

Response to Follow-up Questions – May 29, 2015

2.2 - Track Record

**What are Acceleration Academies current attendance rates, pass rates and drop rates at the schools currently in operation? Please disaggregate that data for general education students and students with IEPs.**

**General Education Students:**

Attendance Rate: 86%\* (approximate; varies monthly. See below)

Passage Rate: If CPS would like our passage rate for end-of-course examinations, they can be provided as well. At present, Edmentum was unable to generate a report that provides this information but are working to produce the data.

Drop Rate: 14%

**Special Education Students:**

Attendance Rate: 81%\* (approximate; varies by month. See below)

Passage Rate: If CPS would like our passage rate for end-of-course examinations, they can be provided as well. At present, Edmentum was unable to generate a report that provides this information but are working to produce the data.

Drop Rate: 19%

\* Attendance rates are calculated by identifying the number of Graduation Candidates who meet requirements for monthly attendance in a given month, and the total number of Graduation Candidates enrolled during that given month. At our academies in Washington State, for example, this equates to 86% on average. Because our sites in Florida are so new, attendance/passage/drop rates are still being calculated and compiled by the State of Florida.

**Please note:**

1. Acceleration Academies is *not* a charter school.
2. It works solely to recover and educate dropouts—and ensure mastery of content to achieve graduation.
3. It does *not* measure student success by calculating student seat time.
4. It measures student success by student mastery of content, as determined by State-approved assessments.
5. Its blended model focuses on one content area at a time until that content area is mastered.
6. Its faculty of general and special education experts, social workers, and support staff rely on research-based strategies to re-engage former dropouts—holistically and effectively.

2.3 - Ed goals and assessment plan

**Please provide the rationale for why Acceleration Academies’ Year 5 goal for course pass rates (75%) is significantly below the threshold for success set by the Options office (90%).**

* Our passage rate calculation was based upon *graduation* completion as opposed to *course* completion.
* Our overall achievement and graduation goals remain above district averages.
* Our goals are wholly research-based and evidence the practical and realistic hurdles the majority of our Graduation Candidates confront when re-engaging in education. Unlike general education participants, dropouts have already rejected high school in its totality, and require a reasoned and different approach to reengagement.
* For clarity and greater specificity, we respectfully seek to amend our submitted materials to include the following:

**Educational Goals for Chicago Achievement Academies**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Goal** | **Metric** | **Grades** | **2016-17** | **2017-18** | **2018-19** | **2019-20** |
| STAR Composite Growth | STAR | 9th-12th | +2 | +3 | +3 | +5 |
| Graduation Rate | CPS Graduation Requirements | 12th Grade | 69% | 71% | 73% | 75% |
| Attendance Rate | Average Contracted Attendance | 9th-12th | 72% | 74% | 76% | 79% |
| Growth in Attendance | Growth in Contracted Attendance | 9th-12th | +2% | +2% | +3% | +4% |
| Course Pass Rates | Ongoing Progress Monitoring | 9th - 12th | 70%\* | 75%\* | 80%\* | 90%\* |
| Post-Secondary Engagement Planning | Naviance Progress monitoring and follow up surveys | 11th -12th | 77% | 79% | 81% | 83% |
| Post-Secondary Persistence | Quarterly Post- Sec Seminars and Naviance Alumni follow up surveys & communication | 12th Grade | 52% | 54% | 55% | 57% |
| 5 Essentials | My Voice My School Survey | 9th – 12th | 82% | 84% | 85% | 86% |
| Personalization Rates | Weekly Student Contact Documentation | 9th -12th | 82% | 84% | 85% | 86% |

\*Amended on 5/22/2015 for RFP submission Tier 1.

2.4 - Curriculum & Instruction

**Describe how teachers will plan for direct instruction for students when they take one course at a time and have flexible attendance hours? On average, how many different courses will a teacher be supporting at a given time?**

Content Coaches (teachers) would rotate full days among each of the operational academies within CPS (e.g., a Math Content Coach would be at the Bronzeville Acceleration Academy all of Mondays, at Englewood Academy all of Tuesdays, at the Washington Heights Academy of Wednesdays, etc.). A schedule is to be posted and available to all Graduation Candidates so that they may reserve one-on-one time with our Content Coaches based on *their* schedules. All faculty schedules are staggered by week (e.g., to enable students to access them on sites during morning, mid-day and evening hours).

At any given time, a Content Coach may be supporting up to four courses.

Planning for direct instruction is done in a manner supported by a student progress monitoring system that is real-time from data compiled by the Edmentum Sensei data system which clearly shows and aggregates student progress in each lesson and standard.

Utilizing the Edmentum Sensei data system, Content Coaches are able to monitor student progress and needs on a real-time basis. Much like teachers in online environments, our Content Coaches can be directly contacted by graduation candidates for additional assistance or to provide direct instruction. The rich data progress monitoring system is essential in the planning for individual student needs and for timely adaptations, modifications or expansion of direct instruction.

**It was stated in the capacity interview that students’ IEPs would be revisited after the completion of every course. With as many as 40% of the students potentially having IEPs, how will Accelerated Academies staff and manage the continual revisiting of potentially hundreds of IEPs?**

End-of-*course* IEP review is structured—not to serve as an analysis of all educational, emotional and physiological factors affecting the student—but instead, to enable the IEP team to focus on what has been mastered, and what is—given that mastery—the student’s best next step. Please note that an IEP Case Manager at each site serves as the key controller of scheduling and implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for each Graduate Candidate having one. Further, special education and general education faculty at each site works with the Case Manager and District personnel in ensuring that therapeutic requirements as well as academic support requirements are fully met. This work is accomplished quite similarly in manner to school district protocols for IEP development, implementation and modification, and is wholly consistent with Federal law, State law, and the district’s own policies. Although the IEP is revisited upon each course completion it is only re-opened when it is necessary to modify the IEP based on student progress.

The IEP Case Manager plans, manages and records caseloads. In addition, this individual tracks and monitors the students and assures equity of services utilizing resources and personnel efficiently.

Full and formal IEP review of each student’s needs and progress are performed as needed—and generally with greater frequency than statutory minimums. At no point do such formal reviews occur less than statutory minimums.

**How specifically do student ILPs (Individual Learning Plans) inform IEPs (or vice versa)?**

* An IEP establishes the specific protocols designed to unambiguously and effectively address the student’s individual educational and education-related needs.
* An ILP takes all of the information contained in the IEP, and develops multiple strategies to meet those IEP protocols most effectively—particularly in light of the student’s unique learning styles, and the relevant content area in which the student is engaged (e.g., a focus on the effectiveness of one-on-one engagement vs. small group discussion; interventions to be considered when the student becomes frustrated; incentives for remaining engaged, etc.).

In combination, the IEP and the ILP form the cornerstone of *how* the student’s instruction is delivered, given his or her unique needs and learning style.

Finally, please note that ILPs and IEPs contain certain overlapping/complementary components. Each addresses factors such as Post High School Goals, Post School Employment, Post Education Training, and Independent Living (if needed). Further, they touch upon the manner in which the Graduate Candidate plans to exit school either with a diploma or certificate of performance. They also identify (i) courses of study for each grade level—from student’s current year to point of graduation; (ii) activities and services to reach goals (e.g. employment); (iii) education/training goals, and (iv) independent learning goals.

**How will parents/guardians be involved in ILP creation and transition planning?**

First, research establishes that parent/guardian involvement varies radically among dropout populations; particularly when the student is over the age of 18 and/or is a parent herself/himself. Second, there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to this issue; some students do not *want* parent/guardian involvement, while others crave it. Our approach is consequently straightforward:

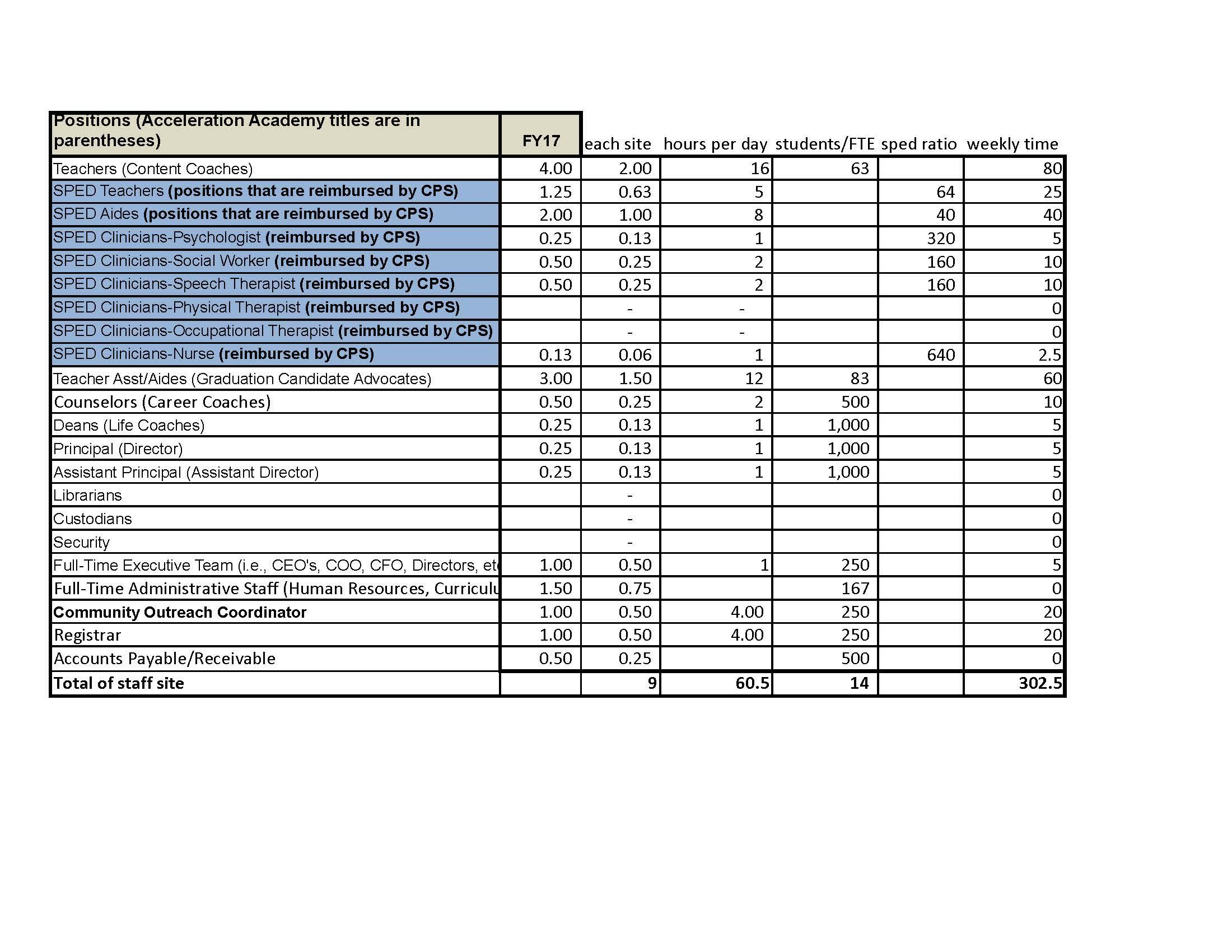
* We reach out to parents/guardians through direct mailings, community meetings and telephone calls and encourage them to participate fully in the in all relevant planning when the student is less than 18 years of age, or when the student has been adjudicated legally incompetent. When the student is over age 18/legally competent, we respectfully inquire about the student’s preferences, and ask whether they would allow us to reach out to people in their lives.
* Invited parents/guardians who respond are included in all relevant discussions relating to planning for the student.

2.5 - Talent Management

**In the Capacity Interview, you stated that the Plato courses will not have an online certified teacher of record attached to it. The teacher of record will be one of your 4 on-site, general education teachers. Please map out how your 4 teachers will have to be certified in order to offer all the courses that are required for CPS Graduation.**

There has been a miscommunication or misunderstanding, it appears. A certified teacher of record will be provided for each graduation candidate (learner/student) for each course. The four (4) on-site teachers will have certifications relative to all core coursework and Acceleration Academies will provide an Illinois certified teacher of record for any student taking a course in which we don’t have an on-site teacher (through the PLATO EdOptions Academy, an AdvancED accredited academy which is also utilized in CPS for credit recovery and acceleration activity. Further, each location will have a full-time certified special education teacher to facilitate a learner’s IEP and ensure adequate progress and supports for students with disabilities.

Teachers of record who are Illinois state licensed state teachers will educate all graduation candidates.

**In year one, how much time would each of the following positions be staffed at each site: psychologist, social work,** **dean, AP, career coach, and principal?**

**Professional development induction appears to train staff primarily on Plato. How specifically would teachers be trained, and how time would be spent on that training, to fully prepare teachers to work with the proposed student population?**

Professional development includes both online training in the use of Plato, and Acceleration Academies’ proprietary training focused on pedagogy and effective teaching behaviors. For each prospective staff member, Acceleration Academies begins with analysis of the skills and knowledge he or she possesses at the outset. Focus is on specific, research-backed skills required for effective teaching in a drop-out recovery program that deploys blended-learning. At a minimum ten (10) days of training occurs for all new employees who work with graduation candidates and a minimum of forty (40) hours of annual, job embedded professional development is provided for each employee in their specific assignment area. Further, as needed professional development is provided for special circumstances where student needs would require a specific methodology that may be unfamiliar to staff. Below is a summary:

**I. TRAINING**

The ***Framework for Accelerated Academies Coaches*** is organized around five standards. The standards represent broad, overarching categories of knowledge, skills and performance.

· Standard 1: Knowledge of Online Systems

· Standard 2: Assessment and Monitoring of Learner Needs

· Standard 3: Instructional Planning and Delivery

· Standard 4: Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

· Standard 5: Engagement in Collaboration and Communication

For each standard, competency statements are delineated. Competency statements define a specific set of skills and knowledge that effective content coaches demonstrate for each of the five standards. Indicators for each competency statement provide concrete examples, evidence of observable behaviors. Indicators suggest tangible actions or behaviors of the competency.

Rubric to Describe Levels of Performance:

The *Framework for Acceleration Academies Content Coaches Rubric* describes evidence of performance at four levels of performance (*deficient, developing, proficient, exemplar)* for each competency statement. While there are a number of factors that lead to differing performance levels, the descriptions in the rubric define performance at each level.

Rating Scale:

The rating scale in the rubric provides necessary feedback to identify areas of effective performance while also informing opportunities for growth. As is the case for all of the monitoring tools developed for the Acceleration Academy, the goal of the rubric is to help grow coaches from good to better to best. For each competency, the indicator statements are delineated across the four performance levels and articulate evidence and observable application of skills, knowledge and behaviors. The four levels or performance are:

· Deficient – performance that does not meet expectations for the identified competency

· Developing – performance that may not always meet all the expectations for the competency

· Proficient- performance that consistently meets all the expectations for the competency

· Exemplar – performance that consistently exceeds expectations for the competency and represents performance at the highest levels

**How are teachers evaluated and what are the frequencies of teacher evaluations?**

[Please note, this provides further information of the Acceleration Academy needs-based professional development system]

**II. TIME DEDICATED TO TRAINING**

As mentioned earlier, ten days of training as well as job-embedded training occurs through the following

Structure of the System for Monitoring Acceleration Academy Content Coaches Effectiveness.

The System for Monitoring Acceleration Academy Content Coaches was designed to develop the expertise and effectiveness of coach’s over time with an emphasis on multiple measures of performance. These include:

· Pre and post conferences

· Self-assessment against the standards and competency statements contained in the Framework

· Process for observations

· Collection of artifacts and evidence

· Formative and summative feedback delivered through direct conferencing with coaches

Formative and Summative Evaluations of Acceleration Academy Staff

Each Acceleration Academy Content Coach will receive **two formative assessments** (December and March) along with four walk through observations (October, November, January, February).

Each Acceleration Academy Content Coach will receive **one summative evaluation annually** (April/May) that incorporates evidence collected throughout the year from formative assessments and walk through observations.

The evaluations will be conducted by certified administrators utilizing the *Framework for Acceleration Academies Content Coaches Rubric*.

**Please provide a professional development plan that at a minimum addresses the following:** **in what forms and formats teachers will learn new concepts (mostly online or in-person and rationale for either); how teachers would, if at all, learn from each other; and how much time will be dedicated to professional development weekly and monthly.**

Overview of Professional Development Program

Acceleration Academies’ Professional Development Program is research-based, proprietary in nature, and is available for CPS review.[[1]](#footnote-1) It begins with training in the analysis of protocols to address the unique needs of students enrolled in the program (e.g., analysis of typically complex life circumstances that cause a student to ultimately reject education). It continues with analysis of research demonstrating what is—and is not—effective pedagogical behavior with reengaged students, and demonstrations of multiple interventions that have been established, to a statistically significant degree, to positively influenced academic growth.

Professional learning communities are organized for staff to staff and organized professional development.

The second area of professional development is focused on the comprehensive assessment of student learning needs. While many programs conduct some form of identifying student learning needs, strategies used are often very narrow in scope. Our processes of identification of student learning needs includes:

* In-depth interview of the student and if applicable, parent/guardian;
* Review of all available academic records relating to the student;
* Assessment of the student’s readiness for learning; and
* Analysis of career readiness needs.

Content Coaches work with Acceleration Academy staff to develop, for each student, a *Graduate Candidate Individualized Learning Pathway* (e.g., specific goals for content needed as well as strategies/methods that match the students learning style) and communicating the plan to the student and their parents.

Content Coaches are also trained to track student success—or lack thereof—once student learning is initiated**.** Considerable professional development is provided on the effective monitoring of individual student learning, through deployment of a variety of formative and summative assessments. Each Content Coach is trained to provide frequent targeted feedback to individual students for improving learning experiences (e.g., student mastery of learning content versus content that remains as a challenge). Content Coaches are also trained in leading students in self-assessment and reflection.

The fourth area of focus for professional development is the identification of intervention strategies to apply when students are experiencing difficulties. Our training recognizes that each student presents with unique learning needs and ways in which they learn best. Content Coaches receive instruction on how to effectively select specific strategies and alternative learning methods to support candidates as they experience any difficulties in learning but also as they need to move ahead. Strategies such as lesson summaries, graphic organizers and illustrations, flexible grouping, curriculum compacting, questioning, and tiering levels of work (not more—but different work) have documented research as best practices for both remediation and acceleration of learning.

Further, Content Coaches will receive professional development in career and college readiness counseling—focused on the ultimate goal of the Chicago Public Schools’ Education Options Initiative to increase graduation rates and academic preparedness for college and career.

The program of professional development outlined in this document will occur over a three-month period. Each of the five professional development modules consists of a minimum of one full day of training.

Acceleration Academies recognizes that content coaches also need to engage in professional learning through communities of practice. Site directors engage coach’s weekly (one to two hours) to focus on examining sub-groups or individual students where learning successes are reviewed with a focus on applying understandings to other students. Weekly professional development also is focused on examining concerns about student learning and/or lack of progress and collectively identifying strategies to address issues as they arise. These weekly professional development opportunities also allow Academy Staff in Chicago to host webinars focused on highlighting new research and high impact strategies that are achieving significant traction in drop out recovery programs.

On average all staff will receive ten full days of professional development outside of the school year and forty (40) hours of job embedded professional development which is exclusive of our weekly Professional Learning Communities that average one (1) hour weekly and approximately five (5) hours monthly.

Examples of additional professional development opportunities for content coaches and other staff include:

Acceleration Academies, LLC has contracted with a nationally recognized and utilized organization to provide:

1. Instructional leadership program (approximately 10 days annually) aligned to the CPS Framework for Teaching;

2. School building leadership program approximately 10 days annually) aligned to the CPS Framework for Teaching as well as national promising practices for instructional leadership;

3. District and organizational leadership program approximately 10 days annually) aligned to the CPS Framework for Teaching as well as national promising practices for instructional leadership;

Further, Acceleration Academies, LLC has been selected and is participating in the Breakthrough Schools program through LEAP Innovations for personalizing learning.

Evaluation of teaching skills and effectiveness is ongoing daily, with site Directors monitoring student-teacher interactions and teacher pedagogy and performance. Formal evaluations are conducted a minimum of semi-annually, and involve face-to-face time with teachers, following observations, using the rubric previously discussed at Section 2.5 (above).

3.1 - General Operations

**According to the ALOP statute, students must be in school a minimum of 3 hours per day (plus 2 hours of social emotional support that can be tracked outside of school). How will Acceleration Academies meet this standard? How will you monitor all of the hours?**

Unless alternative scheduling is authorized/approved, the Acceleration Academy schedule related to serving reengaged CPS students will include a minimum of 3 hours per day of academic activity and a minimum of 2 hours per day of social/emotional supports.

All academic activity of each student is fully monitored whether he or she is onsite or online. This monitoring and recording is accomplished through two distinct method:

1. Onsite, individual daily attendance records are maintained by trained Acceleration Academy staff and compiled for District review.
2. Online academic activity is electronically recorded and maintained by a third party provider; notably, this provider records when a student has been inactive for more than 30 seconds at a keyboard.

Progress reports must are provided, at minimum, with the same frequency and in the same manner as progress reports sent to parents and guardians of students enrolled in the general school program. A student or student’s parent or guardian may request a meeting anytime during the school year to review the student’s progress according to the district’s procedures, and the school district must respond to the request within seven school days after the parent or guardian submits the request.

The support services provided the student in an ALOP include those that are necessary for the student’s academic success and may include but be not limited to the following:

* alcohol, mental health, substance and drug rehabilitation;
* individual, group, and family counseling;
* mentoring and tutoring;
* school physicals;
* health and nutrition education;
* classroom aides;
* career counseling;
* child care;
* and any other social, health, or supplemental service approved in the Student Success Plan.

Where the ILP provides less than five (5) total hours of instruction, the following will be deployed:

* Each day of attendance will provide no fewer than three-clock hours of school work through blended learning services.
* Supplementary services will be additionally provided to include student assistance programs, counseling, case management, health and fitness programs, life skills, or conflict resolution training. Examples include activities:
* directly related to the student’s Student Success Plan,
* provided by qualified personnel with experience and skills appropriate to the services being provided, and
* monitored by the Academy staff to effectiveness improving student’s academic achievement to prepare a student to return to the regular school program.

Acceleration Academies has developed a system of support personnel that includes graduation candidate advocates and trained mentor advisors; these individuals record student progress and hours on the areas of supplemental supports. For the electronic academic areas of our program, Edmentum and the Sensei system provide a student engagement monitoring tool that produces reports down to the minute of student engagement based on key strokes and online activity. (Technology details available upon request.)

3.2 - Student Engagement

**Once enrolled at a school, by statute a student cannot be asked to leave. How would you work with students that miss many appointments and students that fail several courses?**

During registration and enrollment, each student is assigned to the “case load” of one of our Graduation Candidate Advocates (GCAs). The GCA’s core purpose is to establish a one-on-one relationship with the student, and ultimately to gain from the student a commitment to participate fully in instruction. Extensive research establishes that the key to gaining a former dropout’s commitment to high school completion is *trust;* further, research reveals that trust develops when the individual believes he or she has the unreserved support of at least one or more staff members. Additionally:

* We make immediate contact when a student misses an appointment; we do this to ascertain whether there is an obstacle (e.g., transportation) or an attitudinal shift that needs to be focused upon. In those circumstances, direct one-on-one interventions (discussion, questioning, etc.) are implemented based on factual specifics of each case.
* When a student fails academic attempts repeatedly, we probe for causal factors (including whether there may have been a previously undiagnosed learning disability); we immediately shift strategies, and confer with staff on what has previously worked—and not worked—with the particular student.
* Acceleration Academies utilize the Check and Connect intervention developed at the University of Minnesota which is research based and outlined in the *What Works Clearinghouse* to have a 35 point gain in student attendance and persistence in staying and succeeding in school.

**What are your policies and procedures for onboarding students that enter your schools during the school year?**

Because Acceleration Academies provides dropout reengagement services, our onboarding process is continual, highly individualized, and student specific. It begins with analysis of each candidate’s academic history, and one-on-one discussions with him or her on the factors that led the individual to abandon education, the factors that are driving him/her to return, and the individual’s ultimate life goals. Following a skills analysis/assessment to assist in determining where the individual is academically—and *with* the individual—a course of action is developed. Curriculum is examined and discussed, and the individual is assigned a Graduation Candidate Advocate who walks the student through the registration process, submits requests for his/her transcript and confirms eligibility into the program. The student completes our reading and mathematics assessment and, based upon transcript/courses complete, is scheduled into his or her first course.

3.3 – Governance

**What authority does the parent student advisory council, or any entity consisting of students parents/guardians, have in decision-making and oversight?**

The Acceleration Academy Parent-Student Advisory Council serves in an advisory capacity to ensure a constant focus on the mission of the organization. It is structured to include broad-based representation of its students’ their families and their community. It makes recommendations, but does not make policy, program or personnel decisions—instead, it reviews and provides insight and recommendations relating to:

1. Student needs and community concerns
2. Identifying available and potential resources to meet student and community needs.
3. Minimizing the duplication of services while maximizing the use of district facilities.
4. Program development as it relates to the mission of Acceleration Academies
5. Promoting the community/citizen involvement the lives of Acceleration Academy students.
6. Increasing and improving communication with staff, organizations, agencies and businesses within the school site’s neighborhood.

**How do parent, student, and/or neighborhood concerns make their way to the board? To what body are these concerns addressed and what authority does this body possess? What is the appeals process?**

Please see attached *Acceleration Academy Advisory Council Operational Guidelines 2015-2016*. Also, because each Acceleration Academy site within Chicago Public Schools is subject to the Chicago Public Schools Student Code of Conduct as well as the Chicago Public Schools Board of Education Policy Manual (CPS Policy Handbook), all protocols and procedures for student and concerned community member concerns-- and appeals relating to those concerns-- are identical to those for Chicago Public School sites.

**How will the executive leaders oversee and support academy leaders? Who is responsible for compliance at a site level?**

Executive leaders are in daily contact with each site director; each site director is responsible for compliance at the site level, and is supported by Acceleration Academies’ Chief Legal Counsel, who remains available to all site directors days, weekends and holidays. Each site director has counsel’s direct cell phone number, and is encouraged to immediately raise compliance questions as they arise on site.

4.2 - Financial Controls & Monitoring, Does Not Meet Standard

**What are your financial controls?**

Please review the attached document labeled *Financial Control Policies of Acceleration Academies, LLC.*

**How will each of the four proposed Chicago sites meet financial control expectations consistently?**

Through protocols and procedures requiring consistent and regularly scheduled analysis and review of all financial and finance-related transactions by Certified Public Accountant, Chief Financial Officer and Board of Directors. Please see attached document labeled *Financial Control Policies of Acceleration Academies, LLC* for greater detail*.*

1. Because this response shall ultimately constitute a Public Record of CPS, the confidential and proprietary content of the Program is not included in this publication. It readily shall be made available to CPS personnel, however, upon execution of a standard nondisclosure agreement. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)