Explore Excel Charter School

2019-20 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Submitted to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute on:

September 15, 2020

By Explore School Inc.

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Explore Schools prepared this 2019-20 Accountability Progress Report on behalf of the school's board of trustees:

Trustee's Name	Board Position
Hank Mannix	Chair; Accountability Committee
Jana Reed	Vice Chair; Finance, Accountability, DEI Committees
Lindsay Matovich	Treasurer; Finance Committee
Angie Brice Thomas	Member; Accountability, DEI Committees
Lindsay Danon	Member; Accountability Committee
Lola Adedokun	Member; DEI Committee
Shawn Jenkins	Member; DEI Committee

Anna Bear Dallis and Nadia Despenza has served as the Co Principals since April 2019 and July 2018 respectively.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Excel Charter School is a K–8 public charter school in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Excel opened in 2002 and graduated its first class of 8th graders in 2008 to some of the top college-preparatory high schools in New York City. While Excel's mission continues to be to provide students with the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school, we have honed the vision and priorities for how we go about achieving that mission. Our vision for instruction includes:

- We View Excellent Curriculum and Instruction as a Pathway to Equity and a Response to the Opportunity Gap by Providing our Scholars with Access and Opportunities to Succeed
- Our Curriculum is Culturally Responsive, Rigorous, and Standards Aligned
- We Believe Children are Natural Problem Solvers, and so we Value Teaching that Balances Critical Thinking with Learning New Skills and Knowledge
- We Cultivate Student Investment by Nurturing Curiosity, Providing High-Quality Feedback, and Using Data to Drive Our Decision Making

In the 2019-20 school year, Excel served 550 students as of BEDS Day (October 2, 2019).

ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

School Enrollment by Grade Level and School Year

School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
2015-16	58	60	62	58	57	60	63	59	-	477
2016-17	54	59	55	58	58	60	58	62	56	511
2017-18	63	62	61	60	63	55	69	56	60	549
2018-19	58	59	59	58	61	57	60	64	52	528
2019-20	56	51	62	61	59	65	67	64	56	550

GOAL 1: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Summary of changes to the Elementary ELA Goal due to the Covid-19 school closure:

- Schools will be unable to report state test proficiency rates, PIs, district comparisons, effect sizes, or mean growth scores.
- However, in the absence of state test results, schools should report relevant results from internally developed assessments, national norm-referenced tests, and/or any other

evaluation method below. When possible, schools report tabular data aligned to the narrative.

Goal 1: English Language Arts

Excel Charter School students will meet grade level expectations in English as shown on internal interim assessments. Each year, the quantity of students scoring proficient will increase by 10 percentage points over the previous year.

BACKGROUND

For the 2019-20 school year, Excel Charter School used the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) Skills and Listening & Learning Strands for grades K–2 and Expeditionary Learning in cohort with Teachers College Writing curriculum for grades 3–8. In addition, the school reserved a block for independent reading, and students who are reading below grade level received guided reading or Leveled Literacy Intervention.

Excel's previously established partnership with Lavinia Group continued through the 2019-20 school year. The Lavinia Group provided dedicated professional development to Excel's teachers on close reading strategies. The ongoing training ensured that Excel's students received four intensive periods of Close Reading where they read short grade-level texts and dissected the main ideas. Students were taught to closely read a cold text, identify the genre and central idea, and then analyze the text throughout all subject areas. ESI's Program Team continued to provide support directly to Excel's leaders and teachers. In the 2019-20 school year, ESI's Program Team included a Senior Director of Literacy who worked to ensure Excel leaders had the tools, resources, and access to high-quality trainings for literacy instruction.

In March 2020, Excel continued remote instruction in all language arts curricula listed above, primarily using Google Classroom and Zoom to interact with students and collect student work. ESI's Program Team provided guidance on best practices for remote instruction within each content area. For K-2 students, Excel implemented Amplify Reading as a supplemental curricular resource. Amplify Reading as an interactive, responsive platform that allows students to engage with age-appropriate narratives through a game world.

METHOD

Each school year, Excel administers internal ELA interim assessments for all 3-8 students. These interims are scheduled to take place 4 times throughout the school year, with the third interim meant to simulate a dress rehearsal of the state exam. These internal assessments pull directly from past NYS exam passages and questions, as well as other analogous resources. During the 2019-20 school year, Excel shifted the focus of these interims to improve student's writing scores. Because of this change in focus, the multiple choice portion of these interims represents the best comparison of student performance year over year. The data below shows student scores on multiple choice only.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

This chart shows student growth on the multiple choice portion of the dress rehearsal interim from the 2018-19 school year to the 2019-20 school year.

	ELA Dress Rehearsal – MC Only			
	% Proficient 2019	% Proficient 2020	% Points Growth	Met Measure
G3	17	23	+5	No
G4	19	8	-11	No
G5	22	30	+8	No
G6	12	10	-2	No
G7	10	31	+21	Yes
G8	11	29	+18	Yes

SUMMARY OF THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GOAL

In grades 7 and 8, students made significant growth and exceeded the measure of 10% growth from 2019 to 2020. Grade 3 and 5 students also made some growth and came close to meeting the measure, while grade 4 and grade 6 students decreased the % proficient from 2019 to 2020.

ACTION PLAN

Curriculum

K–2:

Excel's early literacy curriculum focuses on comprehensive instruction. The K–2 literacy program focuses on developing phonological awareness, building content knowledge and vocabulary, and developing comprehension skills. Excel uses the CKLA program in grades K–2 as its core curriculum. CKLA has two program strands: Knowledge and Skills. CKLA's two strand program is research-based and provides extensive support for students as they become critical readers and writers.

According to CKLA, the ***Knowledge*** Strand emphasizes comprehension skill development in a language- and knowledge-rich context. The primary instructional activity is a read-aloud that exposes students to complex texts, related to a systematically ordered set of topics, or domains. The materials are designed to build knowledge in areas of history, science, literature, and geography. The lesson activities emphasize vocabulary acquisition, build comprehension skills through interactive discussions during and after reading, and use writing to extend and Excel the texts and their content.[1] To complement this instruction, the ***Skills*** strand is a comprehensive, explicit, and systematic phonics program designed to build decoding, fluency, and writing/spelling skills.[2]

In addition to the two CKLA strands, Excel also offers students Close Reading and Interactive Read Alouds to ensure students have the opportunity to read and analyze high-quality, complex texts that are both on and above grade level. Moving forward with remote instruction, Excel will also leverage Amplify Reading to give students an opportunity to engage with age-appropriate narratives through a game world.

3–8:

Our literacy program is designed to help our students become successful readers and life-long learners who are prepared to thrive in college-preparatory high school programs and beyond.

Specifically, Excel uses Expeditionary Learning (EL) as the primary resource for teaching literacy in grades 3–8. Expeditionary Learning includes both reading and writing instruction as well as explicitly imbedding the Speaking and Listening Standards. The curriculum is designed to address the three key components of the standards: (1) regular practice with complex text and its academic language, (2) reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from both literary and informational text, and (3) building knowledge through content-rich non-fiction. Based on the latest research supporting the power of background knowledge, EL modules are designed around topics that help students build background knowledge. Modules also include a blend of fiction and non-fiction complex texts. In each module, students have the opportunity to dig deeply into a high-interest topic by analyzing complex, grade-level texts and then completing performance tasks and assessments aligned to the standards. In addition, we offer students four periods per week of Close Reading where they read short grade-level texts, dissect the main ideas and craft and structure moves in order to build independence as readers. In 19-20, Excel also added ELA iReady as an additional means of gathering data to drive instruction.

Special Populations of Students (ELL, Students with Disabilities):

In the coming school year, small group instruction (SGI) will continue to be the key component of Excel's approach to supporting special populations. The primary resource for SGI in grades K–3 will continue to be skills double dose. This intervention provides data-based support for students struggling with decoding and comprehension, aligned to the core Skills curriculum. In 4–8, Leveled Literacy Intervention, (LLI) and Wilson are the primary intervention resources for decoding and comprehension for students who are significantly below grade level in reading. In addition, small group close reading groups will be created based on reading and interim data.

Approach to data-driven instruction

In the 2019-20 school year, we implemented numerous data systems and structures to provide school leaders and teachers with actionable data to accelerate student learning. Through the use of PowerBI, we provide school leaders earlier access to assessment data that can be analyzed and compared across grades, schools, terms, and years. We use a set of common benchmarks and measures for student performance in ELA and math. In collaboration with the school's leadership, the network sets End of Year (EOY) measures tied to official assessments. They include:

- the mathematics and English language arts state exams,
- Core Knowledge Skills assessments, and
- NYSESLAT

Aligned to the EOY measures, the network also sets cycle measures that identify intervals for improvement on internal assessments in order to be on track to meet EOY measures. For the 2020-21

school year, in addition to our internal interims, we will use these online assessments to monitor progress throughout the year:

- ELA iReady (3-8 students)
- mCLASS (K-2 students)

Teachers use these measures to set classroom level goals and track progress toward them throughout the year. Progress toward benchmarks is tightly monitored, through weekly data tracking of student outputs aligned to each measure, and through teacher observations, feedback, and professional development aligned to a focused set of teacher inputs. Almost all network-driven professional development and resource creation is aligned to the benchmarks with student outputs and teacher inputs identified termly. Student outputs are defined as observable student behaviors that indicate progress toward achieving the cycle and EOY measures. Teacher inputs are defined as observable strategies and actions teachers can take that will lead to the student outputs.

GOAL 2: MATHEMATICS

ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS

Summary of changes to the Elementary Mathematics Goal due to the Covid-19 school closure:

- Schools will be unable to report state test proficiency rates, PIs, district comparisons, effect sizes, or mean growth scores.
- However, in the absence of state test results, schools should report results from internally developed assessments, national norm-referenced tests, and/or any other evaluation method below. When possible, schools report tabular data aligned to the narrative.

Goal 2: Mathematics

Excel Charter School students will meet grade level expectations in Math as shown on internal interim assessments. Each year, the quantity of students scoring proficient will increase by 10 percentage points over the previous year.

BACKGROUND

Excel's approach to math instruction prioritizes the three key elements of the standards: 1) Deep dive into few topics, 2) Coherence: linking topics and thinking across grades, and 3) Rigor: pursuing conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application with equal intensity. Excel implements research-based curricular resources that best support this vision for mathematical instruction. In grades K–8, Excel uses Achievement First's Math Curriculum, AF Navigator. ESI's Program Team continued to provide support directly to Excel's leaders and teachers. In the 2019-20 school year, ESI's Senior Director of Math worked to ensure Excel leaders had the tools, resources, and access to high-quality trainings for math instruction.

In March 2020, Excel continued remote instruction in math primarily using Google Classroom and Zoom to interact with students and collect student work. ESI's Program Team provided guidance on best practices for remote instruction within each content area.

METHOD

Each school year, Excel administers Math interim assessments for all K-8 students. These interims are scheduled to take place 4 times throughout the school year, with the third interim meant to simulate a dress rehearsal of the state exam. These assessments are designed by AF Navigator and are modeled after the content of the state exam. They provide benchmark data for how students at Excel, and across the Excel Schools network, did in comparison to other schools.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

This chart shows student growth on interim assessments from the 2018-19 school year to the 2019-20 school year.

	Math Dress Rehearsal			
	% Proficient 2019	% Proficient 2020	% Points Growth	Met Measure
G3	30	58	+18	Yes
G4	58	27	-31	No
G5	5	36	+31	Yes
G6	50	22	-28	No
G7	37	39	+2	No
G8	22	34	+12	Yes

SUMMARY OF THE ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS GOAL

Excel students in grades 3, 5, and 8 met the measure and made significant strides in improving proficiency on math interims. No other grades met the measure.

ACTION PLAN

With the adoption of the AF Navigator curriculum, Excel elevated the level of rigor in math instruction for its students. Below, we outline the additional steps Excel took by grade band to continue to improve the quality of math instruction this past year:

- ***Grades K–4:*** In 2019-20, Excel implemented Achievement First's Math Stories curriculum in grades K–4. Math Stories is a curriculum that uses strategically designed routines to help students develop a deep number sense and flexibility with numbers in order to support complex problem solving. Math Stories also provides students with an access point into basic math operations by using real life topics familiar to students.

- ***Grades 3–8****:* In partnership with Achievement First, Excel's 3–8 grade math teachers participated in robust training for AF Navigator designed to deepen their understanding of the math content and the critical thinking work students must engage with to show mastery of the standards. In addition, Excel offered additional math intervention blocks to allow teachers to further assess student needs and employ timely and effective interventions in the 2019-20 school year. Interventions ensure students struggling with grade-level standards continue to get exposure to grade-level content while still remediating lagging skills.
- **Special Populations:** During the 2019-20 school year, Excel's Special Populations team continued to focus on small group instruction (SGI) in math. The aim was for small group instruction and SETSS to be aligned to the current classroom curriculum. To support in remediating any lagging skills, Excel will be using Goal Book which uses vertical progression, allowing teachers to scaffold to reach the priority skills while also providing additional practice for students.

Approach to data-driven instruction

In the 2019-20 school year, we implemented numerous data systems and structures to provide school leaders and teachers with actionable data to accelerate student learning. We've developed a comprehensive data platform through the use of PowerBI providing school leaders earlier access to assessment data that can be analyzed and compared across grades, schools, terms, and years.
We use a set of common benchmarks and measures for student performance in ELA and math. In collaboration with the school's leadership, the network sets End of Year (EOY) measures tied to official assessments. They include:

- the mathematics and English language arts state exams,
- Fountas and Pinnell,
- Core Knowledge Skills assessments, and
- NYSESLAT

Aligned to the EOY measures, the network also sets cycle measures that identify intervals for improvement on internal assessments in order to be on track to meet EOY measures. For the 2020-21 school year, in addition to our internal interims, we will use these online assessments to monitor progress throughout the year:

- Math iReady (K-8 students)

Progress toward benchmarks is tightly monitored, through weekly data tracking of student outputs aligned to each measure, and through teacher observations, feedback, and professional development aligned to a focused set of teacher inputs. Almost all network-driven professional development and resource creation is aligned to the benchmarks with student outputs and teacher inputs identified termly. Student outputs are defined as observable student behaviors that indicate progress toward achieving the cycle and EOY measures. Teacher inputs are defined as observable strategies and actions teachers can take that will lead to the student outputs.

GOAL 3: SCIENCE

ELEMENTARY SCIENCE

Summary of changes to the Elementary Science Goal due to the Covid-19 school closure:

- Schools will be unable to report state test proficiency rates or a district comparison.
- However, in the absence of state test results, schools should report results from internally developed assessments, national norm-referenced tests, and/or any other evaluation method below. When possible, schools report tabular data aligned to the narrative.

Goal 3: Science

Excel Charter School students will meet grade level expectations in Science. 75% of students will earn 70% or above on a NYS Science Exam practice test.

BACKGROUND

In 2019-20, Excel Charter School employed a full-time K–4 science teacher and a 5-8 science teacher. Excel's science curriculum is designed to promote inquiry, problem solving skills, and exposure to 21st century learning and skills. Science teachers develop their own lessons based on best practices in the field, and they partner with school leaders to ensure the lessons are rigorous and aligned to NYS standards. In March 2020, Excel continued remote instruction in science primarily using Google Classroom and Zoom to interact with students and collect student work.

METHOD

Each school year, Excel administers science practice tests assessments for all 4th and 8th grade students. These interims are designed to simulate a dress rehearsal of the state exam.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

This chart shows the percentage of students in each grade earning a passing grade (70% or above) on the practices Science Test.

	% Proficient on Practice Science Test	
	% Students Earning 70% or Above	Met Measure
G4	62	No
G8	65	No

SUMMARY OF THE ELEMENTARY SCIENCE GOAL

Excel students did not meet the measure for proficiency across each grade. In both grades 4 and 8, fewer than 70% of students received a passing grade for Science for the 2019-20 school year.

ACTION PLAN

Excel is continuing to build a robust, high-quality science program that gives students a 21st century science experience. Excel Upper will continue to use Amplify Science, a high-quality curriculum that blends hands on investigations with literacy rich tools to support students. Also rated highly by ED Reports, we expect that Amplify Science will help support Excel teachers in providing high-quality instruction in science. 8th grade students at Excel will have the opportunity to take Living Environment. In 2020-21, all science teachers will participant in network-wide professional development sessions during our staff in-service days. Additionally, Living Environment teachers will participate in periodic collaborative planning meetings to prepare for each unit of instruction.

GOAL 4: ESSA

The 2019-20 ESSA Goal remains unchanged due to the Covid-19 school closure. The 2019-20 accountability status based on 2018-19 results and can be found by navigating to the school report card available here.

Goal 7: Absolute Measure

Under the state's ESSA accountability system, the school is in good standing: the state has not identified the school for comprehensive or targeted improvement.

METHOD

Because *all* students are expected to meet the state's performance standards, the federal statute stipulates that various sub-populations and demographic categories of students among all tested students must meet the state standard in and of themselves aside from the overall school results. As New York State, like all states, is required to establish a specific system for making these determinations for its public schools, charter schools do not have latitude in establishing their own performance levels or criteria of success for meeting the ESSA accountability requirements. Each year, the state issues School Report Cards that indicate a school's status under the state accountability system.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

We have met this measure; Excel Charter School has been in good standing with ESSA for at least the last 3 school years where data is available.

Accountability Status by Year

Year	Status
2017-18	Good Standing
2018-19	Good Standing
2019-20	Good Standing