MEMORANDUM

To: Eric Witherspoon
Superintendent

From: Judith Levinson
Director Research, Evaluation and Assessment

Date: February 22, 2007

Re: **PROJECT EXCEL**

One of the board goals for 2006-07 was to provide evaluation information on Project Excel. This report provides data on key indicators including semester grades, discipline incidents, and longitudinal analyses of academic growth using EXPLORE, PLAN, and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores.

PROJECT EXCEL

The mission of Project EXCEL is to support ninth and tenth grade students enabling them to become engaged, confident learners who will be academically successful both at ETHS and after high school. The goal of the program is to provide students with targeted support to ultimately raise their state reading and math test scores in their junior year to meet and exceed the state standards for academic performance. The program offers test-taking and study skills instruction, creative literacy and math programming, parental participation, and partnership activities with community members and organizations.

Students are considered for placement in Project EXCEL if they score between the 29th and 49th percentile in reading and/or math on the EXPLORE test. Students in Project EXCEL are generally not enrolled in Academy, Read 180 or special education.

Project EXCEL was implemented in 2005-06. The program offers reading and math tutoring, study skills instruction, test-taking strategies, and homework assistance by EXCEL academic coaches. Students meet in EXCEL special study halls three times weekly. The staff is comprised of two academic coaches and a part-time coordinator. The two coaches are teaching assistants. In January, a .8 FTE teacher was hired to provide additional instruction in reading and to meet Title I requirements. The program is funded by Title I funds, and therefore, a certified teacher must be present during class periods when academic support is provided.

An important component of Project EXCEL is the monitoring of academic progress using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), an online computer-adaptive assessment tool. This tool is administered in the beginning of the school year to identify baseline diagnostic information in reading and math. Individual student test results provide detailed information about reading and math skills/concepts that students need addressed to work at grade level. EXCEL staff use MAP results to help focus instruction, and MAP is again administered at the end of the year to gauge academic progress.

Home-school connections are established on an individual and group basis with parents around student needs and parent suggestions. Parent meetings are held three times a year.

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected using the student information database. Interviews with the project coordinator and supervisor were also conducted for background information.

IMPLEMENTATION

The original program plan outlined the following components:

- Summer course in study skills
- Summer activities to include literacy and math-based programs that may utilize strategies such as book groups, drama, media projects, artistic endeavors and computer-generated programs for motivating students for academic success
- Plan for educational progress for each student – developed with parents and staff members
- Special study halls with academic coaches for tutoring and homework support in reading and math
- After-school homework center
- Community connections – to provide summer and after-school creative learning activities
- Assessment component to monitor student progress (NWEA Measures of Academic Progress – MAP)

The special study halls, academic coaches, parent meetings, MAP assessment, and individual plans were implemented beginning in 2005-06. The homework center was offered after school in 2005-06 but was not offered first semester of 2006-07. It is now being put in place for this semester. For the last two summers, students were encouraged to attend summer school classes: Reading/Writing Workshop, Prep Math, Expository Writing, and Reading. In total, 61 students attended summer school in 2006. Fifty-two students attended a special retreat conducted by Quantum Learning. This retreat focused on study skills, memory techniques, note-taking skills, test-taking strategies, time management skills, problem solving, goal setting, and other character and academic skill areas.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2005-06, Project EXCEL began the year with 62 freshman students. In 2006-07, the program is serving 45 freshmen and 34 sophomores (includes 4 students who were reclassified to freshman status). The sophomore group originally totaled approximately 60 students at the beginning of their freshman year. However, a number of students are no longer in the program due to a variety of factors including placement into other programs (e.g., AVID, Academy, special education), moving out-of-district, scheduling problems and parent choice. For the parents who elected for their students to leave EXCEL, the common reason provided was that students do not receive credit for EXCEL participation. The data for the sophomore group reported in this document represents the students who remained in Project EXCEL from freshman year 2005-06 through first semester of their sophomore year 2006-07. In the future, it might be valuable to follow up on the students who no longer are in the program.

Table 1 shows demographic information for program participants.

Table 1. Project EXCEL Demographics

	2006		2007	
	N	%	N	%
Grade				
9	62	100.0%	45	60.0%
10	N/A	N/A	30	40.0%
Sex				
Male	31	50.0%	37	49.3%
Female	31	50.0%	38	50.7%
Ethnicity				
Asian	2	3.2%	2	2.7%
Black	46	74.2%	53	70.7%
Hispanic	4	6.5%	10	13.3%
White	9	14.5%	10	13.3%
Multiracial	1	1.6%	0	0%
Total	62		75	

DATA ON KEY INDICATORS

Tables 2, 3, 4, 5 and Appendix A show data for key indicators of academic performance as well as discipline.

Appendix A shows the course grades in English, math, reading, and history for three points in time: 1) Semester 1 2005-06; 2) Semester 2 2005-06; and 3) Semester 1 2006-07.

The data in Appendix A indicate:

- For the first cohort of students who started Project EXCEL in 2005-06, the percent of D and F grades decreased in English, and history over time from first semester of freshman year to first semester of sophomore year.
- For the second cohort of students who started Project EXCEL in 2006-07, approximately 40 percent of students received A and B grades in English and history, while about 47 to 51 percent received A and B grades in reading and math. About one-third of students received D and F grades in English and history.

Table 2 shows the results of a longitudinal analysis of the EXPLORE test to the PLAN test for a matched group of students. Also shown are the gains for the total ETHS group as well as results for the nation as a whole.

Table 2. Gain Between Grade 8 and Grade 10
Project EXCEL - EXPLORE (2004-2005) to PLAN (2006-2007) vs
ETHS/National - EXPLORE (2003-2004) to PLAN (2005-2006)(n=25)

Subject	Grade 8 Avg Scale Score	Grade 10 Avg Scale Score	Gain 2006 (2005)
English			
Project EXCEL	*12.2*	*14.2*	*2.0*
ETHS	16.6	19.2	(2.6)
National	15.1	17.4	(2.3)
Math			
Project EXCEL	*14.0*	*16.0*	*2.0*
ETHS	17.3	20.5	(3.2)
National	15.5	17.7	(2.2)
Reading			
Project EXCEL	*12.2*	*13.8*	*1.6*
ETHS	16.5	19.2	(2.7)
National	14.9	17.1	(2.2)

- For the 25 students for whom we had both EXPLORE and PLAN scores, EXCEL students demonstrated a gain of 2 points in English and math, and a 1.6 point gain in reading.
- In English and math, EXCEL students made approximately comparable gains to the national group. The gains in reading were less than the national gain.

Table 3 shows the percent of students falling below the 50th percentile in reading on the EXPLORE and then on the PLAN.

Table 3. Percent of Students Below
50th percentile in Reading (n=25)

Group	% Below
Project EXCEL	
EXPLORE (04)	92.0%
PLAN (06)	76.0%

- The data show that 16 percent of the students improved their EXPLORE score and by the time of the PLAN test at the beginning of their sophomore year, tested above the 50th percentile in reading.

Table 4 shows MAP data for Project EXCEL sophomores. These students took the MAP test at the beginning of their freshman year in fall 2005. Based on their performance on that initial test, MAP sets target scores for students to achieve by spring 2006 and then again in fall 2006.

Table 4. Gain Between Fall 2005 and Fall 2006 MAP Scores (n=23)

Subject	% Met or Exceeded Target Score (Spring 06)	% Met or Exceeded Target Score (Fall 06)
Reading	15.4%	37.5%
Math	26.9%	33.3%

- The table shows that by the spring of 2006, 15.4 percent of students met their target in reading; by fall 2006, 37.5 percent of students met their target score in reading.
- In math, 26.9 percent of students met their target score by spring 2006; by fall 2006, 33.3 percent of students met their target score.

Table 5 shows data on discipline for the 34 Project EXCEL students who remained in the program from freshman to sophomore year.

Table 5. Project EXCEL Disciplinary Data (n=34)

	# of Disciplinary Incidents	# of Students Involved in Disciplinary Incidents
Semester 1 2005-06	34	16
Semester 2 2005-06	56	18
Semester 1 2006-07	43	15

- Although the number of disciplinary incidents varied from semester to semester, the number of students involved in such incidents remained about the same.

IMPLICATIONS

Program indicators suggest a number of implications for planning and implementation. As the program approaches its third year:

- Implement homework center
- Continue the focus on addressing student's literacy needs
- Work with deans to develop intervention around social and behavioral skills
- Expand use of summer school programming

APPENDIX A

Semester Grade Analysis: 2006 to 2007
By Cohort

Cohort 1 - English

	A/B		C		D/F		NC		Total	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Fresh Sem 1 Grade	13	38.2%	7	20.6%	14	41.2%			34	100.0%
Fresh Sem 2 Grade	11	32.4%	10	29.4%	13	38.2%			34	100.0%
Soph Sem 1 Grade	7	20.6%	14	41.2%	12	35.3%	1	2.9%	34	100.0%

Cohort 2 - English

	A/B		C		D/F		NC		Total	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Fresh Sem 1 Grade	16	41.0%	8	20.5%	14	35.9%	1	2.6%	39	100.0%
Fresh Sem 2 Grade										
Soph Sem 1 Grade										

Cohort 1 - Reading

	A/B		C		D/F		NC		Total	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Fresh Sem 1 Grade	5	27.8%	9	50.0%	4	22.2%			18	100.0%
Fresh Sem 2 Grade	4	22.2%	5	27.8%	8	44.4%	1	5.6%	18	100.0%

Cohort 2 - Reading

	A/B		C		D/F		NC		Total	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Fresh Sem 1 Grade	8	47.1%	5	29.4%	2	11.8%	2	11.8%	17	100.0%
Fresh Sem 2 Grade										

Cohort 1 - Math

	A/B		C		D/F		NC		Total	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Fresh Sem 1 Grade	14	41.2%	11	32.4%	9	26.5%			34	100.0%
Fresh Sem 2 Grade	14	41.2%	13	38.2%	7	20.6%			34	100.0%
Soph Sem 1 Grade	7	20.6%	15	44.1%	11	32.4%	1	2.9%	34	100.0%

Cohort 2 - Math

	A/B		C		D/F		NC		Total	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Fresh Sem 1 Grade	20	51.3%	10	25.6%	9	23.1%	0	0.0%	39	100.0%
Fresh Sem 2 Grade										
Soph Sem 1 Grade										

Cohort 1 - History

	A/B		C		D/F		NC		Total	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Fresh Sem 1 Grade	11	32.4%	11	32.4%	12	35.3%			34	100.0%
Fresh Sem 2 Grade	17	50.0%	11	32.4%	6	17.6%			34	100.0%
Soph Sem 1 Grade	7	24.1%	13	44.8%	8	27.6%	1	3.4%	29	100.0%

Cohort 2 - History

	A/B		C		D/F		NC		Total	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Fresh Sem 1 Grade	15	38.5%	10	25.6%	13	33.3%	1	2.6%	39	100.0%
Fresh Sem 2 Grade										
Soph Sem 1 Grade										