

1. PROJECT ABSTRACT

The School District of Palm Beach County (SDPBC) requests continuation grant funding for the 2006-07 Florida Education Partnership - Alternative Education/Public Private Partnership Grant. Arbor E & T, LLC, Inc. (Excel Alternatives) is contracted with the SDPBC to provide the educational program at Excel Alternatives schools, designed to meet the needs of students (grades 6 – 12) who are disruptive and demonstrate low academic performance. Excel Alternatives has been selected as SDPBC's continuing private partner because of its record of academic and behavioral success with at-risk students. Students in Excel Alternatives programs are individually monitored for overall success in reading, mathematics, and for progress toward grade promotion and credits earned through each learning community's plan for success.

The SDPBC requests third year implementation funding at \$1,250 per student for 535 students, or a total grant request for \$668,750.00. The contracted 2006-07 enrollment in Excel Alternatives is 535 students. The SDPBC is a large school district (9th largest in the United States), with 170,582 students in 165 schools. This public/private partnership serves students who are disruptive and low performing from all geographic areas of Palm Beach County.

Excel Alternatives for North Palm Beach County is currently in a temporary facility until the newly constructed building is completed and the North program school population moves in April 2007. These students will occupy the second story of the new two-story building, located at 1950 Benoist Farms Road, West Palm Beach, Florida. The initial contract was approved by the Palm Beach County School Board on June 29, 2005. In fall 2006, an amendment regarding enrollment was necessary due to construction delays caused by the severity of the last two hurricane seasons, including three direct-hit hurricanes in Palm Beach County. Enrollment in the 2006-07 school year will reach 535 secondary (grades 6-12) students. Students in Excel Alternatives for Central, West, and South Palm Beach County will remain in their smaller

learning communities due to the distance of the new site from their individual learning communities. Students in the Central, West, and South Palm Beach County Excel Alternative schools receive the same educational and supplemental services as those attending the North Palm Beach County Excel Alternatives School.

2. **PROJECT NEED**

Describe the continued need for the project and provide back-up data as evidence. The need should be evident, compelling, and clearly linked to the outcome(s) of the project and strongly justified through supportive data.

Students eligible for the Excel Alternatives partnership schools are at-risk due to disruptive behavior and low academic performance. As a result, they are disruptive and compromise the learning time of other students; and they are functioning below grade level with diminishing academic progress. These students receive a fresh start to get back on track.

The SDPBC has contracted with Arbor E & T, LLC's to provide an alternative program at Excel Alternatives for appropriate placement for these students, offering them a fresh start, with academic and behavioral interventions, culminating in a return to their district schools better prepared and better equipped with skills that will enable them to learn and be successful. Out of 88,535 SDPBC students enrolled in grades 6-12 during the 2005-06 school year, 21,848 students demonstrated serious disruptive behavior and 30,706 students performed below proficiency in reading and/or math (SSAASY Planning Reference Report.).

SDPBC data indicates that too many secondary students are considered disruptive, and are involved in serious behavioral incidents such as battery, drugs, alcohol, theft, robbery, fighting, threat/intimidation, trespassing, vandalism, sex offenses, weapons possessions, disorderly conduct, and other offenses leading to suspensions and expulsions. During the 2005 – 2006 school year, the average suspension rate was 24% at the middle school level and 21% at the high school level. These suspensions are both internal and external.

Students who are enrolled in Excel Alternatives schools come from the substantial numbers of SDPBC secondary students who are both disruptive and low-performing academically. These are students who have already participated in intensive interventions tried by their regular middle or high school staff. Excel Alternatives students come from the large district pool of low-performing secondary students, as evidenced by low test scores, retention, failing grades, low grade point averages, falling behind in credits, or not meeting state or district proficiency level in reading or mathematics. On FCAT reading, 26% district middle school students scored level 1 or 2, and 22% district high school students scored level 1 or 2. On FCAT math, 23% district middle school students scored level 1 or 2, and 21% district high school students scored level 1 or 2. Out of 88,535 students in grades 6-12 during the 2005-2006 school year, 30,706 students received one or more F on their report cards. At the high school level, 20% of the students earned lower than a 2.0 grade point average in 2005-2006.

This data continues to demonstrate the clear need for a unique intensive intervention and positive alternative academic program with proven data for potential improved academic impact on these students. The Palm Beach County School Board approved the construction of a new, two-story school facility, designed to positively impact the behavior and learning of at-risk students in the Excel Alternatives small school learning environments. In addition, the SDPBC has developed a controlled design for a school bus/drop-off transportation loop, designed for adult supervision and student behavior modification. Due to construction delays caused by two direct-hit hurricanes in FY2005 and another direct hit hurricane in FY 2006, in addition to national construction delays caused by the destructive hurricanes across the United States, Excel Alternatives initially opened in an interim facility in January 2006. The new facility will be complete and North Excel Alternatives school students will begin attending in the new facility in

April 2007. The SDPBC-Excel Alternatives partnership contract for a population of 535 low performing and disruptive students will be fulfilled in the spring of 2007.

3. **PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

a.) *The target population to be served, including the number of students to be served and the assessment measure(s) and process used for student selection.*

The target population for the Excel Alternatives partnership school has been approved in contract by the School Board of Palm Beach County and signed by the Superintendent and School Board for 535 students. During the first semester of 2006-2007, Excel Alternatives has operated in current facilities while construction is completed on the new facility.

Enrollment Procedures:

The SDPBC agrees to identify and assign to those students in grades 6 - 12 whose academic status and disruptive behavior make them eligible for transfer to Excel Alternatives. SDPBC will assign a sufficient number of students to meet the enrollment of 535 students as specified in this application for 2006-2007.

Consistent with established SDPBC policies, procedures, and the Student Code of Conduct, the parties agree that each student assigned shall be in grade levels six (6) through twelve (12) at the time of enrollment, primarily between the ages of twelve (12) and sixteen (16), and be on a standard diploma track. In addition, enrollment in Excel Alternatives is subject to compliance with the provisions of Florida Statutes concerning school entry health examinations and immunizations.

The formal selection and referral process for students to attend Excel Alternatives has been developed by Excel Alternatives and the SDPBC. Excel Alternatives has contributed criteria which focus predominately on behavior, academics, and attendance. The Excel Alternatives student identification includes chronic problems related to attendance, behavior and

poor academic achievement. Below are some examples of Excel Alternatives criteria also to be used by SDPBC.

Students assigned to the Excel Alternatives partnership school shall have one or more of the following exhibited behaviors or academic tendencies, including, but not limited to:

- ✓ Demonstrating excessive truancy, skipping classes and/or tardiness to classes.
- ✓ Leaving campus without permission.
- ✓ Repeating violations of the School District's Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.
- ✓ Exhibiting involvement with tobacco or illegal drugs at school.
- ✓ Demonstrating aggressive, threatening behavior toward other students, teachers or staff.
- ✓ Participating in school conflict(s) where students have needed to be separated.
- ✓ Having to repeat grades.
- ✓ Needing credits to catch up with their cohort group and being in danger of not graduating with their cohort group.
- ✓ Performing below grade level in basic skills in reading and math.
- ✓ Having low grade point averages and in the bottom 25% of their class.
- ✓ Scoring low on FCAT and requiring remediation.
- ✓ Creating and leading other student in disruptive behavior in classrooms, halls, on school grounds and at school events.

The SDPBC developed the enrollment procedures to be used by the SDPBC and Arbor E & T, LLC in assigning and enrolling students in Excel Alternatives. The SDPBC established enrollment procedures as follow:

- ✓ SDPBC will assign students to the Excel Alternatives according to the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct;

- ✓ Each student shall remain enrolled at the sending school until such time as the student has completed the enrollment procedures that have been accepted by the SDPBC and Excel Alternatives;
- ✓ The SDPBC agrees to approve all placements and to transfer a copy of the file for each student assigned to Excel Alternatives upon final approval by the Area Superintendent;
- ✓ “Enrollment” in Excel Alternatives will be considered a "within" district transfer, not a drop from the School District roll, with each student continued on the SDPBC roll in a designated active attendance status that is maintained at the sending school or by the Department of Alternative Education or other appropriate office designated by the SDPBC; and, since Excel Alternatives Students will remain on the SDPBC roster, Excel Alternatives is authorized to utilize standard School District forms for student reporting such as report cards and transcripts.

To mutually help and support the operation of Excel Alternatives, the SDPBC agrees to provide sufficient assistance as follows:

- 1) Staff assistance and training to Excel Alternatives personnel in the areas of SDPBC data collection, storage system(s), academic and attendance systems, as needed;
- 2) The identification of a SDPBC staff member from the Department of Alternative Education, whose responsibility, during the 2006-2007 school year, will be the coordination of the Arbor E & T, LLC contract, and the duties and authority as a point of contact;
- 3) The duties of the identified SDPBC staff member will include, but not be limited to:
 - a. reviewing the provisions of the contract with Arbor E & T, LLC;
 - b. assisting with identification, assignment and enrollment of students in Excel Alternatives; and

- c. assisting in supervision and direction of the placement and enrollment process.
- 4) To meet the enrollment goals, each sending school that refers students to the Excel Alternatives Arbor E & T, LLC partnership school should appoint a site-based administrator to be the contact person for enrollment in this program;
- 5) These site-based administrators will receive in-service training from Arbor E & T, LLC on the enrollment criteria, enrollment process, and Arbor E & T, LLC overall education program.
- 6) Arbor E & T, LLC will advise each site-based administrator, designated School District staff, and the School District representative regarding the ongoing status of enrollment at the district and site level.

Student Enrollment Procedures:

For each student enrolling in Excel Alternatives, a diagnostic assessment in reading and math basic skills will be completed at admission, using assessment software which is consistent with the requirements for other alternative education programs in the SDPBC. Excel Alternatives shall provide the technology to support this software as well as the software, licenses and training.

Excel Alternatives shall maintain student records utilizing electronic or other data systems which are congruent with those required or developed by the SDPBC to conform to state and federal laws, rules or regulations. Excel Alternatives will collaborate with the School District to design “real time” data format for reporting electronic data.

Arbor E & T, LLC and SDPBC agree that new Excel Alternatives students can be enrolled in Excel Alternatives programs on any day of the school week, but new Excel Alternatives students will only be admitted for purposes of orientation on one designated day each week.

Student Exit Procedures:

At the end of the initial 180 days, the Child Study Team (CST) or IEP Team, including representatives from Excel Alternatives and the home school, will consider the student's progress through exit staffing and either recommend the student return to the home school or recommend the student remain in the partnership program. The CST or IEP Team will document its recommendations on the Student Exit Report (PBSD 1605). Students may exit at the end of the 180-day stay on the last day of the semester, based on the School District calendar.

- b) *The proposed education partner that will operate the program, including the provision of personnel, supplies, equipment, and/or facilities. Required information includes non-profit/for-profit status, company name, chief executive, corporate address, telephone number, and educational program title.*

Arbor E & T, LLC, a privately held, for profit organization, is the alternative education partner for the program. The national director of Arbor E&T is:

Ralph Gronefeld
President and CEO
ResCare, Inc.
10140 Linn Station Rd.
Louisville, KY 40223

The local educational program is Excel Alternatives, and the Florida director is:

Joan Vermillion, CEO
114 W. 1st Street, Suite 210
Sanford, FL 32771
(407) 330-0880

Arbor E & T, LLC is working in partnership with the SDPBC to continue implementation and operation of the Excel Alternatives alternative education partnership program for disruptive and low performing students in grades 6 – 12.

- c) *The specific role(s) of each partner in the program, including, but not limited to, the educational program provider and the district school board.*

The specific roles and responsibilities of each partner were determined during project negotiations and are reflected in the SDPBC-Arbor E & T, LLC approved partnership contract.

The School District of Palm Beach County (SDPBC) is the lead partner in the Arbor E & T, LLC Excel Alternatives partnership. The SDPBC has entered into an educational partnership and contract with Arbor E & T, LLC to offer their unique educational program for this high-risk target group of disruptive, low performing students in grades 6 – 12. The roles and responsibilities of the SDPBC are as follow:

- ✓ The SDPBC continues to identify and assign students to Excel Alternatives.
- ✓ The SDPBC provided the temporary facility; acquired land and designed the new school facility to meet the unique design for small learning communities (completion – April 2007).
- ✓ The SDPBC provides transportation, textbooks and related instructional resources needed for instruction.
- ✓ The SDPBC provides all food services for students served by Excel Alternatives.
- ✓ The SDPBC provides a school police officer.
- ✓ The SDPBC provides the technology connections in the facility to ensure that Excel Alternatives can electronically communicate enrollment information and track the necessary student achievement/attendance data to evaluate the student performance outcomes and the long-term success of the Excel Alternatives partnership program.
- ✓ SDPBC includes Excel Alternatives on its internal mail distribution route for direct communication for Excel Alternatives provision of the Services.
- ✓ The SDPBC provides to Excel Alternatives any existing electronic or other student records in its possession which pertain to any students assigned to Excel Alternatives, or pertains to students who are included in the longitudinal tracking program, including

attendance records, academic records, disciplinary records, IEPs and previous or current standardized or other test scores.

✓ This information is provided electronically in a file format usable by Excel Alternatives and transferred to an information repository agreed to by the parties prior to the student's attendance.

✓ The School District designated employees of Excel Alternatives as having a legitimate educational interest such that they are entitled to access to education records under 20 U.S.C. §1232g, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

Excel Alternatives is the alternative education program provider for the continuation of the Excel Alternatives partnership program. Excel Alternatives will serve as the private contractor delivering the educational and support services, personnel, supplies, equipment, etc. to carry out the alternative educational program described in this application.

✓ Excel Alternatives is responsible for providing quarterly formative reports and an annual summative report.

✓ Excel Alternatives provides adequate staffing, computers, equipment, supplies, etc.

✓ Excel Alternatives maintains adequate insurance.

✓ Excel Alternatives provides the school staff to meet the many needs of these high-needs students.

The primary staffing model for the Excel Alternatives partnership school includes the following adults in order to accomplish the 1:15 teacher to student ratio:

- One Principal;
- Four assistant principals (operations; student services; curriculum & instruction)
- Thirty classroom teachers (1:15 teacher to student ration)

- Fifteen paraprofessionals (1:22 teacher to student ration)
- One student service specialist
- One academic specialist
- One FCAT coach
- One reading coach
- One school psychologist
- One intake specialist
- One human resource manager; and
- Additional security personnel and support staff as needed.
- Within this model, ESE and ESOL certification requirements are met.

Equipment

Excel Alternatives provides all computers, software, telecommunications equipment, furniture, fixtures or any other supplies or equipment necessary to provide the services pursuant to the SDPBC-Arbor E & T, LLC Excel Alternatives contract.

Recreation Program

Excel Alternatives will provide adequate equipment and supplies for a recreational program when the North program moves to the new building.

Administrative Services

Excel Alternatives maintains records on student attendance, courses offered, number of students served, courses completed, and student report cards. Enrollment and attendance is accounted for by Excel Alternatives established system and is deemed acceptable by SDPBC.

Excel Alternatives established the instructional hour of the school day to record absences in order to determine daily student attendance using accepted attendance accounting procedures, as promulgated by the State of Florida. Excel Alternatives has limited access to the SDPBC student database only for information related to the students assigned to Excel Alternatives.

Records

Excel Alternatives is responsible for keeping proper and complete books, records, and accounts with respect to the operation of Excel Alternatives and all sub-contracts thereof. Excel Alternatives permits designees of the SDPBC, upon written notice to the Chief Financial Officer of Excel Alternatives, to inspect the same at all reasonable hours and to take away paper copies thereof. To the extent Excel Alternatives will come into possession of student records and information, and to the extent Excel Alternatives will be involved in the survey, analysis, or evaluation of students, Arbor E & T, LLC and Excel Alternatives agree to comply with all requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and any other state or federal law regarding privacy and confidentiality of records. Arbor E & T, LLC and Excel Alternatives adhere to all federal, state and local laws governing confidentiality of student information for any student and all other matters as more fully set forth in the partnership contract.

Additionally, the Arbor E & T, LLC-trained regional and corporate staff assist Excel Alternatives staff with the development of instructional interventions, student behavior interventions, incorporating best practices into the classroom, guaranteeing the curriculum meets district and state compliance, and providing oversight of operational areas and safety training.

- d) *The school facility in which the educational program will be operated. This description should include an assurance that the size of the space and the occupant design capacity meet criteria as provided by State Board of Education administrative rules. Indicate which partner – district school board or education partner – will provide the facility.*

The SDPBC has contracted with a qualified school architectural and construction firms, Morganti and Schenkel Shultz, to design and build the new school facility based on the small learning community model with enhancements provided by the outstanding quality of architectural and building services in SDPBC. This new building is designed with six Small Learning Communities, 3 upstairs and 3 downstairs, each minimizing the potential for student disruption and maximizing the opportunity for students to learn in a safe, structured environment. The new date for building completion, due to hurricane delays, is April 2007.

The facility is centrally accessible to students who might be referred to the program from within the wide North geographic region of this school district. The SDPBC has planned the transportation routes for every secondary school student in the North area of the county to have access to this unique opportunity, as needed. Excel Alternative schools will remain open in the Central, West, and South geographic regions of the school district to meet the needs of students in those areas with smaller learning communities. The temporary facility for the North area has been provided by the SDPBC since January 2005. The students in the temporary facility will be moved to the new, permanent facility April 2007. At that time, Excel Alternatives will continue to serve a student population of 535 students in grades 6-12 at the four sites.

The following parameters have been established:

- The new Excel Alternatives facility is located in an area of Palm Beach County that will provide reasonable geographic access for all referred students.
- Student transportation will be provided to the facility by the SDPBC, and a design for the transportation loop and parent drop-off is structured to provide for behavior modification.
- Food service for students will be provided by the SDPBC.

- The new, building will accommodate communities (each with five classrooms around a commons area), administrative services, and support services.
- The facility meets all size of space and occupant design criteria established by Florida State Board of Education and the Florida Building Code.

The Excel Alternatives North partnership facility offers a highly-structured learning environment formed by small learning communities divided by grade. Each classroom in the learning community opens onto the commons area, where students eat their meals. Each of the school-wide learning communities reflects the school-within-a-school concept. The facility design for Excel Alternatives also reflects adequate space for a variety of administrative services and support in the Student/Family Service Center.

e) How students will be placed in the educational program based on their assessed needs.

The SDPBC reviews all records, transcripts and IEP, ELL or 504 Plans to reasonably ensure that placement in Excel Alternatives is consistent with the enrollment criteria set forth in the SDPBC-Arbor E & T, LLC Agreement and is in the best interest of and is appropriate for each prospective student, provided, however, that all students assigned by the SDPBC are eligible for enrollment in Excel Alternatives. The final decision on which students will be assigned to Excel Alternatives is made by the Superintendent or designee, consistent with the enrollment criteria set forth in the partnership agreement.

For each student enrolling in the Excel Alternatives, a diagnostic assessment in reading and math basic skills will be completed upon admission with assessment software, consistent with requirements for other educational alternative programs in SDPBC. Excel Alternatives shall provide the technology to support the software, licenses, and training.

Students with Disabilities: The parties agree that the SDPBC may place special education students, as defined by the IDEA, and students receiving rehabilitation services under

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, into Excel Alternatives , as appropriate under the students' IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan. In determining placement of students with disabilities at Excel Alternatives, the SDPBC is cognizant that Excel Alternatives students who require special education services shall be on a standard diploma track, served in regular classrooms and provided Excel Alternatives established program provided to non-disabled students. Only students with disabilities who are on the standard diploma track will be eligible for placement. Students with disabilities whose IEP or 504 Plan requires any special programs or services or specialized interventions that cannot be met by Excel Alternatives established program provided to non-disabled students will not be assigned. In all instances, the IEP Committee must determine that the Excel Alternatives' Arbor E & T, LLC program provided to non-disabled students is appropriate for implementation for each student's IEP. Where required by a student's IEP or 504 Plan, the SDPBC will be responsible for providing transportation to and from Excel Alternatives, as well as any Related Services identified in the Plans. For students with disabilities, advancement will be consistent with the student's IEP.

English Language Learners (ELL): Excel Alternatives will accept English Language Learners (ELL) if recommended as best placement by the ELL Committee and if the ELL student(s) meet the enrollment criteria for best placement in Excel Alternatives for disruptive and low performing students. Instruction will be provided by ESOL endorsed or ESOL certified teachers and ESOL content area coverage (60 hour) teachers so as to be in accordance with the terms of the Federal Consent Decree. The student's SDPBC ESOL Resource teacher will meet with the team of teachers at Excel Alternatives to provide assessment and educational progress.

Student/Parent Orientation – Designed for a successful start, stay, and return: A student's first days at Excel Alternatives are spent in an orientation that allows time for the

assessment of reading and math skills diagnostics to determine the educational level of each student and to develop an Individual Educational/Academic Plan accordingly. A focus on high expectations from the students will be set, and each student is required to know the policies and procedures that must be known prior to the student entering a learning community. Students set personal goals aligned with the Excel Alternatives goals to increase academic progress and decrease absences and truancy.

Students identified with reading deficiencies are assigned to a reading class for individualized research-based intervention strategies in the five critical components of reading as required by the SDPBC K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan. Some examples of reading interventions include teaching specific reading comprehension strategies, assigning an older student as a tutor for a younger student, assigning books on tape for fluency, and providing students with high-interest, low readability books and other literature. Students give oral reports and practice fluency skills by reading aloud from selected materials. The educational program provides for differentiated instruction and flexible grouping. In any given classroom, some students may be reading silently, some may be led in discussion, some may be working individually with an adult, or some may be working in small groups.

The details of the instructional program are developed and integrated with all components of the Florida's Sunshine State Standards (SSS). The general instructional methodology will use a delivery system based on instructional best practices and incorporate management tools to effectively teach across the curriculum while providing each student with an individualized learning experience. A variety of multi-level assessments will be used to assist the teacher to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each student, diagnosing skill level and monitoring student progress and grade level gains. Each student's reading and math progress will be

monitored on a regular basis. If a student is not progressing, the student will be referred to the educational specialist, FCAT coach or reading coach who will coach and support the student.

Classroom Expectations: Excel Alternatives has developed a set of behavior expectations which are contained in the Excel Alternatives Student Handbook. The behavior expectations are introduced to students during their orientation and constantly reinforced through classrooms in the learning community.

Continuous/Multiple Assessment Strategies: The Excel Alternatives instructional program incorporates the continuous assessment model. Teachers assess student progress through several methods, including participation in class discussion/activities; student projects; portfolios; traditional student tests and homework assignments; progress in skill development through a software component; and rubrics designed to assess social skill participation, writing assignments and SSR participation. Continuous assessment drives planning and delivery of instruction. The integrated learning system for Excel Alternatives includes an intensive remedial program, with teacher-led instruction, computer-assisted learning, text and print-based resources and collaborative group learning. Every student in the program has an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP), ESE students have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), ELL students have ELL plans, and, as appropriate, students have 504 plans.

During the last quarter that students spend at Excel Alternatives, they participate in a transition curriculum designed to have them 1) examine their academic record, 2) plan what they individually require for graduation; and 3) set new goals for themselves in the areas of attendance, behavior and academics. The curriculum includes exploration of career interests and abilities, and the classes needed to prepare for this vocation. Transition also includes units on expected school behaviors based on the district student code of conduct, discussion on the

responsibility of family membership and a unit on how to select friends. Students set new academic and behavior goals prior to leaving and complete a service-learning project, which is shared both within the school and during a family celebration evening. All of the information gleaned during the transition process will be shared with the guidance counselor and teachers at the public school to which the student returns.

Summer Program (as needed) - Students assigned to Excel Alternatives during any school year may be eligible to participate in SDPBC summer programs, if such programs are offered and are appropriate for the student, at the discretion of SDPBC.

Extended School Year for ESE Students - Any ESE student whose IEP determines the need for an extended school year will receive services from the SDPBC. This determination shall be made with the Area Team Leader or designee, in attendance at the IEP meeting, if the student is enrolled at Excel Alternatives.

Extended School Year for ELL Students - ELL extended school year services are provided for ELL students by the SDPBC, as needed. A student whose ELL Plan determines the need for an extended school year will receive services from SDPBC. This determination shall be made, as needed, according to district ELL guidelines.

f) Measurable anticipated student performance outcomes and targets for each measure of student performance – attendance, academic achievement, and behavior.

The measurable student performance outcomes and targets for attendance, academics & behavior are as follow:

I. Provide services and resources to maximize student attendance.

A. Students enrolled in the program for a minimum of 90 instructional days will demonstrate improvement in attendance as compared with the attendance in the 90 days prior to assignment to Excel Alternatives.

II. *Teach personal/social skills designed to develop appropriate behaviors.*

- B. Students enrolled in the program for a minimum of 90 instructional days will receive fewer discipline referrals as compared with referrals received in the 90 days prior to assignment to Excel Alternatives.

III. *Offer challenging curriculum aligned with state and local standards.*

Quarterly Formative Data:

- A. Students enrolled in the program for a minimum of 90 instructional days will demonstrate learning gains in reading as reported on the Scholastic Reading Inventory lexile levels.
- B. Students enrolled in the program for a minimum of 90 instructional days will demonstrate learning gains in math as reported on the STAR Math Grade Level Equivalent (GLE) scores.

Annual Summative Data:

Students enrolled in the program for a minimum of 90 instructional days will demonstrate learning gains in reading as reported on the FCAT. Students enrolled in the program for a minimum of 90 instructional days will demonstrate learning gains in mathematics as reported on the FCAT.

The Excel Alternatives alternative education partnership school is not a permanent placement for students – it is instead an academic and behavioral intervention which prepares the student to return to the home school or another appropriate placement better prepared to learn and graduate. Therefore, the Arbor E & T, LLC corporate staff will evaluate the student's improvement in academics, attendance, and behavior in a longitudinal study beyond the 180-day placement in Excel Alternatives.

g) *The curriculum content, including a correlation with the Sunshine State Standards, to be used in the program that would lead toward grade promotion and school graduation.*

The Excel Alternatives mission is to work in partnership with SDPBC and the community to get low performing and disruptive students back on track in their learning and behavior so that they can return to their home schools (or another appropriate placement) prepared to be successful.

The Excel Alternatives curriculum is designed to help students be successful when they return to the home school (or another appropriate placement) by:

- Working on academic skills daily through direct instruction and a specially designed software program for acceleration;
- Providing teacher-led, core academic classes designed to meet Sunshine State Standards;
- Offering high school credits needed for graduation;
- Ensuring that each student stays on task to earn the credits and be promoted;
- Participating in district course exams and district diagnostic tests;
- Giving students an opportunity to develop oral skills in speaking and reading;
- Addressing individual fluency needs through a reading class and reading coach;
- Changing behavior through daily class curriculum; and
- Using an aggressive truancy program to address attendance problems.

Arbor E & T, LLC Excel Alternatives utilize curriculum that is fully aligned with the Sunshine State Standards, and designed around the four core classes of Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies with intensive remedial courses in reading and math, as well as elective courses required for graduation. Excel Alternatives curriculum staff continues to work with SDPBC curriculum staff to ensure full alignment in all courses with Sunshine State Standards and objectives. The district scope and sequence is used, as well as grade level

expectations. District-selected textbooks are professionally aligned to state standards. Use of SDPBC textbooks also provides for seamless movement within the district school system.

Currently, all Florida-adopted textbooks are aligned to Sunshine State Standards and FCAT objectives. Arbor E & T, LLC has developed a standardized lesson plan that utilizes a backwards-planning process. This means teachers choose the standards on which they want to focus and then develop the teaching strategies to achieve these standards. Teachers select the standards they will be teaching for the week and identify the process in which they will meet the standards. Standards guide the instruction.

All SDPBC adopted textbooks are aligned to the Sunshine State Standards. Administrators, specialists, and coaches have access to lesson plans to monitor and evaluate the plans for class instruction. Excel Alternatives administrators monitor the lesson plans to ensure teachers are planning for and addressing FCAT objectives. The Excel Alternatives FCAT Coach works with teachers and students to make sure that Sunshine State Standards are understood and that the standards drive the curriculum. The academic program and curricular resources are guided and directed by Excel Alternatives classroom teachers employed by Arbor E & T, LLC.

The staff in each learning community has daily collaborative planning time available, incorporated into the schedule, for the teachers to plan, discuss, and set goals together. During this time, the team can plan for the use of best practices and strategies throughout the curriculum, and use the continuous assessment process to plan and drive the instruction.

Accelerated Credit Recovery: The student remains in the small learning community for the entire instructional day, and rotates on a schedule from class to class within the community. Under the direction of a principal, assistant principal, classroom teachers, an FCAT coach, a reading coach, and an academic specialist, the student studies:

1. Intensive reading
2. Intensive math
3. Mathematics
4. English and Grammar
5. Science
6. Social Studies

Excel Alternatives uses a schedule with classes of 60 minutes each. Students who spend 180 days in the accelerated Excel Alternatives educational program may earn the following credits:

SUBJECT	CREDIT(S)		SUBJECT	CREDIT(S)
English	2.0		Mathematics	2.0
Intensive Reading	1.0		Intensive Mathematics	1.0
Social Studies	1.0		Science	1.0
Peer Relationships and Social Skills/ Critical thinking & Study skills				1.0

After completion of the accelerated academic program during 180 days at Excel Alternatives, the high school student will have earned at least 9 credits and be back on track toward graduation. Students have an opportunity to recover classes they have failed or to accelerate in courses *NovaNet* and/or *Educational Options* software, which align with the Sunshine State Standards. Credit awards are based on state requirements for credit recovery. The program goal is for students to return to district schools back on track and prepared to graduate with their peers.

h) *The general methodology that teachers will use in providing instruction to students.*

Excel Alternatives instructional staff works with state and district curriculum experts to align the time and course design requirements of Florida. The core classes are sixty minutes. Within classrooms there are activities that provide guidance in personal and social practices to guide these young people toward graduation. Activities may include silent sustained reading and journaling, learning and practicing chess to develop critical thinking skills, anti-bullying and

character education, and social skills development designed to change behavior through self-examination.

Sunshine State Standards: Instruction includes the essential knowledge and skills necessary to achieve course completion or course credits aligned to the state standards.

Grade Level Skills: The parties acknowledge and agree that grade level reading and math skills will be determined by software which is aligned with the School District curriculum and/or the required basic skills tests in reading and math.

Hours: The start and end of each school day will be determined by the SDPBC.

Instructional Technology is used in the classroom in a number of ways:

- Students who need credits not offered at Excel Alternatives may take the course with special software or through Internet connection to a virtual classroom;
- Students have access to software that supports the classroom curriculum in the commons area and the computer lab. When programs move to the new building, there will be four computers in each classroom.
- Software programs, such as Power Point, Word, Excel, etc., are available for students to use in the development of class projects.
- Software programs available in the public schools will also be available in Excel Alternatives, as applicable.
- Software addressing the academic skills of reading and math is available through a Skills Center where students work on individually designed programs that address their skill needs. Mastery is required before students move forward.
- Teachers use the *GradeQuick* software program to input student grades.

Transition

During the students' last nine weeks at Excel Alternatives, they begin a transition designed to have them examine their academic record and to set new goals for themselves in the areas of attendance, behavior and academics. For high school students, the transition curriculum includes exploration of career interests and abilities, and the classes needed to prepare for this vocation. Transition also includes units on expected school behaviors based on the district student code of conduct, discussion on the responsibility of family membership and a unit on how to select friends. Students set new academic and behavior goals prior to leaving and complete a service-learning project, which is shared both within the school and during a family celebration evening.

- i) ***The student performance data to be collected and the method(s) for direct student performance assessment. Evidence should be placed on how evidence of increased academic achievement among enrolled students will be demonstrated.***

Student performance outcome data on the project's progress toward achieving the measurable student performance outcomes will be collected, shared, and evaluated by both the SDPBC and the Excel Alternatives partners for this project, and the SDPBC will submit formative reports and an annual summative report on Excel Alternatives student performance outcomes. The SDPBC will monitor the progress reports and data, and work with Arbor E & T, LLC Excel Alternatives to ensure that the students are meeting the project goals. The SDPBC and Arbor E & T, LLC evaluate program effectiveness independently by sharing data collected for each outcome. Results of the formative monitoring reports will be used to make recommendations for programmatic improvements, and results of the annual summative evaluation will be used to make decisions regarding the project.

Measuring Success: It is expressly acknowledged by the parties that most of the students assigned to Excel Alternatives are functioning below grade level in reading and/or math, are frequently enrolled in a grade level significantly higher than their level of achievement, and

are not likely to pass their state test. Accordingly, all accountability standards will be based on comparing Excel Alternatives students to a mutually agreed upon control group. Students who are functioning two or more years below grade level will benefit from an assignment to Excel Alternatives that allows them to improve their reading and math skills so that they can improve their performance on tests and so that they can achieve course credit or grade promotion. The parties further acknowledge that it is reasonable that one of the goals of the Partnership Program is that students make progress toward improving their reading or math skills and that the Partnership Program is designed so that the student who is function two (2) or more years below grade level:

- a) makes progress toward achieving grade level in reading and/or math;
- b) makes progress toward achieving grade level with courses passed or credits earned; and
- c) does not drop out of school.

Control Group Match: The direct student performance assessment will be conducted by comparing Excel Alternatives students to a mutually agreed upon control group match according to the criteria outlined in the contract.

The student performance criteria for the annual summative report are listed below:

1. The percent of students demonstrating learning gains in reading as reported in the School Accountability Report will be statistically higher than for students in the mutually agreed upon control group.
2. The percent of students demonstrating learning gains in math as reported in the School Accountability Report will be statistically higher than for students in the mutually agreed upon control group.

3. The percent of students absent 18 or more days for students enrolled from the first day of school to the last day of school for SY2007 will be statistically lower for students at Excel Alternatives than students in the mutually agreed upon control group.
4. The average number of L2 and 3 discipline referrals will be statistically lower for students returning to a comprehensive secondary school after exiting Excel Alternatives for the first 45 days of enrollment compared to the mutually agreed upon control group. .

A *Longitudinal Tracking Program* will be developed and implemented for those students who have returned from Excel Alternatives to a secondary district school. The SDPBC will provide Excel Alternatives the student's records for the school year prior to enrollment at Excel Alternatives and the records after his/her return to the SDPBC school, including each student's rate of attendance, academic performance records on all tests administered by the SDPBC, the number of classes passed/credits earned and the promotion/graduation record.

In accordance with the partnership contract, SDPBC agrees to provide Excel Alternatives with access to the School District's electronic database to implement the longitudinal tracking program including a mutually agreed upon control group of students for comparative purposes. In the School Board-approved contract, the SDPBC has designated employees of Excel Alternatives as having a legitimate educational interest such that they are entitled to have access to education records under 20 U.S.C. §1232g, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. To the extent Excel Alternatives will come into possession of student records and information, and to the extent that Excel Alternatives will be involved in the survey, analysis, or evaluation of students, Excel Alternatives agrees to comply with all requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

The following chart provides a comparison of FCAT results between the Palm Beach County Excel Alternatives sites and the state averages for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years:

2003-05 Excel Average and Site Comparison to: State Average	State FCAT Avg.		Excel sites Average Score		Excel Palm Beach North Intensive School		Excel Palm Beach West Intensive School		Excel Palm Beach South Intensive School	
	03-04	04-05	03-04	04-05	03-04	04-05	03-04	04-05	03-04	04-05
School Year	03-04	04-05	03-04	04-05	03-04	04-05	03-04	04-05	03-04	04-05
# of Students		201488				11		12		14
8th Grade Math Achievement Levels % at Grade Level or Higher	56	59	14.5	54	8	18	n/a	8	54	21
8th Grade Math Achievement Levels Mean Score (100-500)	311	313	258.0	284	229	247	n/a	258	284	258
8th Grade Reading Achievement Levels % at Grade Level or Higher	45	44	0.0	38	9	9	10	0	38	0
8th Grade Reading Achievement Levels Mean Score (100-500)	295	297	223.0	267	209	233	201	225	267	221
8th Grade Writing Achievement Levels % at Grade Level or Higher	89	92	91.5	75	n/a	58	n/a	90	75	93
8th Grade Writing Achievement Levels Mean Score (1-6)	3.8	3.8	3.3	3	n/a	2.6	n/a	3.1	3.1	3.4
8th Grade Science Achievement Levels Mean Score (100-500)	286			277	189		n/a		277	
10th Grade Math Achievement Levels % at Grade Level or Higher	63	63	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10th Grade Math Achievement Levels Mean Score (100-500)	323	322	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

10th Grade Reading Achievement Levels % at Grade Level or Higher	34	32	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10th Grade Reading Achievement Levels Mean Score (100-500)	300	296	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10th Grade Writing Achievement Levels % at Grade Level or Higher	90	90	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10th Grade Writing Achievement Levels Mean Score (1-6)	3.8	3.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10th Grade Science Achievement Levels Mean Score (100-500)	287		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

- j) *The plan to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the educational program provided, including the ways and means to collect student feedback on program quality; the plan for apprising staff of student achievement; and the method(s) in which evaluation data will be used to modify instruction and other program components.*

The annual summative evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the educational program provided will be measured by comparing Excel Alternatives students’ progress on the identified student performance measures to a mutually agreed upon control group match according to the criteria outlined in the contract. The SDPBC and Excel Alternatives will evaluate program effectiveness independently by sharing data collected for each student outcome. Evaluation data will be used to modify instruction and other program components. Results of these evaluations will be used to make decisions regarding programmatic improvements and ongoing partnership terms.

Follow up on the status of students who have completed the program will begin as soon as the student transitions back to the home school or another appropriate placement. Records will be kept on the student’s progress through graduation. This evaluation will determine if the students are still making progress in academic achievement, passing courses or completing

course credits, and making progress toward graduation. SDPBC will provide data to Excel Alternatives for students who have transitioned for analysis to determine the long-term impact on the measurable student performance outcomes and toward successful progress for graduation. The longitudinal measurement of the Excel Alternatives 's Excel Alternatives educational program effectiveness will focus on the student's achievement one and two years prior to enrollment in the program, and after the student returns to the home school (or another appropriate placement) through graduation.

Excel Alternatives Commitment to Continuous Improvement and QA

Continuous quality improvement is an unending objective of all EXCEL programs that is embedded within every element of our operations to ensure we are committed to daily improvement that ultimately drives us to our goal of providing “Best in *Class Alternative Educational Services*” to our student/parent customers.

Excel Alternatives will gather indicators of school effectiveness by an external Quality School Review System. Excel Alternatives management, external to school operations, will conduct monthly evaluations of school alignment with school improvement plans, district priorities and systems alignment, correlates of the Highly Effective/Accountable school plans and formal site-based semester review. Following the tenets of an accreditation plan, the program will maintain an auditable series of continuous improvement documents providing detailed plans on the policy and procedures and allocation of resources to support said priorities.

Ongoing evaluation will focus on:

- 1) Academic rigor
- 2) Staff development
- 3) “Academy quality” school management

- 4) Effective implementation and use of evaluation and data management
- 5) Quality service to parent and student customers

Monthly school administration will collect stakeholder feedback. The schools will implement formal corrective action plans for significant deficiencies in policy, procedure or operation. The District and school administration will allocate resources to support all corrective plans and ensure schools remain on target for service delivery quality and ongoing improvement.

Student Feedback

There are three key initiatives the principal uses to collect associate, staff, and parent feedback for improvement of the program. These initiatives are:

1. Senior Associate Program,
2. Learning Community Briefs, and
3. Quality Control Independent Parent Survey.

Part of our atmosphere is that we call our students “associates.” The *Senior Associate Program* consists of associates who have maintained a 95% attendance rate, 2.5 GPA, and have received no disciplinary referrals. These associates have shown the ability to work with others. Acting as representatives to the program, they assist in guest tours, provide administrative support, conduct presentations for visitors, and attend one business-oriented trip per semester. More importantly, the senior associates are the voice of their peers. In their bi-weekly round table meeting with the principal, these youth discuss the quality of the program and potential areas for improvement. They provide written and verbal feedback as requested to improve the program’s quality. This data is then taken into consideration by administration, recorded and then used to steer program improvement.

The second initiative is the *Learning Community Brief*. This process is used daily by the Learning Community Supervisor as a forum for program staff to process feelings and opinions on youth matters. Typically 30 minutes long, this meeting occurs every day after the associates leave for the day. Staff is assembled in a common area to reflect on its daily activities. Above all, this critical assembly offers an opportunity to be briefed on issues and events within the program impacting the quality of daily service. Conversation items are consistently focused in three key areas essential to a structured model: behavior modification, academic rigor, and school safety.

A third-party evaluator completes the bi-annual Quality Control Independent Parent Survey. The surveyor contacts parents at random to ask about their experiences with the centers. The surveyor gives anonymous results to the principal. After review of comments and scores, the administrative team will not only utilize the data to determine areas for continuous improvement, but also determine the need to follow up with any specific concern.

Apprising Staff of Student Achievement

To ensure that all students have a positive academic experience, students are provided continuous academic counseling. Upon entry to a program, all students participate in an individual academic counseling session with a designated school-based advisor. The advisor assesses each student's knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics according to academic records, interviews and assessment. This information is documented on a Professional Development Planner. From these results, a customized Individual Academic Plan is developed to meet defined needs within the assigned learning community environment.

For low-performing students, a school-based Academic Specialist is assigned for additional support. During the counseling sessions, the administrator documents short-term

goals with the student, and together they review prior academic objectives and expectations. These short-term objectives are reviewed bi-monthly and progress is documented until they are met. If there is no progress, the counselor and student explore different approaches, such as one-on-one teaching, a team leader conference, parent/guardian conference, after-school tutoring, and additional computer-aided instruction. The intervention may facilitate accommodations for student learning styles or modify the curriculum to meet the specified goals for student progress.

School administration will be directly involved in monthly learning community meetings with instructional and support staff to discuss observed trends related to individual, sub-group and total population progress. In addition, every nine weeks, the advisors update students' Individual Academic Plans based on their overall performance. Each year the administrative team reviews the curriculum to enhance instructional strategy that supports the Sunshine State Standards and FCAT initiatives.

Method for Modifying Instruction and other Program Components as a Result of Feedback

Excel Alternatives school staff incentive compensation will be tied directly to student achievement. Instructional staff will be assigned to a defined learning community (TRAC) in which student performance will be evaluated and reported on an ongoing basis. Monthly learning community plans will be reviewed by all instructional staff. TRAC leaders will submit learning community improvement plans to the academic specialist of the school for review and approval. Instructional staff is required to fully participate in TRAC feedback improvement meetings. Formal Quality School Review is conducted to determine the quality of the academic experience and contribution of individual team members to improve the experience and determine their level of earned incentive. Using this balanced system of formal and informal

feedback, combined with formative and summative evaluations, individual learning communities are accountable for student achievement.

Excel Alternatives has committed to a formal Quality Assurance (QA) process that is the foundation of our School Management System. QA provides feedback in comparison to Excel Alternatives Model Standards defined specifically for the program under review. QA is a summative process providing objective feedback for the purpose of stimulating school improvement and aligning site management with Excel Alternatives Model compliance expectations.

Public Release of QA and School Postings

A School Quality Scorecard, noting feedback for each standard and a score for each element, will be available two weeks after the review. In addition to the scorecard, the Quality Assurance Manager and Director of Curriculum/PL Peer Reviewer will each provide site visit notes detailing their review. Project Leaders will commit to public release and posting of QSR results with both staff and key district stakeholders to drive QA improvement and ownership at the site based level. In addition to public posting of QSR results, each program will commit to debriefing and posting their School Summary Report detailing real time performance on OPM measures as reported out from the weekly data management system. These reports are also shared publicly with our district school partners.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

Recognizing continuous improvement to be a permanent objective, each Project Leader will conduct a formal assessment of program goals, strengths and weaknesses to prepare a Site Based Improvement Plan during the summer prior to school ramp up. These defined

objectives/goals will be monitored via monthly administrative stoplight reviews to ensure adequate progress in site-based improvements.

Additional School District Performance Data Requirements

The SDPBC coordinates the administration the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) three times per year for screening, progress monitoring, and identifying students who are reading below grade level. Once a student is identified as struggling, the Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR) will be administered at the school level to further pinpoint areas of weakness. When areas of weakness are determined, the educational specialist and reading coach will assist teachers in applying appropriate grouping models and differentiating instruction.

If a student is not making progress at the appropriate pace, the teacher collaborates with the education specialist to determine interventions needed. The teacher has a weekly individual conference with each identified student to keep the student on track with his or her own goals.

Student performance data will be used to modify instruction. Excel Alternatives teachers use the continuous improvement process. The teacher uses the software diagnostic system on a continuous basis of screening, assessment, tracking, progress monitoring, and promoting mastery of standards. Screening is accomplished initially for each student by the teacher and the educational specialist during orientation. The student and teacher (and parent/guardian) are immediately informed of the student's grade level skills and specific weaknesses and strengths, and how the skills level compares with Sunshine State Standards and Grade Level Expectations. Students will complete goal-setting to monitor self-improvement.

Continuous assessment is made possible in the credit recovery program through the use of the *NovaNet* and/or Educational Options software. This software permits individualized instruction that prescribes individualized learning paths that are aligned with the Sunshine State

Standards. Students progress through the courseware, completing mastery tests at the end of each module. Student data is tracked and monitored by the software. Teachers continuously monitor and assess students' mastery of these skills and strategies. As they observe students working, teachers constantly act as diagnosticians, learning the strengths and needs of each student.

Progress monitoring is accomplished daily, and analyzed and reported at multiple levels. Teachers maintain ongoing accounts of student progress and mastery, and produce weekly summary reports for students and parents/guardians. Detailed reports are generated to track learning gains and allow teachers to differentiate instruction during small-group or individualized direct instruction. If the progress monitoring reveals that a student is experiencing difficulty, the student and parent/guardian will meet with the guidance counselor, and often the learning center team staff, to review individual goals, gains, and growth.

Teachers generate progress report every three weeks (or more often if needed) to share with students and parents. The progress reports are recorded and reported as required to the student, parent, school administration or other Excel Alternatives staff, and SDPBC district staff. Based on these frequent assessments, students continuously receive focused instruction designed to bring their skills up to grade level. Administrators and teachers disaggregate data, including district and state testing data, for planning and skills mastery. All data are measured against explicit and high standards. Students' skill levels are compared to grade level expectations and Sunshine State Standards. Comparisons are also made to standardized scores, FCAT scores, or other assessment measures.

k) The method(s) for reporting results of direct student performance assessment to students, the students' parents, the school district, and the FDOE.

Students will be held to the same standards that they would be in their district school and assessment will parallel other SDPBC Schools and be aligned with the SDPBC Grade Level

Expectations and the Sunshine State Standards. They will receive quarterly report cards, to be shared with parents/guardians, on the district's report card format. Grades will be reported electronically to the SDPBC. Students will earn credits at the high school level or pass courses at the middle school level. Credits earned or courses passed will be recorded in the School District's student information system and on the student's transcript.

Students will take the FCAT-SSS and the FCAT-NRT exams on the schedule provided by the district and state. Student test results will be reported by the FDOE and shared with school district and Excel Alternatives parents/guardians, students, and instructional staff. The School Accountability Report will be reported to the general public.

A weekly progress report be provided to parents/guardians and discussed with students (or more often if needed.) Every 3 weeks (or upon request), grades will be averaged and sent with an interim progress report to parents/guardians. Every nine weeks, the student's academic status will be summarized and reported by grade on report cards to students and parents/guardians, using the district's report card format. Administrators will also be made aware of individual student progress with regard to core curriculum success as well as reading and math skills development. Excel Alternatives will send report cards to parents by mail on the same report card distribution schedule used by the SDPBC. The SDPBC will receive reports in the format as agreed in the partnership contract.

Administrators work with teachers to provide feedback on the alignment between the curriculum, testing and grading in their classrooms. Administrators examine teacher lesson plans on a weekly basis and informal teacher conferences take place every three weeks (or as often as needed) between a teacher and appropriate administrator over lesson plan design.

Parents/Guardians will attend a parent-student orientation offered in the first week following referral to the program. Opportunities, expectations, and requirements will be clearly explained to parents, which set the stage for measurable student progress. Other parent activities will take place throughout the course of the student's tenure at Excel Alternatives, including parent nights, regularly scheduled calls between the Learning Community staff and parents/guardians, as well as inclusion of parents/guardians in school events throughout the year.

Student performance outcome reports will be provided quarterly and annually to the FDOE. All reports will be shared with Excel Alternatives staff. Quarterly reports will be submitted to FDOE no later than the last day of the month following the end of the quarter (e.g., January 31, 2006, for the quarter ending December 31, 2005). The quarterly reports will be submitted to FDOE on the following dates: October 31, 2006; January 31, 2007; and March 30, 2007. The annual report to FDOE will be submitted July 15, 2007. Reports will be submitted to the FDOE electronically to the FDOE at Kimberly.Davis@fldoe.org, as per the format to be provided prior to the date for the first report.

The SDPBC Finance Department will submit to the FDOE's Comptroller's Office a Final Project Summary and Disbursement Report (DOE 399) by the date specified on the project award notification (DOE 200) form. .

l. The qualifications for teachers and paraprofessionals and the number of staff to be employed.

Excel Alternatives is staffed by Florida certified teachers with education, leadership and skills necessary to achieve the results expected by the School District of Palm Beach County. All teachers must have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree and sufficient course work in a field to be certified in a subject approved by the State of Florida. Professional staff is sufficiently trained for proper instruction and supervision of students. Paraprofessional staff must have a minimum of a high school diploma and the maturity to work with the target population of students.

Paraprofessionals are encouraged to achieve an AA Degree. In addition, all staff is fully screened, including fingerprinting and criminal background screening, in accordance with Florida law.

Arbor E & T, LLC Excel Alternatives teachers all have a strong desire to work with this population of at-risk students in grades 6 - 12. They see these students not as they are today, but as what they will become with support and guidance. The desire to give back or to make a difference in the life of a child motivates these teachers to return day after day to students who do not always respond. Overall, these teachers believe these children can learn and deserve that opportunity.

Excel Alternatives has a specific staffing model of 1:15 (1 staff for every 15 students) based on the high needs of the student population. Excel Alternatives students will be served by 30 teachers, 15 paraprofessional staff, 1 academic specialist, 1 FCAT coach, 1 reading coach, 7 administrative staff members, a school psychologist, and security. The following chart provides a summary of qualifications:

Staffing by Job Classification:

Job Classification	Education Requirement	Qualifications
Project Leader	Masters or Doctorate Degree	3 years school management experience or school admin. certification Evidence of advance leadership skills
Academic Specialist	Masters Degree	5 year teaching certificate 3 year progressive school/academic leadership experience
Instructional (teachers)	Bachelors Degree	Letter of Eligibility 3 year certification 5 year certification Reading/ESOL Endorsement (or working toward)
Instructional Support	Masters Degree	5 year teaching certificate

Job Classification	Education Requirement	Qualifications
(Reading Coach)		State Reading Certification
Instructional Support (Intensive Reading Instructors)	Bachelors Degree	Letter of Eligibility 5 year certificate State Reading Certification
Paraprofessional Admin.	H/S	3 years experience
Paraprofessional Teacher Assistant	H/S, AS, AA, or Bachelors Degree	Eligible for Paraprofessional status in district
Paraprofessional Security	H/S	Background security/enforcement

In addition to these requirements, instructional staff will be actively seeking highly qualified status as defined by the state. Based on placement of instructional staff, focus for in-field certification is also considered a priority and will be reviewed as part of ongoing staff development.

- m) *The objectives for teacher training during the initial orientation to the proposed education program and for ongoing professional development throughout the course of the program.*

Excel Alternatives believes that regular, sustained professional development ensures that educators acquire the necessary knowledge and skills needed for high quality instruction that results in improved student achievement. The Excel Alternatives program for professional development is on-going, results-driven, and standards-based. Excel Alternatives also provides an orientation training that includes information on the Excel Alternatives educational program, policies and procedures, as appropriate for both Excel Alternatives staff and SDPBC staff directly or indirectly involved with the referral process, the assignment/placement of students in Excel Alternatives, the verification of grades and credits received, and the student’s transition back to an appropriate SDPBC school assignment. Any in-service training program required by law or by SDPBC will be provided by the SDPBC to Excel Alternatives staff, consistent with SDPBC procedures.

Specific professional development objectives for Excel Alternatives teachers are in the areas of Classroom Management, Instructional Strategies, Curriculum, Assessment, and Technology Integration. Each area has at least one objective measured by such outcomes as post tests for specific trainings, participation rates, administrative observations and lesson plans.

Measurable Objectives in Teacher Training Program:

Need	Objective	As Measured by
1. Effective Classroom Management	1.1 To teach effective classroom management skills. EXCEL ALTERNATIVES uses Wong’s <i>First Days of School</i> and Fred Jones’ <i>Tools for Teaching</i> 1.2 To provide training to be able to de-escalate inappropriate verbal and physical behaviors. EXCEL ALTERNATIVES uses <i>Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI)</i> and <i>Handle with Care</i>	1.1.1 Formative/summative observation instrument 1.2.2 70% mastery on a <i>CPI</i> posttest instrument 1.2.3 Demonstration of mastery of de-escalation techniques
2. Instructional Strategies (Best Practices)	2.1 To have teachers use effective, researched-based, instructional strategies that meet learner needs and higher achievement goals	2.1.1 Administrative observations and teacher lesson plans that show evidence of differentiation of instruction to meet needs of all learners
3. Curriculum	3.1 To develop competency in teachers so they will align their curriculum to the state standards 3.2 To ensure that teachers are certified in the content area they are assigned 3.3 To ensure that all teachers are certified or endorsed in the Florida ESOL and Reading components	3.1.1 Lesson plans 3.1.2 Teacher feedback 3.2.1 Certification records 3.2.1 College classes taken 3.3.1 Participation in ESOL Endorsement Training 3.3.2 Registration/ Completion of the FL Online Reading Professional Development 3.3.3 Participation in other required components for Reading Endorsement
4. Assessment	4.1 To ensure that teacher assessments are aligned to standards-based curriculum	4.1.1 Percentage of students passing 4.1.2 Quality and variety of teacher assessments used
5. On-going Staff Development	5.1 To involve all EXCEL ALTERNATIVES education staff in weekly staff development that incorporates best practices that can be easily implemented 5.2 To allow teachers time to collaborate and share best practices	5.1.1 Attendance records 5.1.2 Lesson plans 5.1.3 Training evaluations 5.2.1 Attendance records and meeting notes
6. Technology Integration	6.1 To ensure that the most appropriate technology is utilized to increase teacher effectiveness, to improve student achievement, and to improve time management	6.1.1 Teachers use of on-line Orion for lesson plan 6.1.2 Teachers use of on-line grade book 6.1.3 On-line diagnostic math and reading testing

Teachers are supported/coached daily by their learning community peers, and by administrative staff using a “walk-around” summary tool. The principal will do the formal evaluation for the teachers during the school year and the results can be obtained by the SDPBC upon request. The Florida Performance Measurement System (FPMS) is the measurement tool used for all learning community leaders and administrative staff who participate in training offered by the SDPBC to use the FPMS formative and summative instruments.

n) The method(s) and the process(es) for training staff during the planning and development stages, which must include instructional staff, support services providers, and administrative staff.

Teachers:

- All teachers are required to be state certified to be employed by EXCEL ALTERNATIVES;
- Staff members participate in 80 hours of training in content and strategies for best practices using a variety of resources;
- Staff members attend weekly sessions throughout the year;
- Training material of two educational groups is used on a continuous basis: Harry Wong’s *First Days of School* and Fred Jones’ *Tools for Teaching*;
- Staff members are provided assigned reading and expected to attend the training sessions prepared to discuss the assigned reading;
- Additional training focuses on hands-on strategies and manipulatives; instructional technology; strategies for high risk students; differentiated instruction; flexible grouping; continuous assessment; progress monitoring; planning to meet the needs of every student; instructional intervention strategies; behavior interventions; etc.
- Teachers attend district trainings/workshops when available;

- Teachers and paraprofessionals are continuously mentored by learning community leaders and administrators using a “walk around” format and other assessment tools; Training develops from observations;
- Excel Alternatives employs one software specialist on the regional staff to work with teachers and paraprofessionals continuously;
- Excel Alternatives administers its own beginning teacher program;
- Teachers and paraprofessionals 1) are paid for 80 hours of training prior to the beginning of the school year; and 2) have ongoing training throughout the school year on a regular, weekly scheduled basis. .
- Teachers and paraprofessionals receive ongoing weekly training;

Excel Alternatives staff members (teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals):

- All staff members participate in an annual professional development program that consists of 80 hours of specialized training, focused on improving behavior and accelerating learning strategies;
- All staff members participate in the weekly training sessions, highlighting areas of behavior intervention, test preparation, instructional intervention and effective, research-based strategies.
- Excel Alternatives reimburses staff with tuition costs to continue college education;
- In addition, on-going professional development programs are required with on-staff trainers and also with outside programs/consultants;
- Specifically, training will be provided by Excel Alternatives staff, contracted trainers, and specialists provided by companies whose education materials and services are used by Excel Alternatives;

- Training activities conducted in other Excel Alternatives Programs are duplicated at Excel Alternatives.

Support Service Providers/Learning Community Leaders:

- Support Service Providers train the teachers, paraprofessionals, other staff members and support providers in the areas of their support specialties.
- Excel Alternatives teachers are invited to participate in SDPBC staff development, including inservice activities.

Excel Alternatives is committed to ongoing training and consultation to assist instructional lesson plan development for individualization for Excel Alternatives students. Teachers learn to use software to align lesson plans to the SDPBC instructional program/curriculum and Sunshine State Standards.

Excel Alternatives offers a continuing education program to all employees, paying negotiated reimbursement of tuition for teachers or paraprofessionals enrolled in certification and advanced degree programs.

O) The support services that will be provided to the target population and the community-based groups that will provide such services.

A special feature of the EXCEL ALTERNATIVES model is the team of service providers who provide special services to the students and their families in the Family Service Center at Excel Alternatives. The new school building design reflects adequate space for a variety of support services in the Student and Family Service Center. Excel Alternatives retains and orients each to their respective roles to address the health, mental, social and psychological needs of students. Excel Alternatives works in partnership with, not only SDPBC, but also the community. Excel Alternatives fosters partnerships with parents or guardians and local

community-based service providers to meet the high level of needs of this student and family population and to encourage greater family and community involvement. Excel Alternatives services include a School Psychologist for individual and facilitated group discussions; in-school support rooms for times when students need to refocus on their academic work or modify behavior; and a Student Services Specialist to coordinate family night activities and teacher conferences. Also included are numerous community-based social service providers which offer services such as substance abuse counseling, individual and family counseling, crisis intervention, etc.

Students receive individual or group counseling from these community providers based upon their individual needs. Community-based social service organizations are identified, retained and oriented by Excel Alternatives to provide additional services including mental health counseling, teen pregnancy support, grief counseling and substance abuse counseling services to Excel Alternatives students as needed. Adequate Excel Alternatives staff members coordinate the services of these related services.

The Excel Alternatives partnership program also includes a social/life skills program focusing on skills such as teamwork, anger management and conflict resolution. In addition, bully and character education programs are part of the curriculum each week. Student service specialists and outside community-based providers assist with these issues as well as attendance, behavior and other issues that arise for students and families. Special behavior software supports the functions of this center through responsibility/respect units placed throughout the school and a life skills unit used in the in-school support rooms.

In addition to **Excel Alternatives Staff Web-based Resource Trainings** traditional staff training and professional development opportunities, Excel is developing a staff resource

website. The site contains information on research-based best practices for serving over-aged students, as well as core curriculum materials in reading, math, science, and social studies instruction.

The website contains several best practice case studies for improving academic performance and behavior among over-aged students. These include the following five programs that are recognized as among the best programs for serving over-aged youth in the country:

- **Double-Dose Academics (Pennsylvania):** The program emphasizes small learning communities, and provides over-aged students extra support in math and reading, as well as offering CAI in math, that are specifically targeted to enhancing critical skill sets.
- **Telescoping (Rhode Island):** Special expulsion alternative programs are established for over-aged students. These programs use a case management approach, and offer Saturday tutoring sessions, and participation in extracurricular activities as an incentive for academic improvements.
- **Meaningful After-school Study Hour - MASH (Michigan):** This program offers two hours per week of extra academic support, study skills instruction, and academic motivation programs to over-aged students. The program uses a combination of paid teachers and community volunteers as tutors.
- **Everything for All Students (Indiana):** Teachers are provided extra training in how to support over-aged students. They learn multiple strategies for preventing crises that will lead to expulsion or dropping out. At-risk, over-aged students are allowed extra time to complete assignments as a way to support their progress.
- **Core Knowledge Acquisition (Kansas):** Modeled after case management practices in other disciplines, this program helps students create individualized plans with clear

objectives, student-paced goal achievement, and teacher support to address the needs of over-aged students; it also helps initiate academic remediation and behavior modification for those at-risk of dropping out.

4. **EVALUATION**

Describe the instruments and method(s) for evaluating the project.

- *The evaluation instruments should be appropriate to effectively measure program success.*
- *The evaluation methods should be comprehensive, likely to result in a successful project, and include an effective approach for using evaluation results to guide necessary adjustments to the project.*

The annual evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the educational program provided will be measured by comparing Excel Alternatives students' progress on the identified student performance measures to a mutually agreed upon control group match according to the criteria outlined in the contract. The SDPBC and Excel Alternatives will evaluate program effectiveness by sharing data collected for each student outcome. Evaluation data will be used to modify instruction and other program components. Results of these evaluations will be used to make decisions regarding programmatic improvements and ongoing partnership terms.

Follow up on the status of students who have completed the program will begin as soon as the student transitions back to the home school or another appropriate placement. Records will be kept on the student's progress through graduation. This evaluation will determine if the students are still making progress in academic achievement, passing courses or completing course credits, making progress toward graduation, and demonstrating improved behavior in class and at school. SDPBC will provide data to Excel Alternatives for students who have transitioned for analysis to determine the long-term impact on the measurable student performance outcomes and toward successful progress for graduation. The longitudinal measurement of the Excel Alternatives' Arbor E & T, LLC educational program effectiveness will focus on the student's achievement one and two years prior to enrollment in the program,

and after the student returns to the home school (or another appropriate placement) through graduation.

Measuring Success: It is expressly acknowledged by the parties that most of the students assigned to Excel Alternatives are functioning below grade level in reading and/or math, are frequently enrolled in a grade level significantly higher than their level of achievement, and are not likely to pass their state test. Accordingly, all accountability standards will be based on comparing Excel Alternatives students to a mutually agreed upon control group. Students who are functioning two or more years below grade level will benefit from an assignment to Excel Alternatives that allows them to improve their reading and math skills so that they can improve their performance on tests and so that they can achieve course credit or grade promotion. The parties further acknowledge that it is reasonable that one of the goals of the Partnership Program is that students make progress toward improving their reading or math skills and that the Partnership Program is designed so that the student who is function two (2) or more years below grade level:

- a) makes progress toward achieving grade level in reading and/or math;
- b) makes progress toward achieving grade level with courses passed or credits earned; and
- c) does not drop out of school.

Accountability Measures: Student performance will be assessed by comparing Excel Alternatives students to a mutually agreed upon control group match according to the criteria outlined in the contract and listed below. Both groups participate in a non-traditional program for the same measure of time. Students will be tested as they enter the program and as they leave. Students eligible for referral are in grades 6 – 12, have been referred for violations of the code of student conduct, and are also academically low performing (i.e., low performers on state skills

tests, reading two or more years below grade level, have been retained one or more times in grade and are not on track to graduate with their kindergarten cohort).

The mutually agreed upon control group will be matched according to a combination of the following factors:

- i. Gender Match
- ii. From the same community environment
- iii. Race/Ethnic group
- iv. Free/reduced lunch status
- v. Age to grade
- vi. Current year repeaters are matched for FCAT scores
- vii. FCAT scores are the same in reading and math
- viii. Attendance patterns the same
- ix. ELL students are matched to ELL students
- x. Behavior infractions and number agree
- xi. Numbers will be same

Student performance outcome reports will be provided quarterly and annually to the FDOE. All reports will be shared with Excel Alternatives and other appropriate Arbor E & T, LLC staff. The quarterly formative reports will be submitted to FDOE on the following dates: October 31, 2006; January 31, 2007; and March 30, 2007. The SDPBC will provide quarterly formative evaluation reports and an annual summative evaluation report to FDOE based on established and contracted student performance outcome measures in the areas of improved attendance, improved academic achievement, and improved behavior. The formative reports will be developed to determine the progress Excel Alternatives is making toward meeting student outcomes, and to assist by identifying, developing plans and working collaboratively to correct any interim weaknesses.

The annual summative report to FDOE will be submitted July 15, 2007. Reports will be submitted to the FDOE electronically to at Kimberly.Davis@fldoe.org, as per the format to be provided prior to the date for the first report.

The SDPBC Finance Department will submit to the FDOE's Comptroller's Office a Final Project Summary and Disbursement Report (DOE 399) by the date specified on the project award notification (DOE 200) form. .

5. SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Describe how the proposed project will address the reading initiative. Incorporate one or more of the Florida State Board of Education (SBE) Strategic Imperatives.

Governor Jeb Bush issued Executive Order 01-260, announcing the *Just Read, Florida!* initiative to dramatically improve the reading proficiency of Florida's students. The ultimate goal of this reading initiative is that every student in Florida will attain grade level or higher reading skills by 2012. This Florida reading initiative has made additional sweeping reforms requiring *K-12 District Comprehensive Reading Plans* for all public (including charter and alternative) schools. The scientifically research based K-12 plan includes methods (individualized, differentiated, early prevention/intervention, etc.) research-based strategies, instructional resources, and program designs to build communities of intrinsically motivated readers through a standards based curriculum promoting the five essential components of learning to read; critical reading skills, conscious reading choices; academic and technical content literacy, experience-based contextual enhancement; and Intensive Reading for Level 1 and Level 2 FCAT students.

Just Read, Florida! calls for all students to read independently on grade level by school year 2012. The SDPBC believes that the Excel Alternatives alternative partnership program with ARBOR E & T, LLC will assist the district and the State of Florida in achieving this goal by providing an appropriate placement for students in grades 6-12 who are not performing at grade level and are disruptive in their classrooms. The SDPBC coordinates the administration of Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) three times per year for screening, progress monitoring, and identifying students who are reading below grade level and provide additional instruction in an

appropriate and timely manner. Once a student is identified as struggling and the area(s) of weakness determined, the teacher collaborates with the education specialist and reading coach to determine appropriate interventions, grouping models and differentiated instruction. The instructional reading program and reading intervention strategies are grounded in scientifically based reading research and aligned with the Sunshine State Standards.

The Excel Alternatives educational program puts a strong emphasis on learning to read, with the philosophy that all teachers are reading teachers. Excel Alternatives believes that learning to read is essential to full participation in a modern society. Therefore, extensive professional development and classroom monitoring is provided to ensure that educators do all possible to provide research-based reading instruction to students. Students in Excel Alternatives use the scientifically research-based reading programs that are used by SDPBC, including READ 180. The reading programs are designed to meet the educational and personal needs of the older, struggling reader. Using age-appropriate fiction, non-fiction, and a scaffolded instructional model geared to individual student requirements, this program motivates and achieves measurable reading improvement. The reading program will build students' reading mastery and confidence; emphasize essential skills in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; accelerate instruction; raise scores on the FCAT; and monitor student progress.

The Excel Alternatives partnership program incorporates (SBE) Strategic Imperative 3: *Improve Student Rates of Learning*. Students are eligible for placement at Excel Alternatives when they low academic performance (and disruptive behavior.) Students assigned to Excel Alternatives participate in the Arbor E & T, LLC accelerated credit recovery model. All Excel Alternatives teachers receive extensive in-service into all best practices to improve student rates of learning with a Arbor E & T, LLC corporate commitment to implementing the continuous

improvement model. Lesson plans, learning community team activities, student FASTRACK reports and other assessments will be monitored for improving student rates of learning. The unique Excel Alternatives educational program for at-risk students, including the small learning environment, is designed to improve student rates of learning and get students back on track toward graduation. Students have an opportunity to recover classes or to accelerate in courses based on Florida requirements for credit recovery. The overall goal is for these students to return to their home school (or an appropriate school placement) back on track and prepared to graduate with their peers.

The following is an overview of how the *Excel Alternatives* program addresses the reading initiative:

All staff will be trained in the components of reading as identified by the Florida Center for Reading Research (www.fcrr.org). The FCRR research and guidelines will be a part of teaching training and identified part of teacher lesson plans. A strong focus of the program in conjunction with current research is the focus on expanding student vocabulary. Staff will provide word walls, daily/weekly vocabulary and other opportunities for students to increase their exposure to increased vocabulary. The school will maintain a word bank to provide staff, students, and family ongoing exposure and review to new vocabulary.

MIDDLE SCHOOL INSTRUCTION

- Level 1 and 2 students whose intervention needs are limited to the areas of comprehension and vocabulary will be provided intervention across the curriculum and all core subject area teachers will be highly qualified to teach reading or working towards that status (pursuing the reading endorsement or reading certification).

In addition, the classroom infrastructure (class size, materials, etc.) is adequate to implement the intervention class as described in the “Intensive Reading” course description, which can be

found at www.firn.edu/doe/curriculum/crscode/basic612/lnart68.htm. This intervention course should include on a daily basis:

- Whole group explicit instruction
- Small group differentiated instruction
- Independent reading practice monitored by the teacher
- Infusion of SSS benchmarks specific to the subject area course in which the intervention is being provided (biology, world history, etc.)
- A focus on informational text at a ratio matching FCAT (70/30)

Schools will progress monitor Level 1 and 2 students three times per year. This should include a Baseline, Midyear, and End of the Year Assessment.

Each struggling reader will be given the instruction that best fits his or her needs. In addition to FCAT students may be placed into different levels of intensity for reading intervention classes. This information will include data from screenings, progress monitoring and diagnostic assessments already in use in the district, as well as teacher recommendation.

HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUCTION

Level 1 and 2 students whose reading intervention needs are limited to the areas of comprehension and vocabulary will be provided intervention across the curriculum and all core area teachers will pursue highly qualified status to teach reading or working toward that status (pursuing the reading endorsement or reading certification). The intervention class as described in the “Intensive Reading” course description, which can be found at www.firn.edu/doe/curriculum/crscode/basic612/lnart68.htm. This intervention course should include on a daily basis:

- Whole group explicit instruction
- Small group differentiated instruction

- Independent reading practice monitored by the teacher
- Infusion of SSS benchmarks specific to the subject area course in which the intervention is being provided (biology, world history, etc.)
- A focus on informational text at a ratio matching FCAT (70/30)

Schools will progress monitor Level 1 and 2 students three times per year. This will include a Baseline, Midyear, and End of the Year Assessment.

6. **DISSEMINATION PLAN**

Describe the methods/strategies to disseminate and market information about the project to appropriate populations.

- *The applicant's dissemination plan should use effective and realistic means to reach the appropriate target populations.*
- *The methods/strategies used to share services provided by the project should be innovative and clearly benefit the target population.*

An effective communications/community outreach program to disseminate the partnership program's objectives and impact continues to be implemented by SDPBC and Excel Alternatives. This will assure that all of the partnership's stakeholders are enlisted to support this focused program to improve student achievement. Periodic briefings and updates with internal partners and external community interest groups will assure that the project's objectives and accomplishments are communicated and understood. Updates for students and parents will emphasize the program's opportunities for academic achievement and success. The program will actively involve parents and families to improve the likelihood that the target population of students will be prepared to return to district schools better prepared to learn and make progress toward graduation.

Excel Alternatives will continuously provide written and verbal information to community-based services to attract more services on campus for the students and their families.

This communications/community outreach program will be implemented jointly by SDPBC and Excel Alternatives, and will have the following components:

DISTRICT STAFF: Internal communication documents and briefings for District leadership, key District staff and school administrators to assure an understanding of and support for the partnership during the planning, development and school activation phase.

PARENTS/STUDENTS: Communication with parents and students about the opportunity for academic achievement leading to a successful return to district schools. This actively involves parents and families and improves the likelihood of the student's success. This communication takes place through:

- *Enrollment Conference* between the student, parent/guardian and an enrollment counselor at the time of enrollment, during which time the program, its objectives and the opportunities for the student are explained;
- *Parent/Guardian Orientation* session at Excel Alternatives, held on the student's first day of enrollment, including a detailed review of the academic and behavioral programs, as well as the availability of social services offered in the Student Family Service Center;
- *New Student Orientations* weekly, for new students;
- *Telephone Calls*, both regularly scheduled, as well as unscheduled telephone calls as needed, between Learning Community staff and parents/guardians;
- *Newsletter* -a quarterly parent/guardian newsletter;
- *Attendance Calls* – attempts made a minimum of 3 times in a 24-hour period to let parents/guardians know (during school day, at night, early next morning);
- *Parent Nights* – information for parent/guardian on regularly scheduled nights at the Excel Alternatives campus; and

- *Parent Participation* - participation in events held at the school throughout the year.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION and SCHOOL BOARD – Periodic briefings for the SDPBC Administration, School Board Members, and Staff to update the District’s leadership on project outcomes and impact as well as to determine if there are any problems, concerns, suggestions for improvement on the program operation.

DISTRICT PRINCIPALS – Periodic briefings of secondary school principals and administrators of the opportunity for disruptive and low performing students in grades 6 – 12, procedures for referral and placement, and an update on student progress toward meeting goals.

GUIDANCE COUNSELORS - Periodic briefings of secondary guidance counselors of the opportunity and procedures for placement for low performing and disruptive students, and an annual visit of secondary guidance counselors to the Excel Alternatives partnership school to see first-hand and be immersed in the project for greater understanding.

BUSINESS and COMMUNITY - Development of a business-community support group which quarterly will meet quarterly to hear about the program and to participate in a student mentoring program on-site or with the use of e-mail.

7. **BUDGET**

In this 2006-2007 implementation continuation grant, the SDPBC requests funding at \$1,250 per student for 535 students, or a total grant request in the amount of \$668,750. The projected enrollment for 2006-2007 is 535 students by the FY2007 February FTE Count. The North Beach County Excel Alternatives students will attend the newly-constructed school building, located at 1950 Benoist Farms Road, West Palm Beach, Florida, as agreed upon in the SDPBC - Arbor E & T, LLC partnership contract approved in June 2005. The Central, West, and South Palm Beach County Excel Alternatives students will remain in their local learning

communities to ensure that optimum use of learning time is used for education rather than transportation of students.

The full budget request of \$668,750 will be used for partial payment toward contracted services to Arbor E & T, LLC, the designated education provider, to operate Excel Alternatives as an alternative school for low performing and disruptive students in grades 6 – 12 in the School District of Palm Beach County.

General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)

The Educational Partnership – Alternative Education/Public Private Partnership Grant will serve eligible students determined by qualified staff to benefit from 180-days in the Excel Alternatives educational program. Informational materials to be distributed through the project will be sensitive to the needs of all students and families, and will be in multilingual formats, as appropriate, to provide understanding for non-English speaking families. Language Facilitators or Interpreters/Translators will be present, as appropriate. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the new facility has been designed and constructed to provide reasonable accommodations so that the project meets the needs of and is accessible to students with disabilities. The SDPBC serves an academically, culturally, socio-economically, and racially diverse population and is committed to equal access and treatment for all students, employees, and the general public. The School Board’s non-discrimination policies (5.001, 5.61, and 3.06) guide and govern decision-making at all levels for students and employees. The school district’s Equal Education Opportunities (EEO) office monitors, coordinates, and recommends action to ensure compliance with these School Board Policies.

Per the SDPBC-Arbor E & T, LLC Contract for the operation of Excel Alternatives - “Arbor E & T, LLC shall provide the Services and shall operate, maintain and manage the Arbor E & T, LLC Program in compliance with all applicable federal and state constitutional

requirements and federal, state and local laws, statutes, ordinances, rules and regulations, and School District policies and procedures, including, without limitation, all federal, state and local laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or ancestry, and shall provide for enrollment and hiring in a nondiscriminatory manner.”

Additional Assurances (Provided by ARBOR E & T, LLC)

The educational program provider must provide proof of:

- ✓ **Educational progress, as assessed by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in reading and mathematics demonstrated in existing programs with similar student populations.**

Excel Alternative Schools has been providing alternative school management services since 1994 in Seminole County Florida and has operated the Orange County Alternative to Expulsion School since 1997 and Middle School Professional Academy since 1999. Excel Alternatives has provided alternative school management services in Palm Beach County Florida since July 2000.

As a partnership, we will continually evaluate and update our methods for correlation of activity to the SSS and measure improvement on key benchmark assessment. As a function of our Quality Assurance process, curricula are reviewed and updated in keeping with the latest research on best practices. The Excel Alternative Schools will use a detailed curriculum plan driven by the Sunshine State Standards that features the following:

- An extended-day/period alternative school program for assessment-identified low-performing students
- Multi-modality instruction (i.e., Technology Infusion)

- Curriculum management and implementation refinement through the assignment of a school-based Academic Specialist
- Use of Excel Alternative's initiative to implement research-based strategies (i.e., *Just Read, Florida!*)
- Individual student curriculum planning, Exceptional Student Educational services, and English as a Second Language services
- Timely progress reports and report cards
- Infusion of key FCAT preparation tools into daily instruction
- Focused instruction for intensive reading and math curricula for low-performing students
- Inclusion of Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) integral to course content (e.g., online coursework via NovaNet, Ed. Options, and/or Florida Virtual School), complimentary to course content (e.g., use of web-based resources), and supplementary to academic achievement (e.g., Academy of Reading, Academy of Math, FCAT Explorer, etc.)
- Enrichment lab opportunities for students who exhibit an 80% or higher mastery level of content
- Monthly FCAT discussion meetings with students to communicate exam focal areas
- Pre and Post assessments to ensure students' need-specific academic placement and pacing

Central to our model and commitment to correlation with Sunshine State Standards, all Excel Alternatives offered courses will use a Curriculum Card to fully articulate the standards, order of instruction and task analyses. The Curriculum Card will be used as tool to offer students and parents a comprehensive overview of the curriculum plan and will serve as a course syllabus, detailing all state identified academic standards for each subject studied over the course of the school year. The FLDOE Pupil Progression Plan directs appropriate student coursework; the Florida Sunshine State Standards directs appropriate content for the academic course of study listed above. The Excel Alternatives program will use a process known as a Curriculum Card-driven course experience. Certified teachers plan instructional activities for defined courses using the curriculum card as a template; the template shows required coursework, homework, mode of instruction, and correlation to Florida Sunshine State Standards. The standards, required coursework, and flow of the class are outlined on the cards, and are used as a tool to assess progress, report grades, and support lesson planning. The Excel Alternatives program’s open entry/planned exit model allows for students to enter the program at different times during the year; the curriculum cards allow students to enter the flow of each course and complete competencies following the OCPS Order of Instruction. The competency-based academic plan allows for students’ self-paced movement through the benchmarks.

Considering the need for “at-risk” students to have a more individualized, hands-on learning experience, Excel Alternatives teachers will emphasize interactive classes and non-traditional approaches to instruction, which will include the following teaching methods:

- a). Individualized teaching (independent and computerized instruction): small sequential steps using structured materials, and allow students to gather information, ask questions, and receive feedback to develop critical thinking skills.
- b). Interactive-teaching methods (class discussion, group projects, and peer teaching): learning teams are defined, the teacher functions as the leader and coach.
- c). Experiential-teaching methods (laboratory, role-playing, and simulations): provides real life experience
- d). CAI driven learning experience

All teaching methods emphasize the teacher in the capacity of a coach.

Excel Alternatives School Learning Communities Model (TRAC Model)

Designed to facilitate student grouping by focused learning area need, TRAC's are defined within the program to ensure students are receiving the individualized education specific to their individualized academic plans. The TRAC create a structure in daily student schedules to ensure focus on learning area need. Student movement across tracks is expected and offers support to the development of individual student schedules based on needs remembering the goals:

1. Course/Credit Recovery
2. Focused Remediation and FCAT Preparation
3. Graduation and Promotion

Using the rigor of course preparation by design, the following is an overview of each of the five TRAC Learning Communities:

Focused Credit/Course Recovery (CCR)

CCR offers self-paced learning opportunities, including access to a CAI curriculum, to support credit recovery and GED preparation. Students engaged in this learning unit will be classified in one of four areas per Excel and District guidelines: (1) GED Exit Option, (2) GED Special Diploma, (3) Credit Recovery, or (4) Access to High School online. Students are required to complete a school-to-work component and develop a formal school-to-work transition plan. To enable Associates to enroll in on the job training (OJT) course that will fill 25% of the State daily instructional time requirement, the site's learning lab is open 12 hours per day during which Associates may use CAI tools. Certified instructors design individual curriculum that utilize state-of-the-art technology to support student completion of high school credit(s) and the GED test preparation requirement. Instructional staff acts as facilitators to motivate and support learning. Formal evaluation of student readiness for this independent learning option is required prior to placement. Facilitating access to apprenticeship and career training tracks offered through district vocational-technical schools and local community colleges is a priority option for this program.

Specialized ESE Pull-out Learning Community

EXCEL will operate, in partnership with the district ESE department, a unique learning unit (separate self-contained classroom area) devoted to the needs of students requiring service under an IEP. Placement will be recommended per action of a study team and all instruction will be delivered by certified district or Excel ESE staff. Students may be enrolled in programs or course offerings in any learning unit other than I-TRAC based on appropriateness of said placement. The program offers an individualized learning area for youth with special needs; however, said student will be fully integrated into the general school environment at the point of arrival, morning brief and dismissal based on recommendations of the IEP. Youth will have full access to TRACs based on ESE professional assignment; students may be recommended for placement outside the EXCEL school if behavior resulting from manifestation or non-manifestation has adverse impact on the general school climate. The ESE student study team will make approval for initial assignment and post program new assignment.

Remedial Skills/FCAT Readiness Development Center (RSDC)

The primary focus of RSDC is remedial learning. Students will be fully engaged in the academy experience; however, majority time will be spent in use of innovative instructional strategies to address reading and math remediation needs. The program will emphasize and celebrate individual learning gains, especially in the key areas of reading and math. A key strategy for RSDC is extended day school participation in Mastery Zones termed Dis-Part MZ (District Partner Mastery Zone). Each Dis-Part MZ will provide students with corrective

reading and math skills from a proven, research-based strategy for learning improvement (SRA). Students will be required to devote an additional 25% per week learning time to in-school remedial learning under supervision of instructional staff.

Accelerated Learning (HS only GED Exit Option)

Within the Accelerated Learning TRAC, the instructor acts as a knowledge-facilitator, assisting, guiding, and coaching students in developing skills and competencies in ways that are meaningful to them. Student activities dominate the classroom, and students become content experts. Team Leaders deliver the majority of instruction using interactive teaching methodologies. The Program provides appropriate and challenging educational experiences through differentiation of curriculum and instruction, which may include acceleration of instruction, in-depth study, high degree of complexity, advanced content, and/or variety in content and form.

Focused Behavioral/ Learning Community (FLC)

FLC is a mainstream non-traditional learning unit designed for disinterested and disruptive students who require a daily, highly structured school environment in order to stay focused and learn. The professional simulation model used in the program emphasizes accountability for behavior, personal responsibility for learning, and soft skills development. Program design calls for a high level of parental involvement and commitment to a learning plan supported by a blend of computer assisted (25%) and traditional instruction (75%), along with a daily academy offering of math and reading enhancement tutorial elements and interactive (hands-on) lessons introducing the art of learning. As a curriculum designed to develop the whole learner, the academy will emphasize experiential learning through field trips and innovative kinesthetic strategies for student academic engagement. Students enrolled in this program will demonstrate an FCAT academic readiness of Level 2 or above. As the mainstream program within the Academy, student leadership will primarily be drawn from this population of students and this group will be responsible for overall school facility support.

By recognizing the uniqueness of individual students, the TRAC plan allows the alternative school to:

- Evaluate student academic/behavior progress prior to placement.
- Conduct formal evaluation.
- Orient and engage parents/guardians as active participants in school services.
- Assign students appropriately to learning communities.

- Evaluate progress and refine services.
- Evaluate quality of learning communities and allocate resources for continuous improvement.
- Transition individual students back to zoned schools.
- Conduct one-year follow-up for student support and assistance.

The TRAC model emphasizes both individual learning and excellence in teaching. It creates highly accountable and effective schools that provide a unique academic experience for each learner.

The project shall use a customized web-based information management system termed OpTRAC to accurately track real-time and complete data on students' academic and behavioral progress, and individual performance of open entry/planned exit programs. This system allows all programs to utilize a uniform reporting tool to monitor performance and make more informed improvement plans. Student academic performance is collected from administered assignments and assessment, individual and group participation in daily lessons and activities, field trips, and community service. The information collected is entered into the system on a weekly basis.

In addition to OpTRAC, the school will use the District's MIS system for individual student record management. Data collected and input in the system includes:

- Student Demographics
- Student Disciplinary Intervention
- Student Daily Attendance
- Student Academic Grades
- Student Assessment Scores (State Standardized Assessment-FCAT)
- Parent/Guardian Weekly Communication Log

- Student Academic and Behavior Improvement Log
- Student Post Transition Academic/Behavior Progress
- Program Academic/Behavior Cumulative Performance

Site-based staff has the ability to generate real-time (date-ranged) cumulative reporting on pupil progress. Students, parents/guardians, and districts are provided information on individual and cumulative academic and behavior performance every three weeks (progress reports), nine weeks (student report cards) and eighteen weeks (cumulative student and program performance).

OpTRAC records and tracks site-based activities as they relate to student population enrollment, attendance, retention, performance, and outcomes on a weekly basis. While traditional methods of school information management do not adequately track information in an alternative school setting, the *Excel Alternatives* system provides district detailed information on the student population and real-time feedback on the program effectiveness. The system tracks information in six steps:

- 1) OpTRAC I: Tracks number of students referred to EXCEL, number of potential students contacted, number of students who attended orientation, and number of students who entered the program.
- 2) OpTRAC II: Tracks students' daily enrollment and attendance.
- 3) OpTRAC III: Tracks student withdrawals and behavior evaluation referrals.
- 4) OPTRAC IV: Tracks the Academy Management of the Program
- 5) OpTRAC V: Tracks Academic Performance
- 6) OpTRAC Summary Reports: Customized Dashboard Reports

The alternative school will use data-driven strategies to measure effectiveness and track individual student progress. As a school of record, Excel Alternatives will use both District information management systems and internal proprietary management systems to track progress and results of assessment. On key measures of student achievement and school performance, Excel Alternatives will provide ongoing reports of progress:

Reports of ongoing progress for student achievement and school performance

Data	Method for Measurement	Reporting Strategy
FCAT Readiness/Performance	State Evaluation Practice FCAT Samples	Semester report to District, State end-of-year report
Reading Remediation	Scholastic Reading Inventory District Benchmark testing Academy of Reading and Math Diagnostic Read 180	Semester and year-end report to District
Math Remediation	STAR Assessment Academy of Math Everyday Math District Benchmark Testing Math Learning Styles	Semester and year-end report to District
Pre/post measures of behavioral improvement	District CICS System -GPA -Attendance -Course completion/Credits -graduation rates -placement in Community -- College or Vo Tech program	Monthly, Semester and year-end report to District

In addition to these reports, the program will generate a Dashboard Report monthly for distribution to the referring schools, District Administration and for internal measure of student progress in comparison to goals and standards. Given the open entry and end of semester exit design of the program, the report is designed to provide historical and performance data related to student.