Second Year Evaluation Report

Acceleration Day and Evening Academy (ACCEL)

*For the Alabama Public Charter School Commission*

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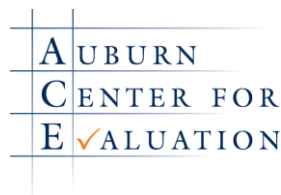
Executive Summary

Summative Finding

Although operating a relatively new school is always a challenge, operating a school as a stand-alone entity with its own education paradigms serving an increasing number of students who have, for the most part, faced large hurdles in pursuing their education is especially daunting. Overall, it is very clear that ACCEL has made great strides to accurately and effectively implement their program during the second year of service. Data collected by this evaluation indicate that the charter adheres to the performance expectations outlined at the time of its Alabama Public Charter School Application and to those established by the resulting Public Charter School Charter Contract.

Evaluation Purpose

The focus of the present report will be on the extent to which the Acceleration Day and Evening Academy (ACCEL), a public charter school, was in adhering to the performance expectations outlined at the time of its Alabama Public Charter School Application and established by the resulting Public Charter School Charter Contract. The primary purpose of the evaluation was to provide stakeholders, including the Alabama Public Charter School Commission (APCSC) and the Alabama State Department of Education, school employees, students, and parents, with data about the impact of this school during the 2018-2019 school year. The findings of this report are intended to be used to provide information to stakeholders of the program so that future planning and decision-making can be informed.

Frameworks for Evaluation

As part of the charter school enabling legislation and subsequent actualization of the law, the APCSC adopted frameworks for annual evaluations of charter schools in Alabama. These

frameworks form the structure of the current report. In addition, given best practice in evaluation, a site visit where stakeholders including school leaders, board members, parents, teachers, students, and guidance personnel were interviewed individually or in focus groups was conducted. Additionally, a number of classroom observations were made by the team and these are summarized and included in the report. The greatest portion of evaluation time and resources was devoted to identification, collection, and synthesis of appropriate data. In addition to the general approach (for whom, under what conditions, and to what extent the school has met set standards or did not meet them), the questions addressed in this evaluation focused on criteria set within three Alabama Public Charter School Commission (Commission) frameworks: (1) Academic Performance, (2) Organizational Performance, and (3) Financial Performance Frameworks. Each framework is divided into indicator categories. For each indicator measure under the Academic Performance Framework (APF), four ratings are possible: "Exceeds Standard", "Meets Standard", "Does Not Meet Standard, or "Falls Far Below Standard."

Academic Performance Framework Ratings	
Exceeds Standard	Charter school receives a performance designation of "Exemplary" or "Very Good."
	School proficiency rate is 10 or more percentage points above the district average.
	School MGP is 5 or more points above the district median.
	Charter school graduation rate is 10 or more percentage points above the district average.
	Charter school proficiency rate exceeds expected performance (effect size >=.30).
	The charter school exceeded its school-specific academic goal(s).
Meets Standard	Charter school receives a performance designation of "Good."
	School proficiency rate is equal to or is up to 9 percentage points above the district average.
	School MGP is equal to or up to 4 percentage points above the district median.
	Charter school graduation rate is equal to or up to 9 percentage points above the district

	average.
	Charter school proficiency rate meets or slightly exceeds expected performance (effect size 0 to .29)
	The charter school met its school-specific academic goal(s).
Does Not Meet Standard	Charter school receives a performance designation of "Fair."
	School proficiency rate is up to 9 percentage points below the district average.
	School MGP is up to 4 points below the district median.
	Charter school graduation rate is up to 9 percentage points below the district average.
	Charter school proficiency rate is lower than expected performance (effect size -0.01 to -.29)
	The charter school did not meet its school-specific academic goal(s).
Falls Far Below Standard	Charter school receives a performance designation of "Underperforming" or "Lowest 5 Percent."
	School proficiency rate is 10 or more percentage points below the district average.
	School MGP is 5 or more points below the district median.
	Charter school graduation rate is 10 or more percentage points below the district average.
	Charter school proficiency rate falls far below expected performance (effect size <=-.30)
	Charter school graduation rate falls far below expected performance (effect size <=-.30)
	The charter school fell far below its school-specific academic goal(s).

For each indicator measure under the Operational Performance Framework (OPF) and the Financial Performance Framework (FPF), a rating of "Meets Standard" or "Does Not Meet Standard" will be determined:

Operational Performance Framework Ratings	
Meets Standard	The school complies with and presents no concerns in the evidence statements.
Does Not Meet Standard	The school failed to implement the program in the manner described in the evidence statements; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school, or regardless of the severity of the failure(s), the board has not instituted remedies that have resulted in prompt and sufficient movement toward compliance to the satisfaction of the authorizer.

Financial Performance Framework Ratings	
Meets Standard	A *Meets* rating indicates sound financial viability based on the overall financial record. The school may have already met the absolute Financial Performance Framework standard based on the financials under review, or, any concerns have been adequately addressed based on additional information such that the Commission concludes that performance indicates sound financial viability.
Does Not Meet Standard	A *Does Not Meet* rating means that even based on the most current financial information (recent audited financials and more current unaudited financials), the school is not currently meeting the standard, and/or concerns previously identified and of heightened monitoring and/or intervention have not been adequately corrected and/or, if not currently manifested, have been of a depth or duration that warrants continued attention. A *Does Not Meet* rating indicates that upon evidence from the performance framework, quarterly reports, notice of concerns, and investigation and review, the Commission identifies significant financial risk such that heightened monitoring and/or intervention are warranted. Appropriate monitoring and or interventions will be determined on a case by case basis, and, in part, by how the rating on the standard in question fits within the school's overall performance on the financial framework.

The first framework, APF, includes measures that allow the Commission to evaluate charter school academic performance. These measures include State and Federal Accountability

standards. In order to align charter school accountability expectations with the state accountability system, the state's measures serve as the foundation of the APF, supplemented by additional measures required by the Alabama School Choice and Opportunity Act. The accountability system evaluates all students and targeted subgroups on three components: proficiency, growth, and career and college readiness (CCR). It also includes graduation rate, chronic absenteeism, and ELP. Academic performance is also compared to that of other schools within the school's local district.

The second framework, OPF, is divided into six indicators. Each indicator is further divided into specific measures where the school must meet the standard. The framework assesses the school's adherence to the material terms of its proposed education program as defined in its current charter contract. It addresses whether the school is complying with applicable education requirements and seeks to ensure that the school is protecting the rights of students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL).

The OPF assesses the school's financial viability and financial management by determining if the school is meeting financial reporting and compliance requirements and if it is following Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). An assessment is also made of the governing board's compliance with its governance requirements and its responsibility to hold the school management team accountable. Reviews are also made to ensure the school's adherence to protecting the rights of the students and parents they serve as well as the staff they employ. This framework also aims to ensure the school's facilities are safe for occupancy, that the school complies with student transportation laws, meets state and federal health and safety requirements, and properly maintains and handles information. Lastly, it evaluates whether the school is meeting its mission-specific organizational goals.

The Financial Performance Framework is a reporting tool that provides the Commission with the necessary data to assess the financial health and viability of charter schools in its portfolio for the purposes of an annual financial trends. The measures are designed to be complementary. No single measure gives a full picture of the financial situation of a school. One of the Commission's core responsibilities with respect to charter schools is to protect the public interest. The Financial Framework is the primary lever for carrying out this responsibility with respect to the allocation of public funds to charter schools.

The indicators for the financial framework are as follows:

1.a	Current Ratio (Near-Term)
1.b	Unrestricted Days Cash (Near-Term)
1.c	Debt Default (Near-Term)
2.a	Total Margin (Sustainability)
2.b	Debt to Asset Ratio (Sustainability)
2.c	Cash Flow (Sustainability)
	Enrollment Variance (Informational)

When reviewing the financial viability of schools, two sets of targets are used. One set is used for schools within Year One and Two of their operation (Stage 1) and the other is for schools at their 3rd year and beyond (Stage 2). This is ACCEL's second year, and such, Stage 1 standards will be used to measure its financial performance.

ACCEL serves students within the Mobile County Public School System, which includes Mobile, Baldwin, and Washington Counties. These students either have fallen behind in school or desire a different education option. Services are provided for grades 9-12 and the school is in its second year of operations. ACCEL was designed to expand the number of struggling students that could be served within the Mobile area and to strengthen the quality of education available to these students. ACCEL's approach to learning is student-centered wherein students are empowered and encouraged to learn at their individual pace through exploration of topics of interest to them and by using learned skills to address real-world projects.

ACCEL was established in 2017 by the Mobile Area Education Foundation (MAEF) as the first approved charter school in Alabama following the passing of the state's charter school law in 2015. ACCEL offers both day and evening courses to help students graduate and prepare for college. This schedule offers students a more flexible option than those offered by traditional schools. ACCEL is located at 3100 Cottage Hill Rd, Mobile, AL 36606.

Evaluation Design, Methods and Limitations

The Holistic Model of Evaluation was used in the present project. The Model was refined by the Auburn Center for Evaluation to meet the dual and simultaneous goals of: (1) Providing information to school staff and stakeholders that can be used throughout the charter contract term and (2) Providing information to school staff and stakeholders on how well the school is performing (program valuation).

Data collection that occurred over the past year used an electronic database, interviews, and site visit observations. Thus, to conduct such an evaluation, the Center used its expertise in both qualitative (interviewing/observing) and quantitative (numerical data and statistics) to

measure the progress of the school: school planning, collection of outcome data, school documents, and school status visits were also examined. The use of multiple methods of data collection supports "triangulation," which is a systematic process of confirmation and establishes interpretive credibility. Triangulation was used through two strategies: 1) triangulating among methods of gathering data and 2) triangulating using multiple sources of data.

The evaluators will work with ACCEL staff in all future evaluations to analyze any limitations within and inconsistencies throughout data collection and analysis. The evaluators will also work to use the findings in this report to adjust data collection and analysis in subsequent evaluation reports throughout the rest of the five year re-approval cycle.

Academic Performance Framework Findings

ACCEL's mission of educating students who are overage for grade, under-credited, or have previously dropped out complicates academic performance findings under the state rubric because the rubric was not designed for use with non-traditional or specialized student populations. Given the alternative nature and specialized population of ACCEL academy, a great many of the categories on the Alabama Charter School Commission's framework cannot be appropriately answered with data that are available. Furthermore, comparisons between ACCEL and local schools may be looked at as a reference point, but should not be taken as a comparison given that the mission and population of each system differs greatly. As such, these academic performance scores need to be taken in context to be appropriately considered during review.

Academic Performance

ACT

Academic performance is conceptualized two ways per the rubric – in terms of standardized tests using ACT scores and in terms of college and career readiness using ACT WorkKeys scores. We first present findings using ACT results, comparing ACCEL to Mobile County as a reference. Figure 1 below presents the average ACT score by subject area between ACCEL and Mobile County. Table 1 breaks down school-wide ACT proficiency rates by subject area, representing the percentage of students that have passed the benchmark score by subject area. This is the percentage of students that scored Level 3 or higher in each area. Note that given available data, it is not currently possible to compare the performance of ACCEL students with those of Mobile County in the same year. As such, ACCEL Academy's 2018-19 cohort is compared with Mobile County's 2017-18 cohort.
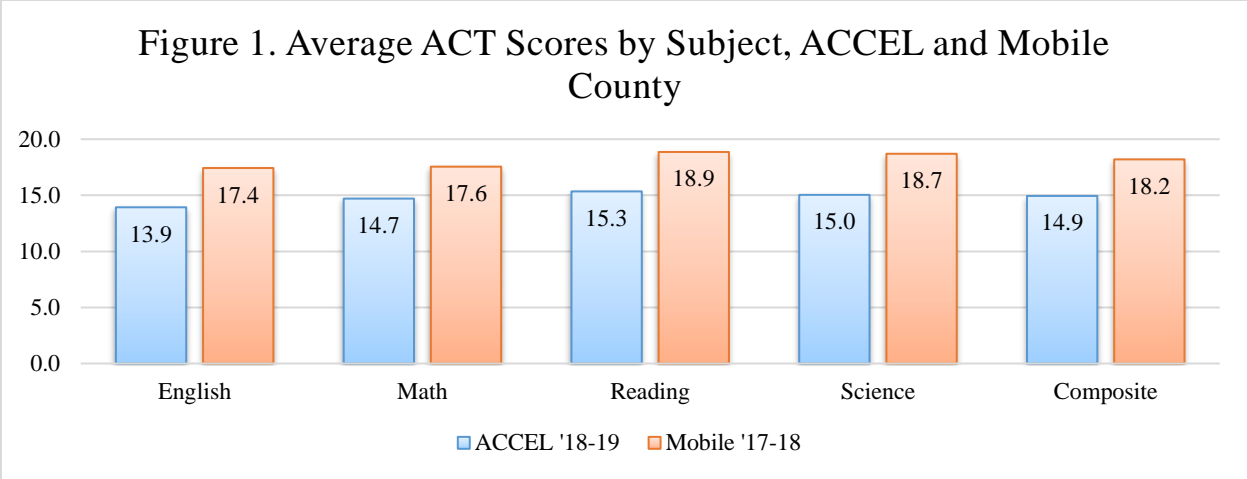
Figure 1. Average ACT Scores by Subject, ACCEL and Mobile County

Table 1.

ACT Proficiency Rates by Subject Area

	% Students Proficient	
Subject	ACCEL Academy (18-19)	Mobile County (17-18)
ACT English	20%	41%
ACT Math	1%	43%
ACT Science	4%	38%
ACT Reading	11%	40%

WorkKeys

Next, we present the results of the WorkKeys test for gauging College and Career
Readiness. Students are considered college and career ready if they score Silver or better
(Level 4+) on each category of the WorkKeys test. Typically, students take three tests:
Applied Mathematics, Graphic Literacy (Reading for Information), and Workplace Documents
(Locating Information). Table 2 breaks down ACCEL Academy scores at each level by test
subject, reporting both the number and percentage of students.

Table 2.
ACCEL ACT WorkKeys Results

	Applied Mathematics		Graphic Literacy		Workplace Documents	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Below Bronze	12	28%	0	0%	0	0%
Bronze	16	37%	16	37%	13	30%
Silver	12	28%	8	19%	24	56%
Gold	3	7%	11	26%	4	9%
Platinum	2	5%	0	0%	0	0%

Of the above scores, a total of 28% (12 students) scored a Silver or better on all WorkKeys tests, shown in Table 3 below. This is a 1.1% increase over the passing rate (26.9%) last year (Year One; 2017-2018 school year) for ACCEL.

Table 3.

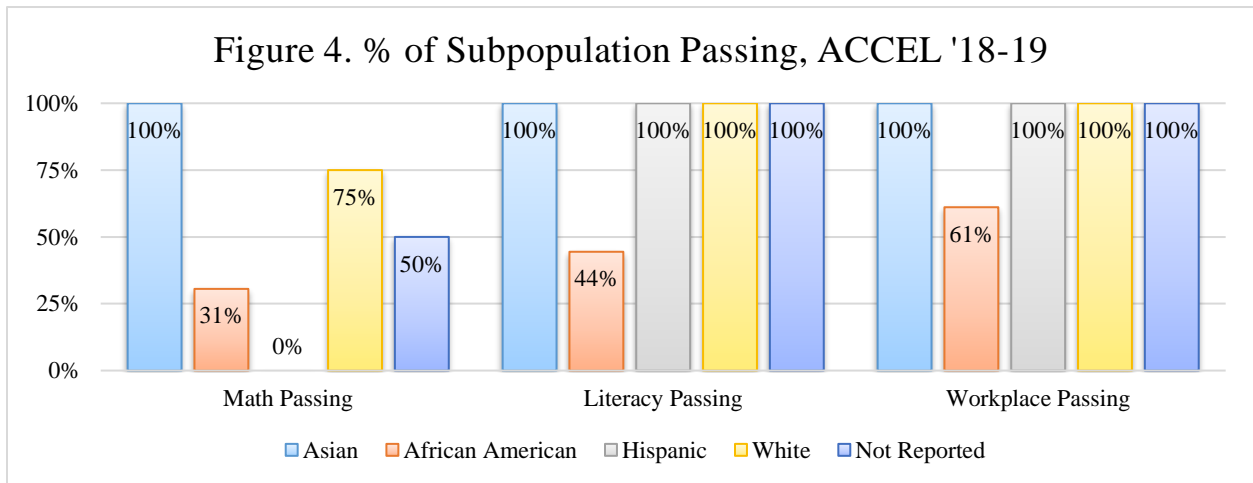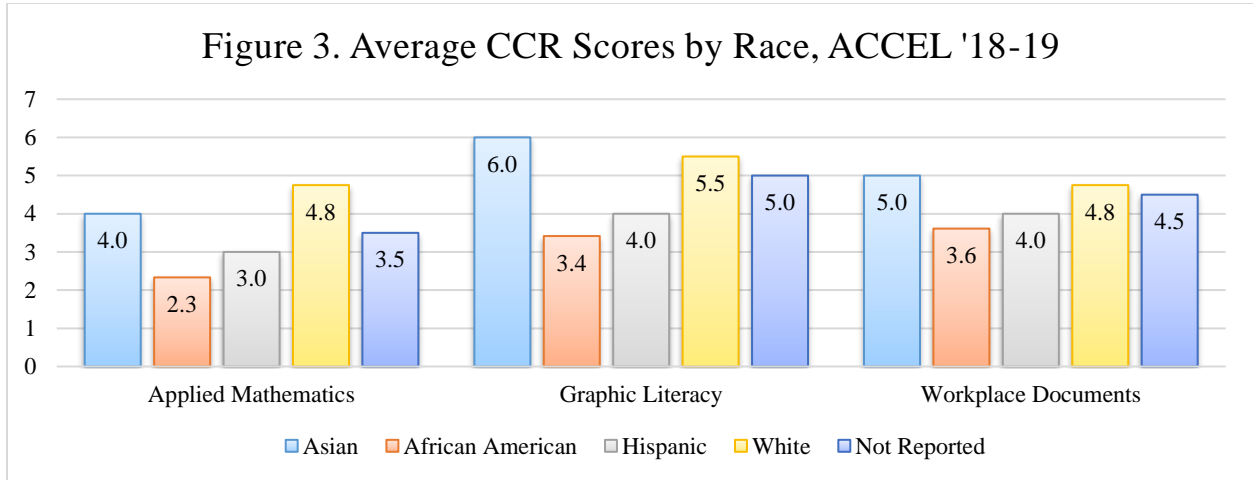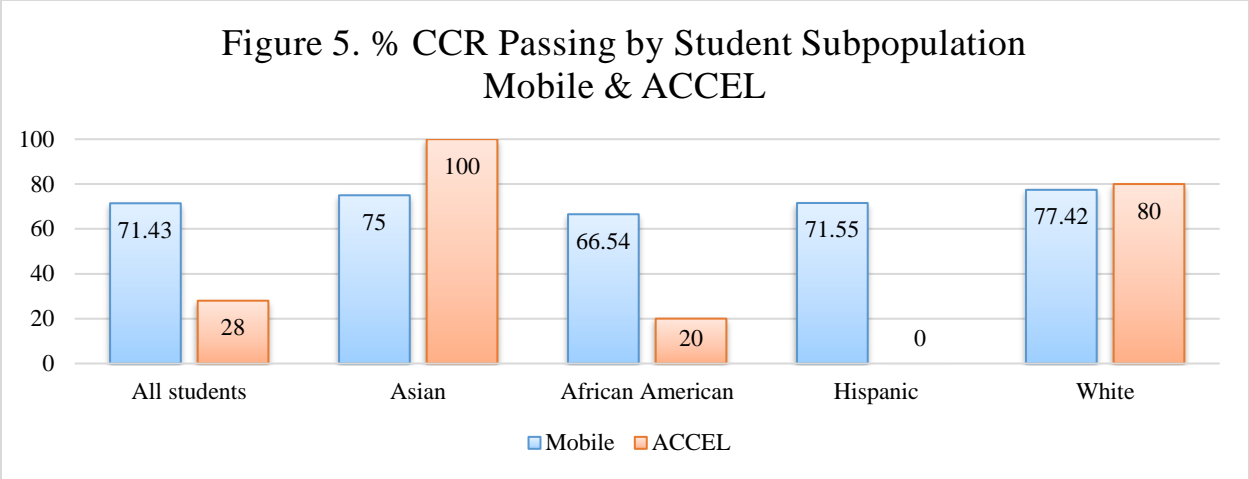| Career & College Ready	#	%
ACCEL	12	28%
Mobile County	-	72%

Figure 3 below presents the magnitude of change from 2017-18 to 2018-19 by WorkKeys score percentage for students at ACCEL.

Figure 2: % Change WorkKeys Scores '17-18 to '18-19
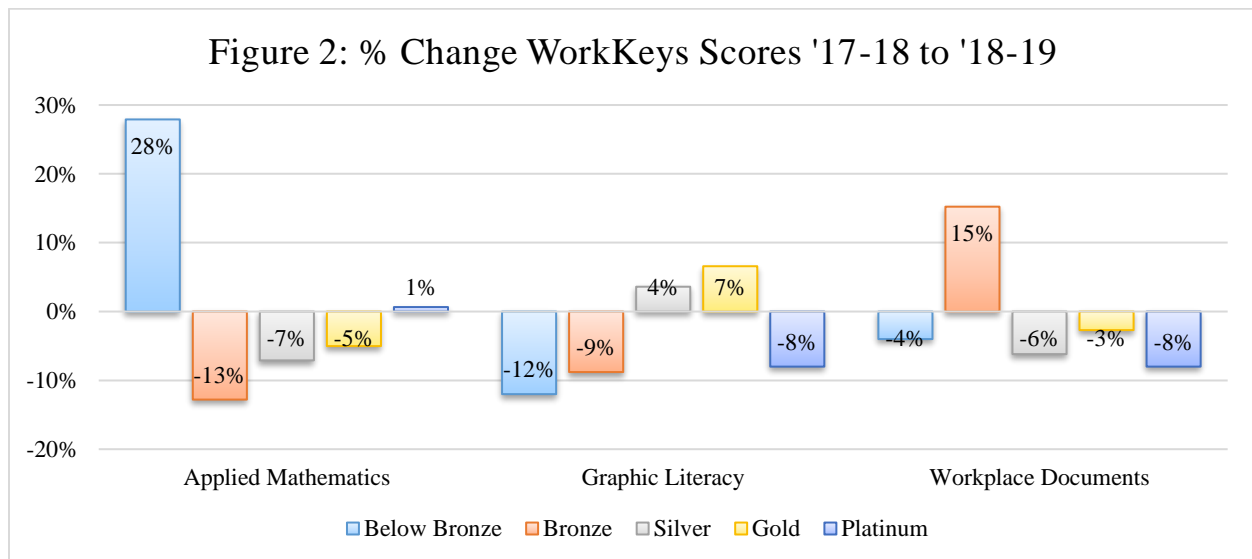
Figures 3-5 present WorkKeys scores broken out by student racial subpopulations. Figure 3 presents the average score (out of 7) by racial group at ACCEL academy. Figure 4 presents the percentage of that subpopulation attaining a passing score (4+) on each WorkKeys assessment. Finally, Figure 5 presents a comparison of each racial subpopulation passing all three WorkKeys assessments in ACCEL academy '18-19 compared to Mobile County '17-18.

Figure 3. Average CCR Scores by Race, ACCEL '18-19

Assessment	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White	Not Reported
Applied Mathematics	4.0	2.3	3.0	4.8	3.5
Graphic Literacy	6.0	3.4	4.0	5.5	5.0
Workplace Documents	5.0	3.6	4.0	4.8	4.5

Figure 4. % of Subpopulation Passing, ACCEL '18-19

Assessment	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White	Not Reported
Math Passing	100%	31%	0%	75%	50%
Literacy Passing	100%	44%	100%	100%	100%
Workplace Passing	100%	61%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 5. % CCR Passing by Student Subpopulation Mobile & ACCEL

Subpopulation	Mobile	ACCEL
All students	71.43	28
Asian	75	100
African American	66.54	20
Hispanic	71.55	0
White	77.42	80

ACCEL does not conceptualize students as Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors. Rather, they categorize students in three phases: Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3. Given current conceptualizations and data availability, matriculation and graduation rates are not possible. Furthermore, specific graduation rates were not provided and are often difficult to garner for nontraditional populations. A rough estimate based on ACCEL's graduation announcement and ADM puts them at a ballpark 40% graduation rate, although this number should be taken with caution. As noted in the prior year's review, stakeholders should negotiate a manner in which to calculate comparison measures between grades and phases, along with comparable graduation metrics and subgroup data.

Alabama Charter School Commission Framework

As noted above, given that ACCEL does not serve a traditional population, the Alabama Charter School Commission's overall framework for academic evaluation is not designed for specialized schools. While a strong tool for roughly equivalent schools, cross-sectional comparisons scores between the outlying school district and this specialized charter school are often incommensurable. While growth metrics can serve as a meaningful way to

assess school progress, ACCEL has not yet been in operation long enough to make meaningful longitudinal comparisons.

Given these constraints, judgements on accountability ratings may not be rendered in several categories due to inapplicable or unavailable data. As such, many of the determinations below will be listed as N/A, or not applicable. Future evaluations might be better served in cases of non-traditional framing of promotion and grade assignment to consider alternate rubrics for schools that are serving nontraditional populations that might be more useful for reaching data-driven decisions about the efficacy of ACCEL.

Indicator 1. State and Federal Accountability				
Measure		Possible Evidence Artifacts	Sources Reviewed	Rating
1a.1 & 1a.2	Is the charter school meeting performance expectations based on the Alabama Accountability System?	College and Career Readiness (CCR) documentation: 1. ACT Scores 2. ACT Work Keys Scores 3. College credits received by students 4. Numbers and outcomes of students in dual-enrollment courses 5. Industry Credentials received by students 6. Evidence of students being accepted into any branch of the military Other student performance data: 1. State testing data 2. Graduation outcomes 3. Course grades 4. Numbers of students enrolled in all classes and sections 5. Passing rates for core courses Evidence of administration of state-approved English language proficiency placement test. Attendance records of students. Types of and numbers of students utilizing remediation strategies and the outcomes for these students.	1. ACT Scores 2. ACT Work Keys Scores 3. Demographic Information 4. Student suspensions and expulsions, as well as outcomes (students returned, did not return, and/or students were repeat offenders). 5. Attendance records of students.	**Meets Expectations – This is contingent on highly limited information. While ACT and CCR scores are below the state median, small performance gains in the percentage of students considered CCR**

		Student suspensions and expulsions, as well as outcomes (students returned, did not return, and/or students were repeat offenders). Growth rate data. List and number of dropouts. Student demographic information. Documentation showing Charter school successfully met its school-specific goal.		

There is no Indicator 2 Category within the APF.

Indicator 3. Geographic Comparisons				
Measure		Possible Evidence Artifacts	Sources Reviewed	Rating
3a.1	How are charter school students performing on state assessments compared to the district in which the school is located?	Comparative District State Assessment Data	1. ACT Scores 2. ACT Proficiency Rates 3. WorkKeys Results	**N/A** – data available but not a relevant comparison
3a.2	How are charter school students in subgroups performing on state assessments compared to the district in which the charter is located?	Comparative Subgroup State Assessment Data	1. ACT Scores 2. ACT Proficiency Rates 3. WorkKeys Results	**N/A** – data available but not a relevant comparison
3b.1	Are charter school students meeting growth expectations compared to the district in which the school is located? (based on subgroup median growth percentiles (MGPs)	Comparative Growth Data	Data not available	**N/A**
3b.2	Are charter school student subgroups meeting growth expectations compared to the student subgroups in the district in which the charter is located? (based on subgroup median growth percentiles (MGPs)	Comparative Subgroup Growth Data	Data not available	**N/A**

3c.1	How are charter school student graduation rates compared to the district in which the charter is located?	Comparative Graduation Rate Data	Data not available	**N/A** – data available but not a relevant comparison
3c.2	How do charter school student subgroup graduation rates compared to the district graduation rates in which the charter is located?	Comparative Subgroup Graduation Rate Data	Data not available	**N/A** – data available but not a relevant comparison

Indicator 4. Growth Comparisons: All Students				
Measure		Possible Evidence Artifacts	Sources Reviewed	Rating
4a	How are charter school students performing on state assessments compared to schools serving similar students?	Comparative State Assessment Data	Comparative population not available	**N/A** – no comparative data
4b	How did the charter school graduation rate compare to schools serving similar students statewide?	Comparative Statewide Graduation Rate Data	Comparative population not available	**N/A** – no comparative data

Indicator 5. School-Specific Goals				
Measure		Possible Evidence Artifacts	Sources Reviewed	Rating
5a	Did the charter school meet its school-specific academic goals?	School-Specific Goal Data	Spring Semester Goal	**Falls Far Below Standard** – Projected 66% would receive an 18 or higher on ACT, only 19% did.

Operational Performance Framework Findings

Indicator 1. Education Program				
Measure		Possible Evidence Artifacts	Sources Reviewed	Rating
1.a	Is the school implementing the material terms of the education program as defined in the current charter contract?	Educational Program Terms-Charter Contract) Board meeting agendas, packets, reports, and minutes Observational data	Board meeting agendas, reports, and minutes	**Meets Standard**
1.b	Is the school complying with applicable education requirements?	Charter contact including *Statement of Assurances* Academic calendar (including State assessments) Consolidated Program Review Report (if applicable) Observational data	Academic calendar	**Meets Standard**
1.c	Is the school protecting the rights of students with disabilities?	Observational data Evaluations and eligibility determination Documented implementation of Individual Education Plans Evidence of Prior Written Notice Evidence of Procedural Safeguard Notices to students and families Service Delivery Logs 504 evaluations and eligibility Documented implementation of 504 Plans Discipline data	Documented implementation of Individual Education Plans, Evidence of Procedural Safeguard Notices to students and families, evidence of prior written notice, discipline data	**Meets Standard**
1.d	Is the school protecting the rights of English Language Learners (ELL) students?	Enrollment policy and procedures Home Language Survey	Enrollment policy and procedures, Home Language Survey,	**N/A** – Some documentation provided but more needed to make a valid assessment

		All school enrollment forms and packets in English and any translated version the school uses		
		A description of the process the school uses to ensure that interpretation and translation services are provided to communicate vital information with LEP parents		
		Evidence of ELL training for staff, participation, and Implementation		
		Parent Notifications forms: initial placement, continued eligibility transition from English development services		
		Updated Staff Qualifications		
		Evidence of progress monitoring of exited ELL students and service delivery as required		
		Roster of eligible ELL students, indicating language proficiency level and the type and amount of English language development services provided for each student		

Indicator 2. Financial Management and Oversight				
Measure		Possible Evidence Artifacts	Sources Reviewed	Rating
2.a	Is the school meeting financial reporting and compliance requirements?	Auditor Report	No information provided	**N/A** – no information provided
2.b	Is the school following Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)?	Auditor Report	No information provided	**N/A** – no information provided

Indicator 3. Governance and Reporting				
Measure		Possible Evidence Artifacts	Sources Reviewed	Rating
3.a	Is the school governing board complying with governance requirements?	Charter contract Articles of incorporation (including bylaws) Board meeting schedule, agendas, announcements, packets, reports, meeting discussions, notes, and minutes Board roster, board resumes and disclosure forms, conflict of interest policies and forms (if applicable) Annual F1 Personal Finance Disclosure Statement Accountability Audit Report	Board agendas, communications	**N/A** – not enough information provided
3.b	Is the governing board holding the school management team accountable?	Board meeting reports, and minutes, meeting discussions and notes School leader evaluation or template	Board meeting reports, and minutes, meeting discussions and notes	**Meets Standard**
3.c	Is the school complying with reporting requirements?	Meeting agendas, discussions, and notes Annual Compliance Calendar	Meeting agendas, discussions, and notes	**Meets Standard**

Indicator 5. School Environment				
Measure		Possible Evidence Artifacts	Sources Reviewed	Rating
5.a	Is the school complying with facilities and transportation requirements?	Inspection reports, permits, and certification collected during pre-opening.	No information	**N/A** – no information provided

5.b	Is the school complying with health and safety requirements?	Collected through Annual Compliance calendar through Emergency Contact Information, Training on Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting. School safety and emergency preparedness plans.	School safety and emergency preparedness plans	**Meets Standard**
5.c	Is the school maintaining and handling information appropriately?	Detailed policies that comply with all federal, state, and local laws pertaining to privacy and security.	SchoolMint documents, Employee Handbook	**Meets Standard**

Indicator 6. Additional Obligations				
6.a	Is the school meeting its mission-specific organizational goals?	• Observational data • Interview data	Some goals inferred, staff training materials	**Meets Standard**

Financial Performance Framework Findings

For the 2018-2019 school year, there was no financial data available at the time of the report. The financial performance framework could not be completed for Year Two, and no comparisons between Years One and Two could be completed. Next year's evaluation will do a retroactive analysis of the 2018-2019, Year Two data as well as data from the current school year, Year Three.

School and Classroom Observation Findings

The following sections of this report include data on (1) the physical space and materials present and used throughout the school, (2) the instruction and pace of the separate activities and of the program as a whole, (3) the quality and nature of staff interactions, and (4) the quality and nature of the perceived student experience. These data include findings from both formal observations as well as the incidental observations that took place throughout the two days of on-site data collection.

1. There were consistently sufficient materials and supplies for the number of youth participating in each observed academic activity. Those materials and supplies being used were in good working condition. The physical space of the whole school was well organized and the space within individual classrooms was also well organized. The work of program participants was displayed throughout the space on bulletin boards and on walls within the classrooms and hallways.

2. The pace of the program was organized, relaxed, and flexible. Students and teachers transitioned between activities easily and smoothly and blocks started smoothly and on time. The observed classroom and activity times were almost always free from interruptions and distractions. Tasks and assignments for students offered a balance of group sizes and incorporated a rage of instructional approaches including individual work and team/small group work along with project-based instruction and discussion-based instruction. The individual activities always seemed to be part of a curricular unit, the assigned tasks were successful at maintaining student engagement, and the activities offered youth choice and the opportunity to employ and develop both decision-making skills and critical thinking skills throughout all observations.

3. Staff members were energetic and enthusiastic. They helped spark and sustain student interest throughout all of the observed activities. The observed staff-youth interactions were positive and respectful. Staff members were actively engaged during all observations. It was observed multiple times that staff helped youth think through problems themselves rather than immediately offering solutions. Teachers accomplished this through having the whole class work through a question asked by one individual, through asking open ended questions to a student/a group of students, and through modeling a similar scenario to a small group of students. Rules and limits seemed fair and consistent when applied across groups of students, and staff used a neutral tone when reminding students to redirect their behavior as seen on occasion both with a sleeping student and with other students using their cell phones. Staff members were respectful and supportive of one another, and the administration team was actively engaging both staff and students during times of transition. Staff members were closely supervising the youth and activities throughout the observation blocks both when there was a full class as well as in the smaller groups during Expedition Friday. Staff were flexible in their management of youth and staff engaged in friendly verbal exchanges with students and with each other. They encouraged and listened to individual youth and they exhibited a high standard of professional conduct around youth and administration.

4. Students tended to show an interest in staff, students were generally cooperative and compliant with staff requests, and students listened attentively to staff. Youth were generally busy and engaged throughout the activities and rarely seemed off-task. Students appeared in control of themselves and they followed program rules throughout the activities.

Supports for Instructions

Throughout the site visit, it was observed that activities offered students choice and decision-making whenever available. Students were seen choosing areas of focus for projects, choosing partners for working together, and choosing how to spend their free time. This autonomy was coupled with support from teachers through one-on-one check ins, expertly facilitated group discussions, and public and private praises for specific behaviors of many students. The culture of encouragement seemed to be engrained in the systems of the school and it appeared to be impactful, even as students occasionally demonstrated inappropriate behavior (e.g., sleeping, being on cell phones). The friendly and individualized way administrators engaged with students in the hallways between classes also provided evidence of the supportive nature of relationships at ACCEL.

In multiple observations that coincided with the end of activities or the end of class times, teachers made sure to provide a structured time for feedback and planning for the future. One teacher used this time to outline plans for the coming weeks and another teacher let students take the lead on sharing their work from the day with each other. Having this time to wrap up by reflecting on and/or looking toward what is next is ideal and supports the instruction taking place in those classrooms.

Possible Barriers to Instruction

Throughout the halls and classrooms at ACCEL, there was limited reflection of a variety of cultures. There was one diversity poster and there was a poster of at least one other country in an individual classroom, but there also were Christian-specific teachings present in multiple classrooms. In one activity, a Bible verse was used as the basis for a reflective writing assignment for all students in the classroom. While there wasn't a complete absence of diverse

representation, this is an area where there is room for improvement in subsequent years. Using displays and materials that reflect a wide variety of cultures, ethnicities, races, and religions may help students feel more comfortable and prepared to learn.

The schedule of the site visit allowed for the opportunity to conduct observations during the Friday Expeditions. The pace and structure of each expedition activity generally depended on the activity, but they were almost all productive and engaging regardless of the content. The exception to this pattern included the Yearbook group. The time was disorganized and hectic, and students seemed passive and disengaged in spite the site visit coinciding with the end of the school year which could be prime yearbook production time.

It was noted that in multiple classrooms and in various situations, students had their cell phones out during class time. While the use of technology generally seemed appropriate and beneficial for students, cell phones were a common distraction and point of redirection for teachers across multiple classrooms. It is recommended that the use of cell phones by students be monitored to ensure they are not currently (and they are not becoming) a barrier to instruction for students at ACCEL.

School Leadership and Guidance Counselor Interviews

Summary of Findings

One of the most salient themes throughout the Year Two interviews with the ACCEL leadership team was growth. It was reported that from Year One to Year Two, the number of students enrolled at ACCEL increased from 265 students to 324 students. Class sizes increased accordingly from about 24 students to 28 students per class, and the number of applicants for new students increased to over 600.

These changes in the student population were concurrent with leadership "refining the

procedures to consistently deliver" to students and staff. In addition to the growing pains and related evolutions of policies and procedures, the experience of having the school server hacked along with facing frustrations with NextGen reporting software with the state have both been other defining events for Year Two of ACCEL. One school leader spoke of the frustrations around these incidents saying, "not only do we have to triple the work load to fix what they have done, no one has instructed us to get done, no one has told us how to do it. We're small potatoes to the rest of the state. They're not sure if they want to help us, it's been a huge disappointment to me, but it's held up. We've gotten through it." This resiliency through two defining events has built community within the school and also helped focus efforts to bring in and involve the community outside of the walls of ACCEL.

It was reported that, "they (the other schools in Mobile County) want us here- they are sending the kids there. They need us here- what that does is that it makes it difficult, there has to be a lot of work done with those families to help the kids succeed. It's not just the school, it's the whole universe of the student."

Because of some of the educational challenges that became apparent in Year Two for students, the administration at ACCEL decided to implement changes. Some changes were minor and procedural (for example, they "did a better job of listening to students and now have study hall for an hour") while others are foundational and require a shift in the vision of the school as it stands in Year Two.

ACCEL reported having made a decision to include students started at grade 7 instead of grade 9 in subsequent years. This move will help prevent students from coming to ACCEL so far behind "that there is no way to get them caught up," which has been common throughout Years One and Two. Having students enter the charter school earlier would help lessen the gaps in

knowledge current students have faced during their first year at ACCEL but increasing the number of students will also bring about additional challenges. The administration said, "the biggest concern that we have [in expanding down grades] is losing the personal touch, that particular work is sharing our philosophy, we [have] repurposed our model- the idea is to ask the key leaders to repurpose existing staff and hiring new staff next year [in order to add more grades to ACCEL]." While the school will be at full capacity soon, the board will continue to look at the facility and the waiting list/lottery procedures that are in place as they continue to display resiliency throughout adverse experiences and through a continued time of growth.

Preliminary Findings

Although growing ACCEL to capacity is of paramount importance, growth without relative increases in funding has presented unique challenges so far for ACCEL. Not being able to hire additional faculty or staff was challenging for leadership in Year Two, and although there is not a quick or easy solution to this problem, perhaps increasing an awareness on all levels of leadership within the school about the challenges teachers and students are facing because of the influx of new students might help increase communication and allow for more focused support. The leadership team also reported, "we faced a lot more attendance and discipline problems this year." In addition, scheduling was a challenge because of the numbers of students who needed certain credits. The burden of, for example, the number of students who needed remedial classes exceeded the number of seats in those courses. Even though not being able to hire additional faculty is a large, systemic barrier, it is recommended that doubling down on communication efforts might help lessen the burden for students and teachers most affected by these temporary circumstances.

It was noted that the foundation will be focusing on committee work in coming years. There will be an Academic Excellence Committee (which will focus on teacher evaluations), an Operations and Governance Committee (to oversee the physical space of the school), and a Finance Committee (which will work to rebuilt and secure the server). The work of these committees is important, and it is recommended that members on this board have the option to receive professional development to account for any deficits in knowledge or areas that need additional support in order to best serve the students and families at ACCEL through their seat on a committee.

School Teacher Interviews

Summary of Findings

Teachers generally seemed satisfied with their experiences at ACCEL in Year Two. They discussed continuing to see changes in students who were finishing up their second year at the time of these interviews, and they talked about how helpful it was for the new (i.e., first year) students to have the returning students as models. One teacher said, "everything's leveling off now, the older students had peer pressured the younger students into getting with the program." Another teacher said, "I feel that especially the kids that we've had for two years now, you can see positive changes now, I've got these kids who are excited about graduating-you can get them to find the class, they're just great."

In addition, teachers have noticed an increase in student attendance issues. When asked to name the number one thing they would change about the school, a vast majority of teachers interviewed said "better attendance." One teacher said, "there are more students, [but] we increased the kids who actually came to school. We had a lot more night school students than we had before." Other teachers reported that classes sometimes became difficult to teach because so

many of the students were absent.

Teachers expressed that the culture of the school prioritizes professional development. One teacher reported that "PD is any form of professional learning" and at ACCEL, "it goes on all the time." For another teacher, being at ACCEL and having the various professional development opportunities "has made me really have to evaluate the kind of teacher and professional assignments [I give out], thinking back on my past career, here I make a difference and I didn't have that feeling in the past." The growth in understanding culture, especially with our Year One students, it impresses me a lot that they actually have internalized [how things go at ACCEL]. The beginning of this year was a little more rocky but now it feels like a total school with the two classes (folks that were there last year and the new folks this year)."

When asked to describe their experience teaching here, one teacher said, "I don't have to lean in and watch [over students] like other classes I've been in, for instance I have some kids in my first period class, they were in different groups, it was like organized chaos- they were able to get the work done, we can just give them the space to do that in [here]." Another teacher added, "I will agree our feeling here, like our faculty is so close- just by looking at and feeding off each other- I've worked at schools but this one has a unique culture."

Preliminary Findings

When asked to compare their experiences in Year Two to last year, Year One, teachers talked about increases in fighting, especially between female students. One teacher said, "we have a lot of similar issues as other schools, our discipline issues stem from attitudes- not following the same behavior that brought them here in the first place. [There are] some days when we've had zero issues." Another teacher talked about "yelling at [students] like I'll hate them for the rest of my life" in other schools, but at ACCEL, the administration "will come to

you each time [and say] 'let's find a common ground to deal with it together here.'" Even though there is administration support during tense behavior issues with students, it is recommended that a focus of subsequent years include data collection on fighting. Additionally, having some professional development on behavior management and behavior modification might help teachers feel more equipped to handle these frustrations within their classrooms.

Even though some teachers reported that they have seen progress in student attendance from last year to this year, other teachers added to the discussion by pointing out there is still room to go on decreasing truancy. One teacher shared a situation where a student was punished for truancy by being required to attend "truancy school" off campus, which then made them late for ACCEL. This dynamic "double punished students and they never got caught up." This can add pressure to teachers and make them feel like, "if you don't have the students, you can't teach." Perhaps continuing to focus on attendance and truancy would reduce the number of students whose education is negatively affected while also reducing the burden that falls on teachers who are trying to "adapt to whatever the class needs" while utilizing the tools available to them (e.g., Google Classroom) within the boundaries of the "make up policy that is empowering [students] to take control."

When asked what they would change about ACCEL if they could, teachers reported a desire to "expand the physical plant so we could exercise," "have organized sports, especially against other schools and playing other teams," "have a transportation system," "have books for classes- technology is great but books are a way to get everyone in one place," and to "have more parental engagement."

Student Interviews

Summary of Findings

Throughout the interview process, most students were eager to share their reflections about their time at ACCEL. One student said, "to me this school is awesome. I came in with 10.5 credits- I had to put my mind to it, day and night- I had to prove some people wrong. The teachers here and the staff are going to go the extra mile, I think this school is like a different family for me." Another student shared that they have felt supported at ACCEL in ways they haven't before: "my grades are getting better, the teachers pull me to the side and help. Last year [at a different school] I didn't get the help that I needed but this year teachers [at ACCEL] are helpful." A third student shared, "I had a really different experience with [other] public schools compared to here, here they actually take the time to give you the information you're looking for." Another student described their experience at ACCEL in this way: "at my old school I was having anxiety attacks, I was an honors student so I wasn't a priority, they just wanted me to move on- I heard there's a school opening up, [before I applied to ACCEL] we were just waiting until I was 17 to drop out."

In addition to their overall impressions of and experiences with ACCEL, students tended to also have a positive perception specifically of the instruction at ACCEL. One student compared classes here to their previous school by saying that, "the material is harder [at ACCEL] but the teachers are more supportive and they give you bigger opportunities." Another student explained, "our culture here is unique- we have dual enrollment classes and the teachers and friends help us by understanding that we have problems in our own lives which have nothing to do with school- they've done absolutely everything to help me."

Students were not the only ones satisfied with their ACCEL experience. When asked

what their parents thought about the school, students reflected that their parents also tended to like it. When asked to explain more, students shared that their parents liked it because of the opportunity it provides their students. According to one student, "my mom thinks I would have dropped out without this school." Another student said of their parents, "they like it, they say it's a miracle that I'm graduating. They like the school a lot because [the student is] getting one on one time, but they think it's better than my old school because I was just playing there." Another student shared that their parents know "pretty much everything" about the school and another chimed in, "my mom is just a dial away- [the school] calls parents for the grades, if you have credit issues." According to students, ACCEL is generally meeting their needs and the needs of their families.

Preliminary Findings

While students noted that there has been "not so much fighting [at ACCEL] as [there is] in other places," they also found it worthwhile to talk about the problem of fighting among students. One student said, "some students really get along- there's some fighting but people are mostly friendly," and another person said, "some students can get messy with fighting and discipline problems." A third student said, "but there's a lot less fighting here." The mixed experiences of how much fighting happens at ACCEL indicates that for some students, the amount of physical altercations may be inhibiting their educational experience. For others, it may be better than they expected and be a positive aspect in that regard. It is recommended that data be collected and tracked specifically on fighting so that policy and other decision-making can be informed by type, frequency, and duration of fights that do happen.

Although students presented with a general sense of satisfaction with ACCEL, they did complain throughout the interviews about not having extracurricular activities. One student said

having extracurricular activities, "would be a bonus to the school." Another student said, "there's no PE, you don't really have the chance to blow off steam. I used to run track. That's one thing I do miss, sports- and band." Another student pointed out that even though there are not extracurricular activities, "there's still so much to do here, so much happens, there's a lot of different opportunities here like AP Economics." It is recommended that a focus of development in subsequent years include additional opportunities for out-of-school activities for students.

Parent Interviews

Summary of Findings

Parents indicated that they are generally very satisfied with ACCEL. When asked to describe ACCEL, parents said, "I love it, it's a good school," "the environment that has been created shows that kids can find a place to succeed," "they make time instantly for parents to talk about your kids," and "things are handled in a timely manner." When asked to elaborate, a few parents recounted the changes they have seen in their children since moving from another school into ACCEL. For one family, that meant their student went from being bullied and told "he was just not smart" while also failing math to "he was so excited [to come to ACCEL and now] he loves math and he loves science." For another student with a diagnosed learning disability, he went from "missing a whole lot of school" at a private school to being at ACCEL where he "never has problems, before he just gave up, he didn't care, but here they want to see him do good." For another family, having their child accepted at ACCEL meant leaving behind old teachers who "said that he's going to be a dropout anyway so why should we bother to try?" and instead found a supportive environment where teachers "care about him, they pay attention to him and let him be successful!"

Parents also reported feeling like they know the teachers at ACCEL pretty well. They

reported being able to name and identify teachers while also feeling like teachers are available to them and responsive to their needs and requests. One parent said, "[teachers at ACCEL] reach out to us, it doesn't matter what we contact teachers for or when, they are responsive to us and take care of it." Another parent remembered of their child's previous school, "[at] other schools, [I'd be like] who is the teacher's name? Other schools were always fighting to get a meeting with [teachers], we couldn't schedule a meeting with teachers in other schools, teachers didn't know parents, parents didn't know teachers- here teachers contact parents and are proactive."

One parent talked about how their whole family "used to hate open school nights, [my student] wasn't interested in it, he wasn't disturbing anybody, the first open house [at ACCEL] every table was full." This parent went on to say that, "he's done great when people [at ACCEL] have paid attention to him, taken a personal interest in him."

Preliminary Findings

When asked what improvements could be made to ACCEL, one parent talked about having some communication issues with the school. They found out at the end of the year about some of the services their family could have been getting all year and they expressed some frustration over that misunderstanding. Another parent suggested that the physical space could be improved to have a more campus-like feel, but then noted of the administration at ACCEL, "they've made it work."

In general, parents expressed very positive feelings about ACCEL. They were eager to share the ways in which their children and families have benefitted from this school, especially when compared to previous schools (and in one case, when compared to outcomes for a sibling who graduated from another school). Parents wished ACCEL could accept more students and said that it would be great if there could be "ten more of these charter schools."

Conclusions

During the course of compiling this report, a great deal of difficulty arose using the APF to compare ACCEL with other schools. ACCEL is a nontraditional institution, whereas, the framework is largely oriented towards measuring the success of traditional schools. It is suggested that a separate rubric for schools serving nontraditional populations might be more useful for casting appropriate judgments of school effectiveness.

At the time of the report for the second year of operations, 2018-2019, there was no financial data available for analysis. The financial performance framework could not be completed, and no comparisons between Years One and Two could be completed either.

A great deal of information about the day to day supports and barriers to education at ACCEL was gleaned from site observations and interviews with students, parents, and staff of ACCEL. Throughout the time spent on campus and analyzing data remotely, areas of improvement were consistently noted. From these findings, the panel makes the following recommendations:

1. It is recommended that data reporting be prioritized in subsequent years. For example, the absence of relevant financial data impacted the utility of the framework that is used to evaluate charter schools throughout the state. Although this lack of data could be because of the hacks this year, having access to all necessary data is a vital part of the evaluation and review process.

2. Professional development opportunities focused on aggression and fighting might help improve physical altercations at ACCEL. It is also recommended that the administration consider collecting comprehensive data specific to fights and physical violations that occur in Year 3. Being able to reference for each fight the name and number of students involved, the estimated

duration of the fight, the location on campus, the time of day, and the consequences for students could provide insight on any potential trends in such a way that aggression might be better addressed and managed.

3. Continued efforts should be made to improve the school's current food service and the school's extracurricular offerings. Although there is no easy solution to changing the physical space of the school, perhaps conversations about the best ways to meet the needs of students and teachers regarding exercise and activity might continue to inform the current space.

4. Attendance issues were a major concern for teachers who were interviewed. It is recommended that the school make increased student attendance a priority both in practice and in professional development in the 2019-2020 school year.

Beyond these four recommendations, efforts in Year Three should focus on the continued streamlining of data collection for efficient analysis in subsequent years of the program and continued work to maintain a high standard for parent/family communication.

Overall, it is clear that ACCEL has made great strides to accurately and effectively implement the second year of the program. This report finds that ACCEL adheres to the performance expectations outlined at the time of its Alabama Public Charter School Application and to those established by the resulting Public Charter School Charter Contract.

Appendices

The following pages include the interview protocols used with parents, teachers/staff, and students at this school (Appendix A). As interview guides, the following pages were referenced during informal conversations and were not always followed verbatim. Additionally, every question may not have been asked to every evaluation participant. Appendix B includes biographical information about each of the Auburn Center for Evaluation's panel members

Behavior Management Coordinator

I. General Background

1. Tell me briefly about your professional experiences and responsibilities, both at this particular school and others, ending with your role here?

II. Parent Involvement

1. Can each of you describe the contact you have with parents of your students, especially in regard to student behavior issues?

2. Is there anything else I need to understand about parental involvement at this school and how it impacts your job?

III. Student Discipline and School Culture

1. At what point do you become involved in discipline or safety issues?

2. Tell me what you think are some common student discipline or safety issues here? Which are unique to ACCEL?

3. How are behavior management issues communicated to staff, parents, and students?

4. Tell me about some common ways of dealing with behavior problems.

5. Tell me about some successes dealing with student behavior.

6. What kinds of initiatives exist to address school culture issues?

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PARENTS

I Introductions

1. Let's go around the table and have everyone introduce him/herself. While doing that, tell me briefly about the child or children you have attending ACCEL, their ages and grade levels, and just a little about their learning experiences here at this school.

2. If someone asked you to describe your school, what words come to mind? *Probe further.*

3. How did you learn about ACCEL Academy?

4. What were the some of the reasons you decided to send your child here?

II. Parent Involvement

1. How much do you think you know about what is going on in your son or daughter's school?

2. Can you tell me about your experiences with this school; field trips, parent conferences, join your child for lunch, other types of school visits?

3. Can you tell me how the school communicates with you?

4. Do you ever go online to find out about the school? If so, how often?

5. How well do you think the teacher(s) at this school know your child?

6. How well do you know the teachers at this school? How have you gotten to know them?

III. School Climate

1. Are there any school discipline issues that are of concern to you? (*Ask for elaboration*)

2. If your child experiences any type of problem at school, how do you find out about it?

3. Do your children feel safe in this school? Why or why not?

4. What does your child tell you about the school?

5. When you tell other people about your child's experience here, what do you tell them?

IV. Teaching and Learning

1. What can you tell me about how your son or daughter's teachers conduct classes? Are you happy with their school experience?

2. What's the best thing you've heard about teaching and learning in this school during this year? What's the worst?

3. Tell me about your child's homework- how often do they have homework?

4. If you could do one thing to improve this school, what would it be?

5. Is there anything else I should know about your child's experience here?

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

TEACHERS

I. Introductions

1. Let's go around the table and have everyone introduce him/herself. While doing that, tell me

briefly about your experiences here at this school, e.g. how long you've been in the field

of education, your current role here at the school.

2. If I asked you to describe the way this school operates and how students and others experience

ACCEL, what would you say?

3. Starting with the opening last year, what have been the biggest successes you've had?

4. What have been the largest challenges?

5. How does being a teacher here compare to other places you've taught?

6. Tell me about a typical school day here.

7. How has ACCEL approached professional development?

II. Parental Involvement

1. Can you describe the kinds of contact you have with parents of your students?

2. How do you communicate with parents about their children's progress?

III. Student Discipline and School Climate

1. Tell me what you think are some student discipline issues here at ACCEL?

2. Describe some discipline interventions that have been successful for you.

3. What kinds of things do you as a staff do to promote a positive school climate?

4. Do you and your staff always feel safe at this school? Do your students feel safe?

IV. Teaching and Learning

1. What would you say the staff's primary mode of teaching? What percentage of the time do

your colleagues lecture? Use group work? Other activities?

2. How has teaching at ACCEL impacted your approach in the classroom?

3. When colleagues from other schools ask you what it's like to teach here, what do you tell

them?

4. What else should I know about your experience as a teacher in this school?

GUIDANCE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

I. General Background

1. Can you briefly tell me about your role here?

2. What has your involvement with the startup of the school been?

II. Parent Involvement

1. Can you describe the contact you have with parents of your students?

2. Has the Learning Perspectives Initiative changed the way that you or the school community as a whole interacts with parents?

3. What have you or the school done to address parental involvement and communication?

4. What are the most common kinds of contact you have with parents?

III. Student Discipline and Safety Issues

1. At what point do you as a counselor become involved in discipline or safety issues?

2. How do student discipline or safety compare to other places you've worked? What approaches do you employ to address these issues?

IV. Teaching and Learning/Environment

1. What would you say is the primary method of teaching in this building?

2. What are the most common and pressing daily issues that your students bring to you?

3. Tell me about career guidance in this school. What are some of your successes and failures this year? What is your approach to student career guidance?

4. What can you tell me about your experiences recruiting and retaining students?

5. If you had only a sentence or two to sum up your experience of ACCEL's first year, what would it be?

6. What else would you like to share with me about the experience this year

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ADMINISTRATORS/BOD

I. General Background

1. What can you briefly tell me about yourself and your involvement with ACCEL Academy?

2. I know we're starting a new school year, but can you tell me about last year?

3. What were some of the frustrations in Year 2?

4. What were your largest successes?

5. Tell me how you have approached professional development for your staff.

6. Tell me about how you've built community with the school.

II. Parental Involvement

1. Can you describe the kinds of contact you have with parents of your students?

2. What steps are you taking to increase communication with parents?

III. Student Discipline and School Culture Issues

1. Tell me what the most prominent student discipline issues have been over the past school year.

Do you feel that those issues are common in area or district, or are they unique to this school?

2. Do you and your staff always feel safe at this school? Do your students feel safe?

IV. Teaching and Learning

1. What would you say is your staff's primary mode of teaching? What percentage of the time do

they lecture? Use group work? Other activities?

2. Which elements of curricular delivery have changed since the school opened last year? Why

and how were they changed?

3. What were some challenges with teaching and learning in the second year?

4. Describe the experience you have had with the ALSDE. What support have they given you?

5. Can you tell me about your experiences recruiting students for the academy? What have been some successes and failures in this regard?

6. Can you tell me about student attendance? How have you, as a school approached this issue? What have been some successes and failures in this regard?

7. How did your experiences from last year inform your planning for this school year? What are your goals for this year?

8. What else should I know about your experience as a leader in this school?

Appendix B: Biographies of Auburn Center for Evaluation Panel Members

Daniel Henry, Ph.D.
In his last 40 years as an educator, Daniel Henry has been a high-school English teacher, a community college writing teacher, and a professor of educational psychology at Indiana, Central Michigan, and Auburn Universities. He began his career in program evaluation at the Indiana University Center for Evaluation where he directed the Michigan Small Class Size Evaluation, the Ohio Local Report Card Project, The Learning Perspectives Initiative, and several other large educational evaluations. He also directed the Kelly School of Business' evaluation of the Cisco Networking Academies. Dr. Henry has taught research and program evaluation at the graduate level, and serves as a grant reader for the US. Department of Education. He has conducted program evaluation for entities as diverse as the USDA and Stenden University in Port Alfred, South Africa. In 2014, he founded the Auburn Center for Evaluation which has since its inception has conducted large-scale evaluations for the ALSDE (Alabama Reading Initiative evaluation), the National Science Foundation, Murray State, and McGraw-Hill Incorporated.

Lisa Simmons, Ph.D.
Lisa Simmons is an Assistant Research Professor at the Auburn Center for Evaluation. She began her career in education working at a residential school for students with severe to profound developmental delays. After earning her Masters in Developmental Psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University, Lisa began teaching in an early intervention classroom while she earned her K12 Exceptional Education teaching credential from the University of West Florida. Lisa then earned her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Auburn in 2017 where she worked as a graduate research assistant at the Auburn Center for Evaluation. Upon graduation, Lisa accepted a full-time position at the Auburn Center for Evaluation to continue her work there. During her tenure at the Auburn Center for Evaluation, Lisa has worked on 15 federal 21st Century Community Learning Center grants and she has also spent time collecting data in public charter schools in Alabama.

Andrew Pendola, Ph.D.
Andrew Pendola is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Auburn University. He began his career as a Middle School Social Studies teacher. While earning a Masters in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Andrew was awarded the Norman Gill Fellowship to evaluate program equity and postsecondary matriculation in the Milwaukee Public Schools and coordinated city-wide educational goals with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. Later Andrew worked as a researcher in educational philanthropy the Argosy Foundation, designing and evaluating STEM programs for historically disadvantaged student populations. While earning his Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Policy from the Pennsylvania State University, Andrew began work evaluating state-level teacher production and shortages and has written several articles and legislative briefs on educational labor markets.

Brenda Plympton, M.Ed.
Brenda Plympton is a Research Assistant at the Auburn Center for Evaluation. She began her career in education as a Georgia State Law Enforcement Instructor, where she taught both officers and community stakeholders. Brenda earned her Masters in Adult Education from Auburn University. Following her 20-year career in law enforcement, Brenda began pursuing her doctoral degree at Auburn. She currently acts as a consultant and aids organizations with staff development and training. While working at the Auburn Center for Evaluation, Brenda has assisted with federal 21St Century Community Learning Center grants and data analysis for public charter schools in Alabama.