page=85>

⁹⁰ "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

Figure 2.36: Student Opinions on Brainfuse, Fall 2012 Survey

When asked to rate the program overall, two-thirds of students classified Brainfuse as either above average or excellent. A further 27 percent viewed Brainfuse as average. With that in mind, approximately 37 percent of students considered themselves very likely to utilize Brainfuse in 2012-2013, with more than half of students (51 percent) either slightly or somewhat likely to use the program at some point during the current school year.

As with the Writing and Mathematics Centers, we used student-level data to assess whether self-reported usage of Brainfuse contributed to higher academic achievement in 2011-2012. The analysis remains subject to the same caveats discussed in the contexts of the two Centers (i.e., no information for graduates and reliance on student recollection). Still, as seen in Figure 2.39, **the mean GPA for students who reported using Brainfuse exceeded the mean GPA for non-users by 0.11 points, or 3.7 percent.** The difference proved statistically significant at the 1 percent level.

Figure 2.37: Brainfuse Use and Mean 2011-2012 GPA

The next figure shows the extent to which self-reported users and non-users of Brainfuse differ in terms of SOL scores. We examined SOL performance in three areas in which Brainfuse offers academic support: language arts (Writing and Reading); mathematics (Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry); and science (Biology, Chemistry, and Earth Science). In general, average SOL scores proved lower for Brainfuse users than non-users. Users only outperformed non-users on three tests: Geometry (a 10-point difference) and Biology (a 1.6-point difference).

Figure 2.38: Brainfuse Use and 2011-2012 SOL Scores

SUBJECT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS		MEAN SOL SCORE		
	DID NOT USE OR DON'T KNOW	USED	DID NOT USE OR DON'T KNOW	USED	DIFFERENCE
Writing	224	94	497.6	483.4	-14.2
Reading	224	95	503.8	481.9	-21.9*
Algebra 1 ⁹¹	158	41	399.0	391.7	-7.3
Algebra 2	201	112	431.1	409.2	-21.9*
Geometry	288	72	415.2	425.2	10.0
Biology	323	89	464.3	465.9	1.6
Chemistry	171	99	460.1	452.3	-7.8
Earth Science	167	38	446.7	446.0	-0.7

*denotes statistical significance at the 1 percent level

The fall 2012 staff survey also included a series of questions related to Brainfuse. We provide a full set of results in Figures A.98-A.102 of Appendix A. When assessing the resource's capacity for improving student academic success, 37 percent rated Brainfuse as above average or excellent, while 13 percent perceived the resource as average. Nearly half of responding staff (47 percent), however, remained unsure. As to their inclination to recommend Brainfuse to students in 2012-2013, 29 percent of staff replied "very likely," with 31 percent answering either slightly or somewhat likely. In an open-response question, staff referred to Brainfuse as a valuable resource for students needing academic assistance outside of school and acknowledged receiving positive feedback from students who utilized the program in the past. However, staff also felt that the school needed to encourage wider usage among students, perhaps by holding additional demonstration sessions.

EXTENDED SCHOOL LEARNING OPTIONS

As part of the school's commitment to providing extended learning opportunities, TC Williams created **Titan Time**.⁹² Scheduled for 38 minutes each Tuesday and Wednesday, Titan Time offers either academic remediation or enrichment, depending on a student's grades in the previous five weeks. Students who received a grade of D, F, or I in any class attend **Titan Up** to receive additional instruction from a teacher in the relevant content area. All other students participate in **Titan Choice** and enjoy the freedom to select an activity from a variety of options, including silent study hall, meeting with a guidance counselor or teacher, visiting the Media Center or Career Center, and going to the gym. The school organized Titan Time into multiple cycles, each lasting five weeks. During each cycle of Titan Time, approximately 1,300 students attended the Titan Up component.⁹³ In cycle 3,

⁹¹ In reference to students who took the standard form of the Algebra I test: 30 used Brainfuse, scoring 398.8 on average; 122 did not use or could not recall using Brainfuse, scoring 398.1 on average. The 0.7-point difference did not prove statistically significant. In reference to students who took the Plain English Algebra test: 11 used Brainfuse, scoring 372.1 on average; 36 did not use or could not recall using Brainfuse, scoring 401.8 on average. The -29.7-point difference proved statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

⁹² "TC Williams High School Titan Time Summary." Alexandria City Public Schools. Titan Time Summary.doc

⁹³ "TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update." Op. cit.

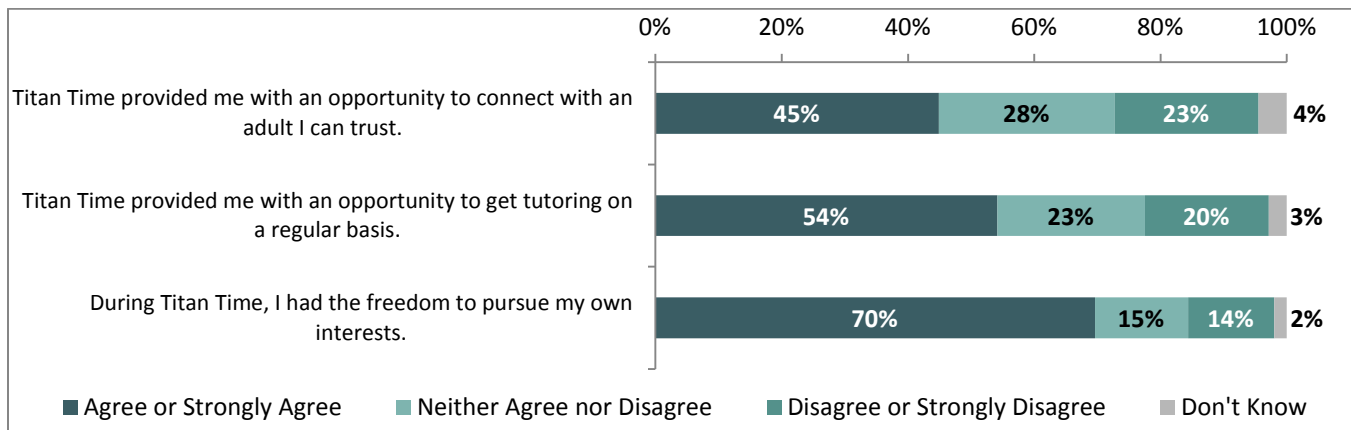
for example, teachers assisted 1,371 students through Titan Up.⁹⁴ The following figure shows the content areas addressed each day.⁹⁵ According to end-of-year departmental reports, surveys found overwhelming support for Titan Time among mathematics teachers, while English teachers believed that the initiative holds significant potential.⁹⁶ In 2012-2013, the school intends to expand Titan Time to three days, in order to add an advisory.

Figure 2.39: Cycle 3 Titan Up Students by Content Area

CONTENT AREA	DAY 1 STUDENTS		DAY 2 STUDENTS	
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
Elective	85	6.2	245	17.9
English	288	21.0	195	14.2
History	115	8.4	235	17.1
Math	583	42.5	451	32.9
Science	300	21.9	245	17.9
Total	1,371	100.0	1,371	100.0

In the fall 2012 survey, Hanover Research sought student opinions on Titan Time. For a full accounting of student responses to all related questions, please refer to Figures B.53-B.63 of Appendix B. As seen in the following figure, students appeared most satisfied with the flexibility offered by Titan Time, with 70 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that the classes enabled them to pursue individual interests. Slightly more than half (54 percent) of students agreed or strongly agreed that Titan Time provided regular opportunities to receive tutoring. Less than half (45 percent) believed that Titan Time allowed them to connect with an adult at the school.

Figure 2.40: Student Opinions on Titan Time, Fall 2012 Survey



The following figure captures student perceptions of the most valuable aspects of Titan Time. According to students, Titan Time proved most useful in creating time for personal enrichment (24 percent of respondents), academic remediation (23 percent), and

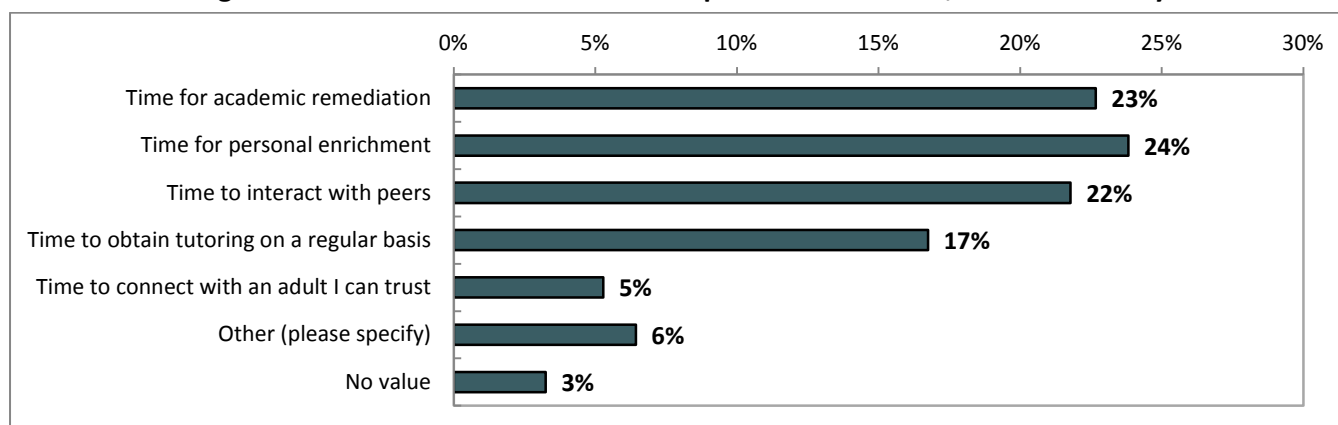
⁹⁴ Cycle 3 began on April 24, 2012 and ended on May 21, 2012.

⁹⁵ Titan Time Cycle 3 Master schedule.xls. Alexandria City Public Schools. Titan Time Cycle 3 Master schedule.xls

⁹⁶ Hall, et. al. Op. cit. Also, Taylor and Eaton. Op. cit.

interactions with peers (22 percent). When asked to rate the usefulness of Titan Time overall, however, slightly more than half (54 percent) of students viewed the time as above average or excellent. Roughly one-third (35 percent) classified Titan Time as simply average.

Figure 2.41: Students: Most Valuable Aspects of Titan Time, Fall 2012 Survey



The fall 2012 survey also asked about students' experiences with Titan Up. Close to two-thirds (65 percent) of responding students participated in the program during 2011-2012. The following figure indicates the subjects in which students received additional instruction. Mathematics represented the most common subject, cited by 37 percent of students—more than twice the share of responses for the second most commonly-addressed subject, science. Equivalent percentages of students (16 percent) studied English and social studies. Thus, perhaps not surprisingly, core subjects remained the primary focus of Titan Up for students. Students appeared less satisfied with Titan Up than Titan Time in general. As a resource for improving academic success, roughly 44 percent of students rated Titan Up as above average or excellent. Forty-one percent considered Titan Up merely average.

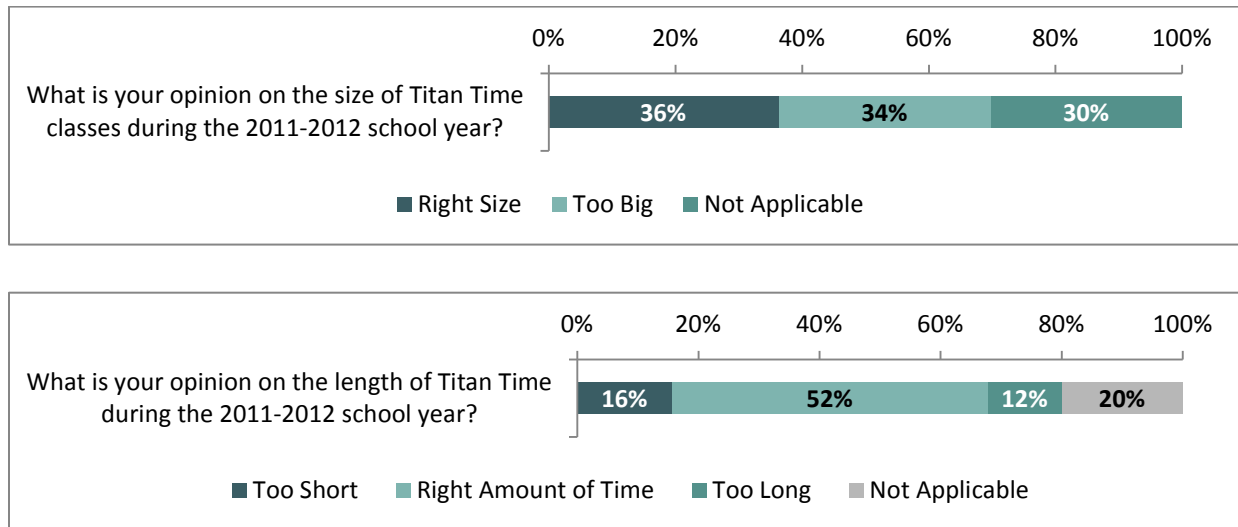
Figure 2.42: Student Titan Up Subjects, Fall 2012 Survey

SUBJECT	PERCENT
Art	1%
English	16%
Mathematics	37%
Science	17%
Social Studies	16%
World Languages	9%
Other (Please specify)	5%

Hanover Research's fall 2012 survey of staff also included a series of questions regarding Titan Time. A full analysis of the responses received can be viewed in Figures A. 103-A.114 of Appendix A. Staff offered feedback on the structure of Titan Time, as seen in the following figure. Overall, staff involved in the program appeared rather evenly split regarding the size of the groupings, with 36 percent referring to Titan Time classes as

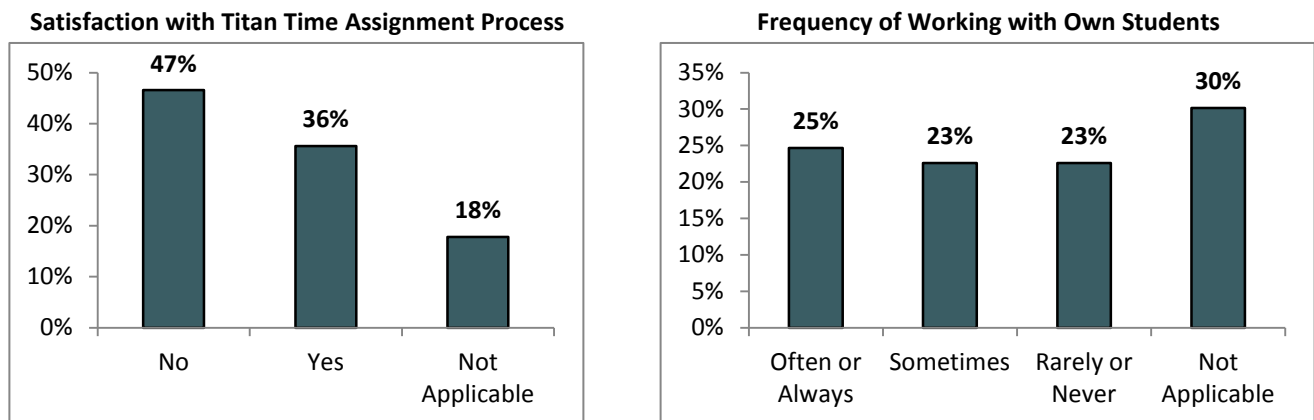
appropriately sized and 34 percent describing the classes as too big. English and mathematics teachers, however, differed sharply. Two-thirds of responding mathematics teachers viewed the classes as too big, compared to only 37 percent of responding English teachers. The second graph in Figure 2.45 indicates that roughly half (52 percent) of staff felt that the school allocated an appropriate amount of time to Titan Time.

Figure 2.43: Staff Opinions on the Structure of Titan Time Classes, Fall 2012 Survey



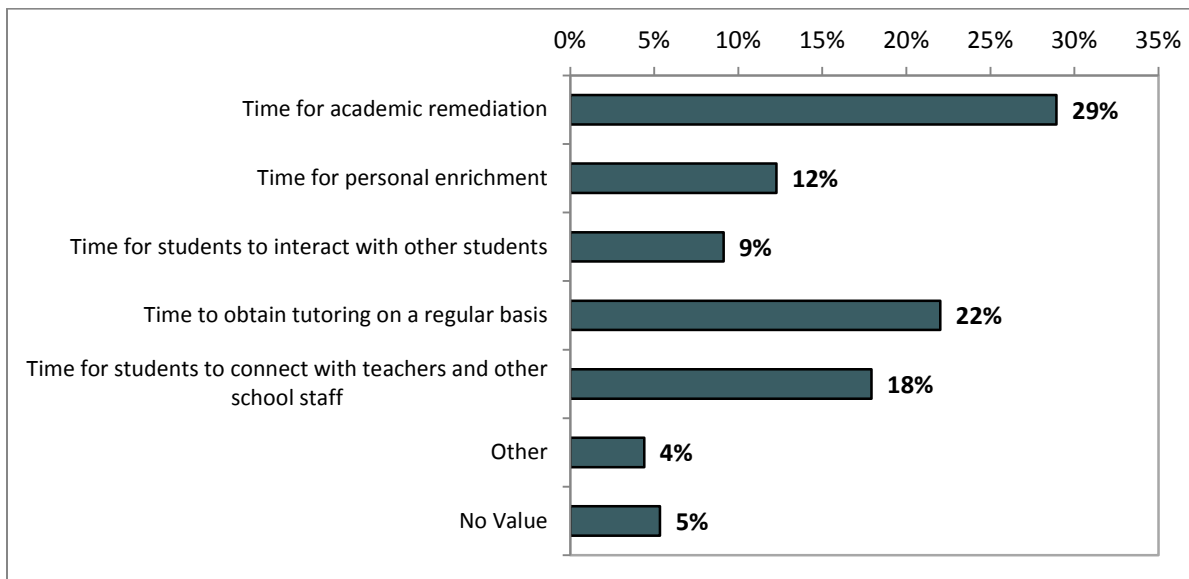
Staff also seemed fairly disapproving of the school's method of assigning students to classes for Titan Time. As seen in the following figure, nearly half (47 percent) of staff disagreed when asked whether or not the assignment process was satisfactory. The dissatisfaction most likely reflects insufficient opportunities to assist students taught in the regular classroom. In fact, as illustrated below, only one-quarter of staff often or always worked with their own students during Titan Time. Close to one-quarter (23 percent) rarely or never worked with their own students.

Figure 2.44: Titan Time Assignment Process, Fall 2012 Staff Survey



The following figure captures staff perceptions of the most valuable aspects of Titan Time. Twenty-nine percent cited time for academic remediation. The second and third most important outcomes included time for tutoring (22 percent) and time for students to connect with teachers and other staff (18 percent). Interestingly, staff opinions of the program's effects differ markedly from those expressed by students. As discussed previously, students found Titan Time most useful for providing time for personal enrichment and interacting with peers. Much smaller percentages of staff members considered Titan Time as important for such reasons. Overall, staff appeared critical of Titan Time. Only one-third of staff rated the program as an above average or excellent resource for improving academic success, and another 31 percent referred to the program as average. One-quarter of staff, however, actually deemed the program below average or very poor.

Figure 2.43: Most Valuable Aspects of Titan Time, Fall 2012 Staff Survey



According to Hanover Research's fall 2012 survey, approximately 56 percent of responding staff members provided tutoring to students through Titan Up. English and mathematics teachers reported participation rates of roughly 74 percent and 93 percent, respectively. When rating Titan Up as an academic resource overall, 31 percent described the classes as above average or excellent, while 32 percent viewed the sessions as average. Slightly more than one-fifth (21 percent), however, viewed Titan Up as below average or poor.

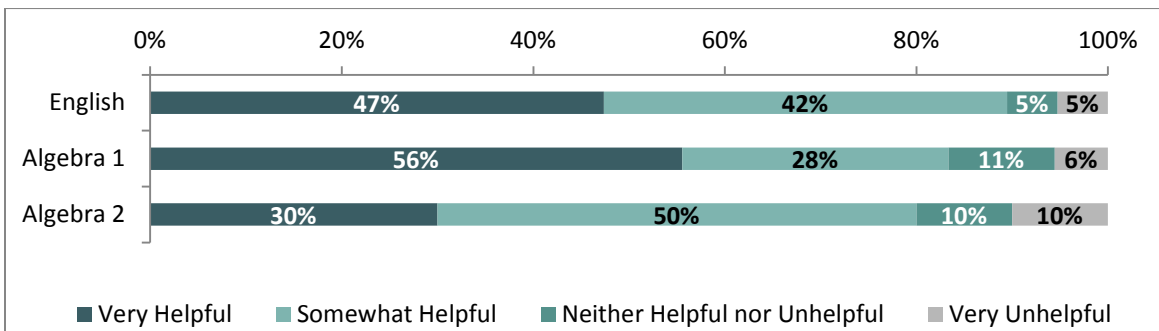
When asked to provide open-ended feedback on Titan Time, staff noted that attendance often proved poor. As a result, multiple staff members suggested that the school make attendance mandatory, imposing consequences for students who refuse to comply. In addition, several noted that a repeated need to handle disciplinary problems reduced the amount of time available to provide academic assistance to students truly motivated to

learn. The most common recommendation, however, consisted of greater opportunities to work with one's own students.

TC Williams also introduced **8th Period**.⁹⁷ Participating students attend twice a week for an hour after school. Teachers instruct groups of approximately 15 to 18 students requiring remediation in English, Algebra 1, Algebra 2, or Geometry in order to pass the Standards of Learning (SOL) examination at the end of the school year. The small-group environment promotes teacher-student interaction and gives each student additional chances to practice and ask questions. The program also involves high-achieving students as peer tutors. Each peer tutor earned a grade of B+ or higher in the content course and an advanced pass on the related SOL test. Based on the Fiscal Year 2012 budget, eight 8th Period teachers received stipends totaling \$15,455.⁹⁸ Two mathematics programs used during the sessions also required additional outlays: Apangea (\$10,000) and HELP Math (\$4,200).⁹⁹

Of the 1,043 students surveyed by Hanover Research in fall 2012, only 5 percent attended an 8th Period class in 2011-2012. Slightly more than one quarter (27 percent) of responding students participated as a peer tutor. Other respondents received remediation in English (29 percent), Algebra 1 (29 percent), or Algebra 2 (16 percent). Approximately 63 percent of participating students rated 8th Period as above average or excellent. Though one third considered the program average, only 5 percent referred to 8th Period as below average. As seen in the next figure, students appeared most satisfied with the assistance provided in English, followed by Algebra 1 and Algebra 2. We provide a full analysis of student survey responses related to 8th Period in Figures B.69-B.75 in Appendix B.

Figure 2.44: Student Views of 8th Period's Helpfulness, Fall 2012 (by Subject)



According to the fall 2012 staff survey, only 6 percent of respondents participated in an 8th Period class. None of the responding counselors participated. Only 5 percent of responding English teachers participated, compared to roughly 22 percent of responding mathematics teachers. Of all staff surveyed, only 7 percent rated 8th Period as above average or excellent. A further 6 percent referred to the program as average, and roughly 9 percent considered 8th Period either below average or very poor. More than three-quarters (78 percent),

⁹⁷ "TC Williams High School 8th Block Course Proposal." 2011. Alexandria City Public Schools. 8th period.pdf

⁹⁸ "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

however, remained unsure as to the program's usefulness as a resource for improving student academic success. In an open-response question, several staff members noted that participating students lacked commitment. In order to change the degree of seriousness with which students perceive the program, staff suggested that the school make attendance mandatory. A complete analysis of staff survey results with respect to 8th Period appears in Figures A.120-A.122 in Appendix A.

The school also conducts a **Saturday Learning Academy**.¹⁰⁰ Teachers referred students to the Academy for academic support or as part of a negotiated plan to "buy back" instructional time.¹⁰¹ At times, counselors referred students for disciplinary reasons. The Academy retains an open door policy, however, by also serving "walk-ins" or students who attend voluntarily. Beginning in late October, the Academy convened for three hours every Saturday (except holiday weekends). Teachers assisted students in five subjects: reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. As with the Writing and Mathematics Center, the school rewarded participating teachers with a stipend. In Fiscal Year 2012, Saturday Learning Academy stipends equaled \$21,530.¹⁰²

According to data supplied by TC Williams, a total of 538 students attended the 24 Saturday Learning Academy sessions held during the 2011-2012 school year.¹⁰³ On average, roughly 22 students attended each Academy, though participation ranged from a minimum of two students (on November 12) to a maximum of 60 students (on March 24). In terms of demographics, underclassmen accounted for a larger share of participating students than upperclassmen. Nearly half, or 47 percent, of last year's attendants were in ninth grade. In comparison, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students accounted for 24.7 percent, 14.9 percent, and 11 percent, respectively.

Among the students responding to Hanover Research's fall 2012 survey, only 8 percent recalled attending a Saturday Learning Academy session. Of those students, the average number of sessions attended equaled roughly 2.4. Most students focused on one of the core subjects, English (22 percent) or mathematics (32 percent). Smaller shares of students studied science (16 percent) and social studies (13 percent). Other subjects mentioned by students included world languages (e.g., Chinese, Latin, and Spanish) and exam preparation (SAT and AP). When asked to rate the Saturday Learning Academy, 42 percent described the sessions as above average or excellent. An equivalent share (41 percent) found the sessions merely average. Seventeen percent considered the sessions either below average or very poor. A full analysis of student survey responses regarding the Saturday Learning Academy appear in Figures B.76-B.80 in Appendix B.

¹⁰⁰ "Saturday Learning Academy." Alexandria City Public Schools. Saturday Learning Academy.pdf

¹⁰¹ "Buy back" plans apply to students who accumulate more than three unverified absences in a block class (or more than five in an embedded class) in a given quarter. For additional details, please see "Welcome Back TC Staff! Transforming, Instruction, Raising Achievement 2011-2012." Alexandria City Public Schools. Welcome_Back_Teachers Trans PP.ppt

¹⁰² "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

¹⁰³ "Saturday Learning Academy data." Alexandria City Public Schools. Saturday Learning Academy data.pdf

With respect to the staff surveyed in fall 2012, only a small percentage participated in the Saturday Learning Academy (6 percent). A vast majority of all staff who responded to the survey (71 percent) felt uncertain as to the program's contribution to student academic success. Open-ended responses provided by staff pointed to frustration with poor student attendance and an emphasis on discipline as opposed to academic remediation. In addition to making attendance mandatory, staff recommended distinguishing between students attending for behavioral and academic reasons. Such a distinction increases the likelihood of providing needed academic support to students truly interested in and motivated to learn. Please see Figures A.123-A.126 for all staff survey results related to the Saturday Learning Academy.

OTHER PROGRAMS

In 2011-2012, TC Williams formed an **International Academy** to meet the needs of English-Language Learners (ELLs), specifically speakers at Levels 1, 2, and 3.¹⁰⁴ Students receive instruction in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. In some cases, a single, dually-certified teacher instructs the students. In other cases, courses are co-taught by ELL and content teachers. In general, students engage in project-based learning. The International Academy attends to students outside of the classroom as well, providing access to a dedicated team of support personnel, including counselors and a social worker, with the capacity to meet the students' diverse needs.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the International Academy includes team-building and community outreach efforts, such as mentoring and service programs.¹⁰⁶ In order to prepare for the International Academy, participating teachers received training through Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL).¹⁰⁷ QTEL, which required an expenditure of \$75,000 in transformation grant funds in Fiscal Year 2012, combines academic rigor with high levels of support.¹⁰⁸ In addition, professional development conducted in the summer prior to the International Academy's opening cost \$3,477, as reported in the Fiscal Year 2012 budget.¹⁰⁹

A study recently conducted by The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education found that the International Academy "shows promise for meeting the needs of secondary ELLs."¹¹⁰ A majority of 25 teachers surveyed by the Center agreed that International Academy students benefit from the social and emotional supports provided, receive the standard curriculum, feel more comfortable participating in class, and enjoy equal access to college-preparatory courses. As a result, the Center recommended

¹⁰⁴ Acosta, B.D., Marzucco, L., Bayraktar, B., and Rivera, C. "Evaluation of English Language Learner Programs in Alexandria City Public Schools." 2012. The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/curriculum/ell/gwu-report.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ Branch, C., Allen, T., and Hampl, A. "TC Transformation: Year Two." AlexandriaNews.org, August 11, 2011. <http://www.alexandrianews.org/2011/2011/08/t-c-transformation-year-two/>

¹⁰⁶ "Vision and Action Committee Updates and Next Steps." Alexandria City Public Schools, October 2011. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw-transformation/vision-action-committee/20111011-update.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ Branch, et. al. Op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Acosta, et. al. Op. cit.

continued support for the program, including plans to partner with the International Network for Public Schools (INPS), an organization with proven success in raising achievement levels, graduation rates, and post-secondary enrollment rates for ELLs.

With respect to other special programs, TC Williams introduced **dual enrollment** opportunities to students in 2008-2009, focusing initially on elective courses.¹¹¹ In 2011-2012, the school, which partners with Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), began a pilot initiative in mathematics. TC Williams plans a further expansion of dual-enrollment courses in 2012-2013, with approximately 250 students expected to enroll. The following figure shows dual enrollment options for the upcoming year, including the titles of the TC Williams course and the related course at NOVA and the resulting number of academic credits.¹¹² Dual enrollment courses admit interested juniors and seniors of at least 16 years of age who either earned college-level standing on NOVA's placement test or scored 550 or higher on the Critical Reading Portion of the SAT.

Figure 2.45: TC Williams-NOVA Dual Enrollment Courses, 2012-2013

DEPARTMENT	TC WILLIAMS COURSE	COLLEGE COURSE	CREDITS
Business and Information Technology	AOF: Introduction to Business and International Finance	FIN 248 International Finance	3
English	College Composition	ENG 111 and 112 College Composition	6
	College World Literature	ENG 251 and 252 Survey of World Literature	6
Family and Consumer Sciences	Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation	HRI 101 and 102 Hotel-Restaurant Organization and Management	6
	Advance Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation	(To be determined)	6
Health and Medical Sciences	Practical Nursing	HIM 111 Medical Terminology I	3
Math	Differential Equations	MTH 291 and 292 Differential Equations	6
	Calculus with Analytic Geometry II	MTH 174 Calculus with Analytic Geometry	5
Marketing	Entrepreneurship	BUS 116 Entrepreneurship	3
	Advanced Leadership Development	BUS 117 Human Relations and Leadership Development	3
Social Studies	College US History	HIS 121 and 122 United States History	3
Technology Education	Engineering Statics	EGR 130 Statics and Strength of Materials for Engineering Technology	5

Source: TC Williams High School Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA)

¹¹¹ "ACPS Daily Digest." Alexandria City Public Schools, January 27, 2012.

<http://acps.ezcommunicator.net/edu/alexandria/ViewNewsletter.asp?app=0&id=515>

¹¹² "Advanced Placement or Dual Enrollment." 2012. TC Williams High School Parent Teacher Student Association. www.tcwilliamsptsa.com/sites/default/files/news-files/advance_placemetn_or_dual_enrollment-1.pdf

Meanwhile, TC Williams continues to make a wide range of **Advanced Placement (AP)** courses available to students. In 2012-2013, the school plans to offer AP courses in the following subjects: English Language, English Literature, French, German, Latin, Spanish Language, Spanish Literature, Art History, Music Theory, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Statistics, Computer Science, Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Physics II B, Physics II C, Psychology, Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, World History, European History, U.S. History, and U.S. Politics and Government.¹¹³ In 2011, 756 students enrolled in AP courses. Of the 1,541 AP examinations taken that year, 55.7 percent (or 421) resulted in scores of 3 or higher.¹¹⁴

In 2011-2012, TC Williams, along with six other ACPS schools, initiated an **International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IB MYP)**.¹¹⁵ The MYP requires students to study eight subjects—English, another world language, science, mathematics, technology, arts, humanities, and physical education—in each of the program’s five years. Students complete the MYP while enrolled in grades 6 through 10. In fall 2011, a group of teachers and administrators from TC Williams participated in subject-specific “Category II” IB training. The sessions provided insight into IB-related philosophy and methodology, placing particular emphasis on unit planning and “Areas of Interaction.”¹¹⁶ As the program prepares for full authorization under the oversight of a full-time coordinator, the school will proceed with further staff training, data collection, and a gradual implementation of the IB methodology.¹¹⁷

ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING

The transformation process involved a **restructuring of the administration** at TC Williams. In spring 2010, Superintendent Sherman and the executive staff seized control of the school. In the process, the Superintendent created an office on the main campus and established a transformation center next door. In the initial stages of the transformation, the school replaced or retired all but three members of the administrative staff. All remaining and any newly-hired personnel committed fully to the transformation model.

The school’s current administration includes principals assigned to three crucial areas: operations, school improvement, and academics. With respect to the latter, the school hired a lead academic principal, as well as two content-focused academic principals: one for mathematics and science, and another for social studies and English.¹¹⁸ In addition to overseeing the curriculum, academic principals conduct classroom observations and

¹¹³ “TC Williams High School Course Selection Form 2012-2013.” 2012. Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/guidehs/course-selection-form-tc.pdf>

¹¹⁴ “TC Williams High School 2011-2012 School Profile.” 2011. Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw/counseling/profile.pdf>

¹¹⁵ “IB Middle Years Program Partnership.” 2012. Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/middle-schools/ib-myp-news.pdf>

¹¹⁶ “IB MYP at TCW.” Alexandria City Public Schools, 1:1, Fall/Winter 2011. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw-transformation/ib-myp/ib-myp-20111221.pdf>

¹¹⁷ See “IB Middle Years Program Partnership” and “TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update” Op. cit.

¹¹⁸ “TC Williams Staff.” Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/tcw/staff/>

evaluate teachers.¹¹⁹ The school also appointed a dean of students, supported by three grade-level deans primarily responsible for enforcing disciplinary policies.¹²⁰ In 2011-2012, TC Williams decided to form a data support team tasked with helping Principal Maxey make data-driven decisions.¹²¹ The team manages data collection and assists the principal in interpreting the information.

STAFF INCENTIVES

TC Williams created two initiatives to reward teachers engaged in innovative program development. First, the **Mini-Grant Fund** finances teacher professional development aimed at raising student achievement.¹²² Successful applicants explain the way in which the training supports increases in student learning and ultimately document such improvement with pre- and post-training achievement data. The recipients also commit to sharing the knowledge and skills acquired with other teachers. According to the Fiscal Year 2012 budget, 30 teachers each received a mini-grant of \$1,500 for a total of \$45,000.¹²³ Second, the **Titan Transformer Award** recognizes teachers who prove “truly transforming” in their daily instructional practices.¹²⁴ Such teachers go “beyond the call of duty” in advancing the school’s transformation agenda, and, as a result, earn rewards ranging in value from \$50 to \$500.

Among the respondents to the fall 2012 staff survey administered by Hanover Research, 4 received Mini-Grants, and 31 earned Titan Transformer Awards. On the next page, Figure 2.50 indicates levels of staff agreement with several statements pertaining to Mini-Grants and Titan Transformer Awards. In general, respondents viewed the two incentive programs rather skeptically. When asked whether the process for awarding Mini-Grants appeared transparent, only 27 percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed. Even fewer (25 percent) considered the process fair. Mini-Grants also failed to inspire staff, with less than one-third (31 percent) strongly agreeing or agreeing that the awards create an incentive to innovate.

Respondents viewed the Titan Transformer awards even less favorably. Less than one-fifth of respondents found the awarding process transparent (18 percent) or fair (19 percent). Less than one-quarter, or 24 percent, considered the prospect of winning a Titan Transformer Award a motivator for contributing to the transformation process. In open-ended responses, staff called on the administration to raise the awards’ profiles, define the selection criteria, and make the entire process more transparent. In the eyes of several respondents, the awards lacked credibility due to a perceived secretive nature of the decision-making process. We present a full accounting of the survey results pertaining to staff incentives in Figures A.127-A.134 in Appendix A.

¹¹⁹ “TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update.” Op. cit.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ “Interventions Annual Form by Federal Requirement.” Alexandria City Public Schools, October 27, 2011, p. 9. Interventions annual report.pdf

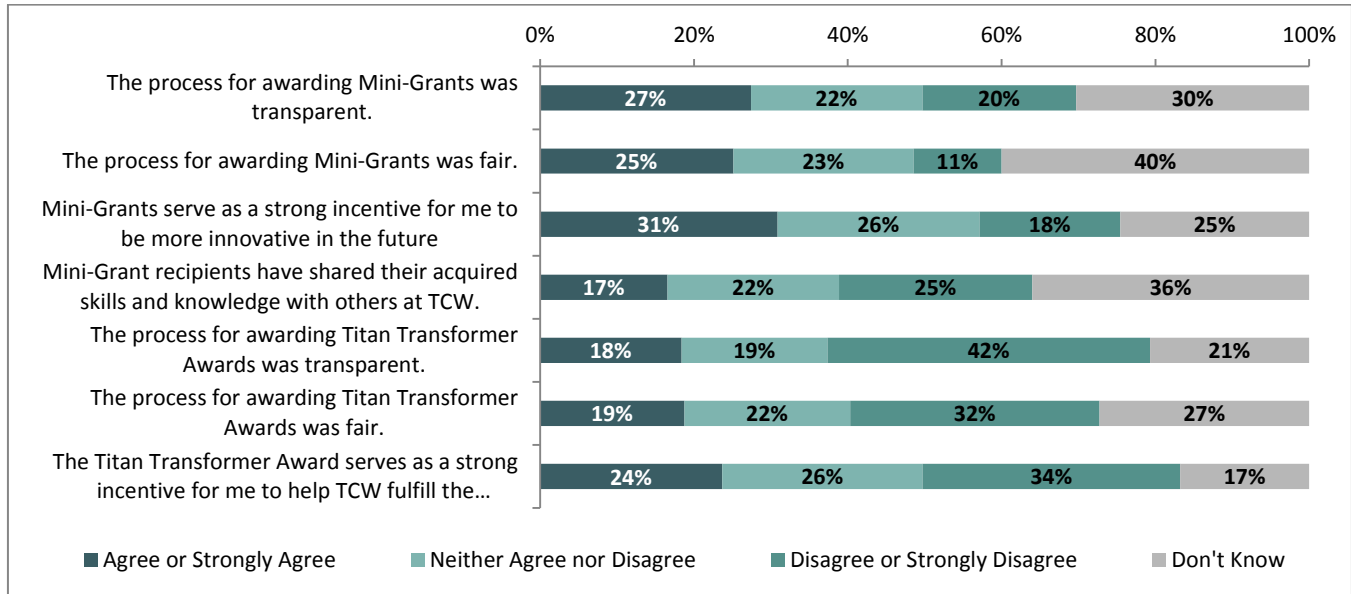
¹²² “TC Williams Teacher Leadership Mini-Grant Fund.” Alexandria City Public Schools. Mini-Grants.pdf

¹²³ “PLA Budget Revised.” Op. cit.

¹²⁴ “Titan Transformers.” 2012. Alexandria City Public Schools. Titan Transformer selection process.pdf

In the fall 2012 focus groups moderated by Hanover Research, several staff members voiced similar concerns. Some participants felt that, by singling out some individuals, the awards contradicted the notion of transformation as a collective, collaborative process. In addition, some participants believed that the general lack of transparency surrounding the awards led to feelings of favoritism, a fact which threatened to reduce morale.

Figure 2.46: Staff Views of Mini-Grants and Titan Transformer Awards



TRANSFORMATION-RELATED COMMITTEES

TC Williams established **five committees** to address the most significant aspects of the transformation process.¹²⁵ The *Transformation Steering Committee* meets monthly and oversees the entire process. Members include teachers, administrators, Superintendent Sherman and other central office personnel, along with external partners and representatives of the Virginia Department of Education. The Committee issues quarterly reports to the Alexandria City School Board and the local community and regular reports to the Parent Teacher Student Association. The *Vision and Action Committee* meets regularly to develop programs and initiatives aimed at increasing opportunities available to students. A few of the VAC's recent undertakings include: implementation of a visual and performing arts program; support of the International Academy; work with the Deputy Superintendent's office to design an alternative school; monitoring of school climate; pursuit of an IB MYP candidacy; and expansion of dual enrollment.¹²⁶ Third, an *Instructional Council* convenes weekly. The IC, whose membership includes department chairs and administrators, discusses any matter related to the design and delivery of curricula. The *Professional Learning Committee*, meanwhile, assumes responsibility for planning

¹²⁵ "Five Focus Areas." Op. cit.

¹²⁶ "Vision and Action Committee Updates and Next Steps." Op. cit.

professional development. For example, the PLC reviews PLPs in order to identify any common topics requiring additional support.¹²⁷ Lastly, the *Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee* meets twice a month. The Student Advisory Committee has made several notable achievements, including the recommendation to appoint student liaisons to the ACPS School Board. In July, 2012 two TC Williams students were appointed to represent the interests of students at school board meetings.¹²⁸ The Student Advisory Committee also "negotiated with the Alexandria Transit Company's DASH system for a steeply discounted ACPS student pass."¹²⁹ DASH "Swag Tags" provide students with unlimited bus transportation during the summer months (May 21 – September 2) for a one-time fee of \$50-65, depending on purchase date.¹³⁰ Finally, the Student Advisory Committee undertook a review of the current grading policy at TC Williams and provided recommendations for future changes.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Transformation represents a truly collaborative process, as TC Williams continues to work with several external partners and organizations. External partnerships provide added knowledge and expertise and seek to build the internal capacity needed within the school to ensure the long-term sustainability of reforms implemented during the transformation. In particular, **Dr. Marty Brooks and Dr. Bena Kallick**, the external lead partners, oversee the process and attend all meetings of the Transformation Steering Committee.¹³¹ Dr. Brooks and Dr. Kallick worked closely with Superintendent Sherman, ACPS central office personnel, and school-based administrators and teachers to create TC Williams' transformation model in spring 2010. During Fiscal Year 2012, Dr. Brooks and Dr. Kallick each received \$37,500 in compensation and expenses.¹³²

Dr. Fran Prolman and Dr. Jon Saphier advise the school on both pedagogy and curriculum design. Dr. Prolman, for example, conducts the Skillful Teacher and Skillful Leader programs. Of 21 respondents surveyed by the English department, ten took and eight completed the Skillful Teacher course. In general, opinions seemed "neutral or tending to negative."¹³³ In contrast, survey responses obtained by the mathematics department indicated that teachers found the Skillful Teacher sessions helpful and adopted the strategies learned into classroom practice immediately.¹³⁴

Dr. Ron Ferguson remains responsible for efforts to strengthen student-teacher relationships. To that end, he supervised administration of the Tripod questionnaire to

¹²⁷ "Interventions Annual Form by Federal Requirement." Op. cit., p. 5.

¹²⁸ "Alexandria City School Board Appoints Student Liaisons to the Board." July 2, 2012. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/news2013/nr2012070202.php>

¹²⁹ "Swag Tags Entitle ACPS Middle and High School Students to Discounted Bus Fares." May 18, 2012. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/news/good-news/gn2012051803.php>

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ "TC Williams Transformation – Year 2 Update." Op. cit.

¹³² "PLA Budget Revised." Op. cit.

¹³³ Taylor and Eaton. Op. cit.

¹³⁴ Hall, et. al. Op. cit.

students. The survey seeks to capture “key dimensions of classroom life and teaching practice” as experienced by students.¹³⁵ More specifically, the questions offer insight into “students’ academic and social behaviors, goals, beliefs, and feelings.”¹³⁶ Within the English department, opinion appears mixed as to the usefulness of the survey.¹³⁷ Math teachers, however, found the responses valuable in four respects: by making teachers more sensitive to student needs; by challenging teachers to try different methods of instruction; by improving classroom management; and by fostering relationships between students and teachers.¹³⁸ For his services, Dr. Ferguson received \$30,000 in Fiscal Year 2012.¹³⁹ In 2012-2013, TC Williams will develop additional processes for the analysis and use of Tripod data.

With respect to external organizations, TC Williams began a partnership with the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People** (NAACP) in 2011-2012. For example, in the fall, the NAACP helped to plan and sponsor rallies on both TC Williams campuses to celebrate students with exemplary attendance records.¹⁴⁰ The events included prizes and other items to demonstrate the NAACP’s support of the students.

SCHOOL CULTURE

In both fall 2012 surveys, Hanover Research asked a set of questions intended to solicit respondents’ opinions on the school’s climate overall. The full set of student responses appears in Figures B.81-B.108 of Appendix B. We provide a full analysis of responses from staff members in Figures A.7-A.19 and Figures A.135-A.155 of Appendix A.

The next figure indicates the extent to which students and staff agreed or strongly agreed with similarly-phrased statements describing the culture at TC Williams. As illustrated in the graph, both groups responded most positively to questions related to the academic supports available to students. Nearly 80 percent of students acknowledged the willingness of English and mathematics teachers to offer additional help outside of the classroom. Almost 90 percent of staff claimed to provide such assistance. Close to three-quarters of students found tutoring readily available when needed. Roughly 95 percent of staff, meanwhile, considered such resources easily accessible to struggling students.

Such results appear consistent with the feedback provided by students and staff in several open-ended questions. For instance, when asked to describe the main strengths of TC Williams, students cited teachers who appear both willing and able to offer assistance whenever possible. Students also emphasized the variety of academic supports available and the school’s excellent facilities (e.g., the gymnasium) and resources (e.g., information technology). In general, students viewed TC Williams as a diverse community that holds high expectations for each individual. Staff concurred, referring to a shared goal of student

¹³⁵ “Framework for Teaching and Learning.” Alexandria City Public Schools. <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/middle-schools/framework/>

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Taylor and Eaton. Op. cit.

¹³⁸ Hall, et. al. Op. cit.

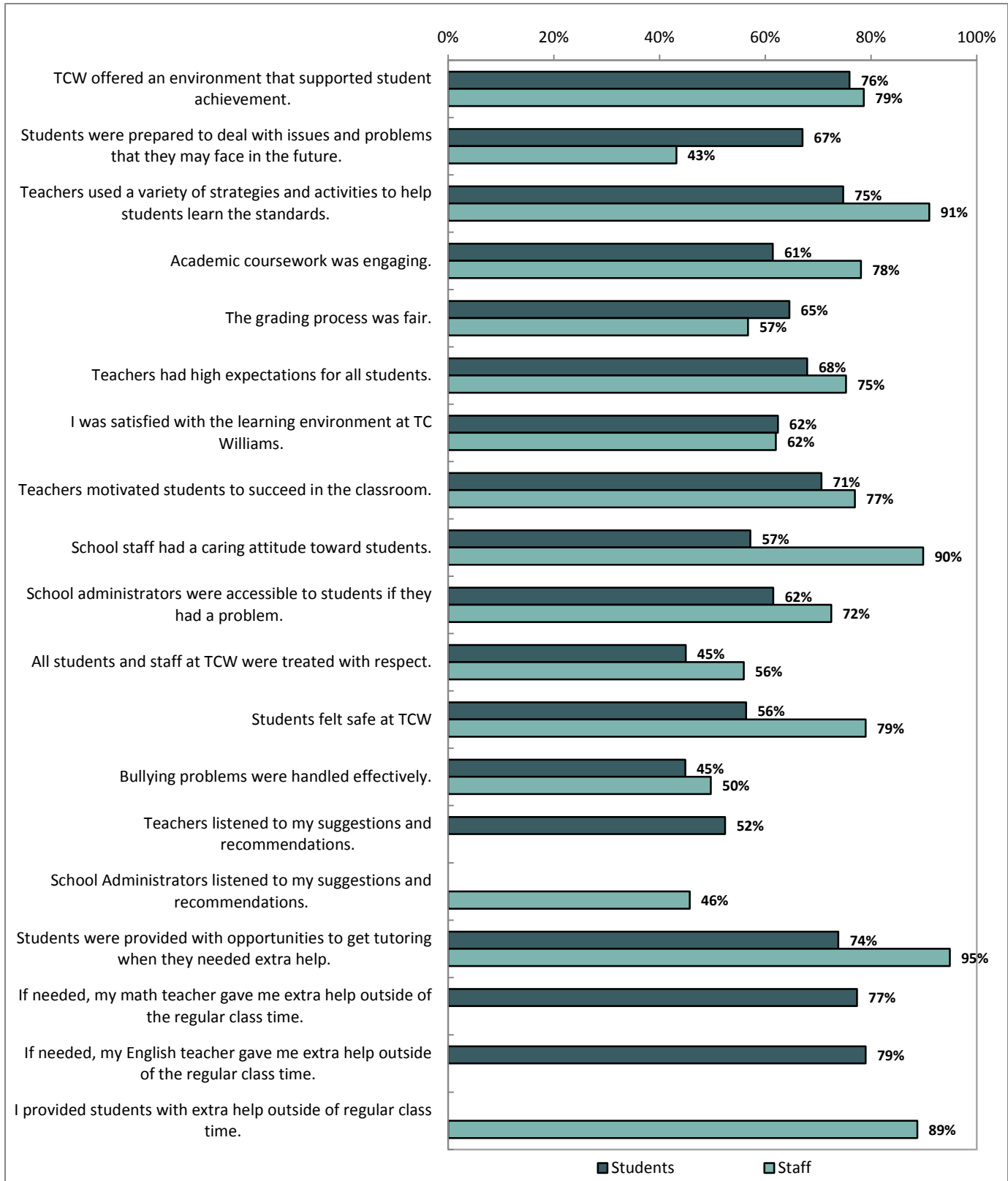
¹³⁹ “PLA Budget Revised.” Op. cit.

¹⁴⁰ “Interventions Annual Form by Federal Requirement.” Op. cit., p. 11.

success supported by increased learning opportunities (e.g., the Writing and Mathematics Centers). According to staff, reduced teaching periods and caseloads facilitated connections with students.

In contrast, both groups seemed much less satisfied with the disciplinary environment and the emotional climate at the school. For instance, less than half of students (45 percent) and only half of staff members felt that the school effectively addressed bullying problems. Moreover, only 45 percent of students and 56 percent of staff believed that the school treated everyone with respect. However, students and staff diverged when assessing the degree of physical safety provided by the school. On the one hand, only 56 percent of students admitted feeling safe on campus, while 79 percent of staff believed that the school offered a safe environment. In the open-ended questions, students often lamented the school's size, claiming that crowded hallways and classrooms contributed to an impersonal environment and exacerbated disciplinary problems.

With respect to discipline and safety, the opinions expressed to Hanover Research by students in the fall 2012 focus groups highlighted the extent to which the school environment improved relative to prior school years. Participating students emphasized recent changes in behavior, noting a dramatic decrease in fights. In general, the students in the focus groups described the school's climate as increasingly relaxed and positive over the past few school years. Staff responses to open-ended questions also cited an improved disciplinary environment as among the most positive outcomes of the Transformation Process to date.

Figure 2.47: Student and Staff Opinions on TC Williams, Fall 2012 Survey (Percent agree or strongly agree)



1750 H Street NW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20006

P 202.756.2971 F 866.808.6585
www.hanoverresearch.com