Extended School Year Program

Final Executive Report

(FY 2015 and FY 2016 data)

October 2015
FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Extended School Year Program
Interim Executive Report

The Extended School Year (ESY) program is overseen by Fairfax County Public Schools’ (FCPS) Department of Special Services. The purpose of the Extended School Year Services (ESY) program is to provide special education and related services to students whose educational progress during the school year would be significantly jeopardized if the students did not receive services during normally occurring breaks in the school year. Eligibility for ESY is determined by the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. The provision of these services is mandated for identified students under Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement ACT, 2004 and Federal Regulations, 2006. (See the Extended School Program Final Evaluation Report October 2015 for a detailed program description.)

Evaluation Purpose and Design

The ESY program was recommended for evaluation through a process that included input from central office departments, school-based administrators, and FCPS’ Leadership Team. Evaluations conducted by the Office of Program Evaluation judge the quality of FCPS programs across four core program characteristics:

- **Program Definition** – how the program is intended to be carried out and why;
- **Fidelity of Implementation** – how the program actually runs at schools or sites;
- **Outcomes** – the impact the program has on participants; and
- **Program Costs** – the program’s costs and how staff optimizes the use of available funds.

OPE staff developed an initial set of evaluation questions based on the information needs identified by the previous Assistant Superintendent for DSS. The questions were validated and refined based on recommendations from a team composed of representatives from central office, school- and region-based staff, as well as a university expert.

The evaluation focuses on the class-based program as the majority of students (97 percent) are in this service setting. Information about program definition and prior program costs can be found in the interim report (ESY Interim Evaluation Report, April 2015). This final report focuses on program implementation and outcomes, as well as updated program cost information. Taken together, the two reports provide the FCPS School Board, Leadership Team, and program staff with evidence-based judgments about the effectiveness of the program based on evaluation data and make a summative recommendation to continue the program as is, continue it with modifications, or discontinue the program.

Interim Report

The interim report presented findings related to program definition (how the program is organized to produce its intended outcomes) and then-available program costs. The report concluded that the ESY program is well-designed based on meeting federal and state requirements, practitioner expertise, and alignment with the limited research available on ESY services. Furthermore, the interim report stated that the program had detailed documentation describing expected activities for various staff at the site.
level and successfully communicated those expectations to ESY site-based staff. In terms of program costs, the interim report found that the program has been able to meet the needs of an expanding ESY population, despite a budget that has stayed approximately the same, by reducing costs per student and drawing from a reserve fund. The recommendations from the report focused on ensuring solvency of the federally mandated program and finding ways to continue to reduce program costs.

Following Summer 2014, ESY program staff made several changes to the program’s definition which aimed to improve instruction and reduce program costs. Thus, beginning in Summer 2015, ESY teachers have been required to use evidence-based programs to align their instruction to that received by students during the regular school year. The program also made changes to program definition that minimized costs. The program eliminated some site-based positions, decreased the number of contract hours for site-based staff, and removed the requirement that all schools have Collaborative Learning Team (CLT) meetings once a week. Additional details about the interim evaluation findings related to program definition and program costs (including program efforts to minimize costs) are available in the ESY Interim Evaluation Report, April 2015.

Final Report
The final report examines fidelity of program implementation and outcomes based on summer 2014 program data and parent satisfaction with the summer 2015 program, as well as efforts the program has made to optimize costs for the summer 2015 program. The Conclusions and Recommendations sections of the report reflect on findings across all years of the evaluation. Listed below are the specific evaluation questions answered in this report.

Fidelity of Implementation
• To what extent is the program implemented with fidelity to the program model across sites (consider both site and student-level implementation)?
• Is staff development sufficient to support implementation with fidelity?
• Does the program have staff with the skills, background, and knowledge to meet their job responsibilities?
• Are the participating students those most reflective of the types of student for whom the ESY program is intended?

Outcomes
• To what extent does the program meet its goals:
  o Students meet their IEP goals at the end of ESY; and
  o Students maintain/extend their progress on IEP goals by the end of the first quarter?
• To what extent are parents satisfied with the program?

Program Costs
• To what extent do program staff engage in cost saving or cost minimizing efforts?

During the evaluation period covered in this report (Summer of 2014 and Summer of 2015), data were collected from multiple sources. To answer the evaluation questions about implementation, data were collected from Summer 2014 ESY administrators, ESY teachers/SPARTs, and ESY program management through structured interviews and surveys. Additional implementation data was collected from
Procedural Support Liaisons (PSLs) during the spring of 2015 through a focus group and a survey. As a result their responses reflect experiences with the Summer 2014 program and the identification of students for the 2015 program. To answer questions about outcomes, the evaluation analyzed ESY progress reports and attendance records from Summer 2014 and school-year teachers’ ratings of readiness for instruction and progress on ESY goals during the first quarter following the ESY program. In addition, parents completed surveys about their satisfaction with the Summer 2015 program. Information about program costs was obtained from interviews with program and DSS financial services staff, as well as a review of budget documents.

Conclusions
This section of the report highlights major program strengths and challenges based on the findings from the questions that guided the evaluation. (See the full ESY Final Evaluation Report for the detailed discussion of findings that led to the following conclusions).

Program Strengths (Based on Implementation, Outcomes, and Costs)
- FCPS is implementing the ESY program in alignment with guidance provided by the State and Federal Government.
- Program staff continuously strive for improvement through efforts to refine the ESY administrator handbook, improve trainings for ESY site-based staff, and utilize evidence-based instruction to align with instruction provided to students during the school year.
- A majority of students are making “some” progress towards achieving their ESY IEP goals at the end of ESY.
- For two-thirds of students, the program is meeting its objective of positioning them to be ready to make progress by the end of the first quarter.
- Overall, parents of students attending ESY are very satisfied with the services their child(ren) receive.
- Program staff consistently reflect upon and engage in efforts to optimize program costs.
- In Summer 2015, the program reversed its trend of increasing enrollments. If this continues, the program may be able to significantly lower its costs.

Program Challenges (Based on Implementation, Outcomes and Costs)
- Efforts to train school-based IEP teams on identifying students for ESY and writing quality ESY goals did not having the intended effect across the division. Despite a one percent decrease in the number of students enrolled in the Summer 2015 ESY program, there was still a perception that students were over-identified by IEP teams for the program. Concerns about the quality of the goals for a proportion of students also pose challenges to effective instruction.
- It is a challenge for the program to hire qualified special education teachers during the summer. Additionally, some ESY administrators were perceived to have insufficient special education experience during the Summer 2014 program. The training offered by the program cannot fully compensate for gaps in knowledge, and PSLs in particular were concerned that site-based staff were not adequately prepared to deliver ESY services.
• The evaluation found slightly over half of students were deemed ready to recover lost skills at the start of the school year and school-year teachers’ ratings of student performance on ESY goals were closer to “some” progress rather than “sufficient progress” even after a quarter of instruction.
• Efforts to reduce expenditures, while commendable given the budget constraints, may be having unintended negative consequences on the quality of the program. Teachers’ primary concerns included the availability of program-supplied instructional materials and resources.

**Recommendations**

Information in the Conclusions section guided the development of a summative recommendation for leadership, as well as recommended actions for various stakeholder groups to improve the program.

**Summative Recommendation for Leadership:**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue program as is</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Continue program with modifications</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discontinue program</td>
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**Action Recommendations for FCPS Staff (modifications)**

**Leadership Team (CAO/DSS)**

• Develop a means to address the long-term funding needs of the ESY program.

**Department**

• Improve monitoring and oversight of the process for identifying students for ESY. Convene a team to review IEPs of students referred to ESY to review whether the referral is appropriate, goals are clear, and all necessary materials from the teacher are included in the packet.
• Ascertain common problems in identifying ESY students appropriately and make any needed adjustments to trainings/support to schools or IEP teams who may need it.

**Program Staff**

• Review trainings offered to ESY teachers and administrators to tailor professional development to experience level and the type of staff assignment being given.
• Establish required communications to parents in advance of ESY and during ESY, including:
  o Develop templates for program staff and schools to use in communicating with parents.
  o Require ESY teacher communication on at least a weekly basis regarding student progress on IEP goals.
  o For more disabled students, consider daily communication sheets.
• Identify ways to improve hiring of the most qualified and experienced ESY staff and ensure teachers’ knowledge and skills are well-matched to student needs.
• In light of stable funding and increased demand for ESY, develop a decision-making mechanism to identify and minimize negative impacts of cost reduction efforts on students.
• Establish appropriate benchmarks for ESY goals (growth/maintenance) to allow the program to measure student progress at the end of ESY and monitor ESY outcomes during the school year.

Note: The Office of Program Evaluation (OPE) invites program managers to respond to recommendations presented in evaluation reports in order to gauge the level of understanding of, agreement with, and commitment to proposed next steps. Program management responses are written by and represent the perspective of the program management office and/or parent department. Department of Special Services’ (DSS) program management response to the final evaluation findings and recommendations for the OPE is available as Appendix F to the Extended School Year Services Program Final Evaluation Report.
APPENDIX A

BOX SCORE
### Program Performance at a Glance

This Box Score Report summarizes the ratings of the program at the end of this evaluation period. See the Extended School Year Final Evaluation Report October 2015 for the detailed justifications for these ratings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE Components</th>
<th>Below Benchmark</th>
<th>Above Benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Definition</td>
<td>Final – Not Rated</td>
<td>Interim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity of Implementation</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Interim – Not Rated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Interim – Not Rated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Costs</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Interim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Program Quality Ratings (4 levels)**
- **Above Benchmark = 4**
  - Program meets Prerequisites and Standard Elements of the component.
- **Benchmark = 3**
  - Program meets Prerequisites and at least one Standard Element of the component.
- **Basic = 2**
  - Program meets Prerequisites of the component.
- **Below Basic = 1**
  - Program does not meet Prerequisites of the component.

**Program Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY 2015</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost*</td>
<td>$5,151,806</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Participants:</td>
<td>3,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost Per Participant:</td>
<td>$1,561</td>
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</table>

*Cost reflects budgeted rather than actual expenditures. See Program Costs section of Extended School Year Interim Evaluation Report for detailed cost information.

**Decision Rules for Making Overall Recommendation in Program Evaluation Reports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Interim Year</th>
<th>Final Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue As Is</td>
<td>Rating of 4 on Program Definition, Fidelity of Implementation, Outcomes, and Program Cost.</td>
<td>Rating of 4 on Program Definition, Fidelity of Implementation, Outcomes, and Program Cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue with Modifications</td>
<td>Rating below 4 on Program Definition, Fidelity of Implementation, Outcomes, or Program Cost.</td>
<td>One rating of less than 4, but at least 3 on Program Definition, Fidelity of Implementation and Outcomes, and at least 2 on Program Cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontinue</td>
<td>Irreparable adverse effects observed at any point during the evaluation year.</td>
<td>Irreparable adverse effects observed at any point during the evaluation year. Or, rating of 2 or below on Program Definition, Fidelity of Implementation, or Outcomes. Or, rating of 1 on Program Cost.</td>
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</tbody>
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**Report Recommendation:**  **Continue As Is**  **Continue With Modifications**  **Discontinue**

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1 Modifications described as recommendations
APPENDIX B

BOX SCORE RATINGS AND JUSTIFICATION
CORE PROGRAM QUALITY COMPONENTS:
RATINGS AND JUSTIFICATION

This section of the report provides a formal rating for each of the core program components considered in this evaluation, along with the evidence that justifies it. The ratings use a four-point scale where “3” is considered the minimum level (Benchmark) that a program should achieve on each component.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Rating: NA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Definition</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Justification:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Not rated because no new data</td>
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<tr>
<td>about Program Definition was</td>
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<tr>
<td>collected for this report. Readers</td>
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<td>should rely on the rating provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>in the ESY Interim Evaluation</td>
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<td>Report, April 2015.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rating: 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fidelity of Implementation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Justification:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The ESY program meets the</td>
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<td>prerequisites and one of the two</td>
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<tr>
<td>standard elements required for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fidelity of Implementation,</td>
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<tr>
<td>earning it a rating of 3 (Benchmark) on</td>
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<tr>
<td>this component of the program. The</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following paragraphs provide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>additional detail about this rating.</td>
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</table>

Overall, responses to teacher surveys indicate that the major activities described in the program model are being widely implemented—individualized instruction, critical life skills, social/interaction skills, Collaborative Learning Teams (CLTs), school-wide behavior approaches, and service learning projects. The evaluation found that the program is implemented by site-based staff with a clear sense of the program’s purpose and scope. Additionally, the program is offered to all students whose IEP team refers them. Taken together, the findings indicated that the program has met the prerequisites for program implementation and one of the standard elements.

The program only partially meets the second standard element. While program activities are implemented across sites, there appears to be variability in how consistently they are implemented at the student-level. Based on concerns raised by about one-third of the ESY teachers, the evaluation concluded that instruction on students’ IEP goals was hampered by poorly written goals and lack of instructional materials, as well as inappropriate student grouping. This variability in consistency of program implementation at the student-level indicates that, while the majority of students received quality instruction, for a sizable minority instruction could be improved. The evaluation also found concerns about whether all sites were staffed with knowledgeable and skilled ESY administrators and teachers prepared to meet the specialized needs of the students they were serving. It was not clear whether staff training was able to make up for lack of prior knowledge. While ESY administrators and teachers generally thought their training prepared them to deliver the program, half of the PSLs who responded to a survey did not agree. In addition to issues about implementation, the evaluation found that IEP teams have a tendency to over-identify students for ESY due to a number of factors, and to a lesser extent, to under-identify certain types of students.
Overall the program activities are generally well implemented for the majority of students, but there are areas for improvement. To earn a “4” the program would need to develop better monitoring systems to address the quality of ESY IEP goals and supporting materials sent from base-schools, develop hiring models that would increase the percent of knowledgeable and skilled ESY administrators and teachers, and develop a process for reviewing at least a subsample of referrals to ESY to ensure that students are being appropriately identified for services.

### Outcomes

**Rating:** 3  
**Justification:**  
The ESY program meets the prerequisite for outcomes and one of the standard elements thus earning a 3 for this rating.

The program’s goal is for students who attend ESY to be rated as making progress on their goals at the end of ESY. The vast majority of students met this benchmark. Additionally, higher levels of attendance were associated with better ratings on goals further suggesting that the program was having an impact. The majority of parents also were satisfied with the program and felt their children had benefited from participation.

The program does not earn a 4 on Outcomes because the evidence is mixed as to whether it has achieved its long-term goal of preparing students to recoup loss and make progress in a reasonable amount of time, as defined by the end of the 1st quarter. School-year teachers rated only 57 percent of students as ready to recover lost skills at the start of the year. After a quarter of instruction, 67 percent of students were rated as ready to make progress. While this does show an increase, one would expect a higher percentage of students to be rated as ready after a full quarter of instruction. Furthermore, school year teachers’ ratings of student performance on students’ ESY goals were significantly lower at the end of the 1st quarter than at the end of ESY. Taken together these results suggest only moderate impacts of the program.

### Program Costs

**Rating:** 3  
**Justification:**  
ESY meets the prerequisites and partially meets the standard elements for Cost. The main concerns are that efforts to minimize costs may be having a negative effect on the students served and that the program’s long-term solvency issues remain, thus earning a rating of 3. The following paragraphs provide additional detail about this rating.

The program meets prerequisites for Cost by describing how funds are used to support program goals, by having sufficient financial records to allow calculation of per-student costs and by minimizing costs. It also meets one standard element by reflecting on the impact of cuts to program quality. During interviews, program staff described in detail how funds were allocated to different program activities to support ESY services. The program is allocated a budget of over $5 million annually. Approximately $4 million of the budget is used for the academic program; the remainder of the funds are used for transportation. As described in the ESY interim evaluation report, during FY 2015 the program relied on reserve funds to cover the gap (approximately $0.75 million) between its $5.15 million in funding and actual expenditures. For FY 2016, the program was allocated $5.5 million. To decrease reliance on reserve funds, between FY 2015 and 2016, staff engaged in cost minimization efforts that are estimated to achieve a $0.14 million reduction in overall program costs. Since the largest share of the budget is spent on staffing, that was the focus for cuts. As staff described the cuts, they provided a rationale for the choice and justification about how they expected minimal impacts on program quality. Specifically, the one-day reduction in contract time for Instructional Assistants (IAs) was a planning day not an instructional day. The replacement of SPARTs with lead teachers was done at the elementary sites to save costs but not at the secondary sites because staff said it was a more demanding, full-time job at
the secondary level due to the number of students and types of issues that arose. They noted that contract time for the CLTs was cut based on feedback from ESY administrators and teachers that it was not useful, though the program maintained its expectation that ESY administrators and teachers discuss students during contract hours. The program also experienced a one percent decrease in student enrollment for FY 2016 rather than its traditional 6.7 percent growth rate. The program attributes the decrease to changes in the training of Procedural Support Liaisons. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that staff understand their program costs and attempt to optimize costs in ways that will have the least impact on the program.

The program cannot receive a 4 due to concerns that efforts to cut costs are beginning to impact program quality. The results of the evaluation indicate that there may be unintended consequences from efforts to reduce funding for supplies and materials to ESY. Additionally, concerns about program solvency remain despite the cost-saving efforts by the program. At current funding levels, it is unclear that the program could optimize costs sufficiently to bring expenditures in line with annual funding. The program could earn a “4” by bringing costs in line with budget without negatively impacting program quality.