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A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
IN A SCHOOL DISTRICT IN NORTH CAROLINA FOR HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS AT-RISK FOR DROPPING OUT

By
Janice E. Duffie

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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2021

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Janice E. Duffie under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
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The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of an alternative educational program in North Carolina for high school students at-risk for dropping out. The CIPP model was used to evaluate to what extent the alternative educational program is achieving its stated mission. This mixed-method evaluation consisted of quantitative and qualitative data that included interviews with district- and school-level leaders, surveys from selected staff at six high schools and the alternative educational program, and historical data. The program evaluation explored the program's strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for improvement. Based on the findings, the research questions examined leaders and staff's perceptions of the program's effectiveness. Using thematic analysis, themes of the program's strengths and weaknesses were extracted from triangulation of interviews and surveys. The key findings focused on academic, behavioral, and social practices that substantiated or failed to substantiate the mission. Areas that were identified as needing improvement were academic-referral process, software usage and training, and student failures; behavioral-student legal issues and discipline procedures; and social-IMPACT social skills period, and home and community supports. The implication for sustaining the program is that knowing the perceived effectiveness and on-track rates for students may help leaders make more informed decisions. Additionally, knowing the various types of programs available and the specific components that staff felt were impactful for student success can better inform leaders when creating programs to fit the district's needs.

Keywords: alternative educational programs, alternative programs, *dropout*, *program evaluation*, *CIPP model*, *online learning*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1960s, there has been a steady increase in the emergence of non-traditional schools designed to meet the needs of students who require education not offered in the regular school setting (Raywid, 1994). Programs such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Fine and Performing Arts, and Career and Technical Education are often feasible for students who are unsuccessful in regular school settings. Unfortunately, a large population of at-risk students and students with disabilities suffer in the absence of appropriate educational settings designed to meet their specific needs. Powell (2003) suggested that the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act (2002) caused state leaders to implement alternative educational programs as an avenue for meeting the needs of at-risk students and for reducing the number of students who drop out.

When students are not succeeding in the regular school environment, are having behavior challenges in a traditional school, or are having conflicts with the law, alternative educational programs are viable substitutes for traditional schools. Many school districts created alternative educational programs to assist students with earning credits to obtain a high school diploma, and to ultimately prevent them from dropping out (Carswell et al., 2009). It is reasonable to conjecture that many of the alternative schools of the 21st century are in direct response to the cry for help from parents, teachers, and administrators seeking relief for struggling students.

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2016), the majority of the alternative educational programs in North Carolina serve students with two or more at-risk indicators such as pregnancy/parenting, irregular

attendance patterns, patterns of disruptive behaviors or discipline issues, drug or alcohol abuse, learning disabilities, and/or not meeting or exceeding academic standards. Other at-risk indicators may include students who receive free or reduced lunch, students identified as English Language Learners (ELL), and students eligible for special education. Regardless of the reason for the students' placement in an alternative educational program, non-traditional schooling can serve three major purposes: to intervene and address problems that prevent students from achieving success in the traditional school setting; to reduce the risk of students dropping out of school by providing resources to help resolve issues affecting their performance; and to facilitate the return of students to their traditional school setting if and when it is practicable, with the skills necessary to succeed (Raywid, 1999).

According to Carver et al. (2010), the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) revealed that 10,300 public alternative programs and schools for at-risk students served approximately 646,500 students during the 2007-2008 school year. Thirty-nine percent of all school districts nationwide offered an alternative educational program or school in 2000-2001. In 2007-2008, the number of school districts with access to at least one alternative educational program increased to 64%. However, in North Carolina there were 75 alternative schools for at-risk students, serving approximately 5,223 during the 2018-2019 school year.

As schools address the needs of at-risk students, their mission should be to ensure that all students are provided with a quality education. In the past, as suggested by McGee (2001), alternative educational programs were originally established to cultivate creative outlets for at-risk students, but are now perceived as places to send disruptive

students. Unfortunately, alternative educational programs, especially for expelled and at-risk students, have gained the reputation as places where undesirable students are sent (Lange and Sletten, 2002). Nevertheless, all students have a right to a free and appropriate public education. Furthermore, there are a set of standards that students must fulfill in order to receive a high school diploma. Alternatives and non-traditional schools and programs are usually subject to the same state requirements and academic achievements as the traditional schools (Aron, 2006).

Background and Significance of the Study

District PNC (pseudonym) (2019a), the district selected for this research study, is currently comprised of approximately 23,348 students and includes 38 schools; one Pre-K Education Center, 16 elementary schools-grades Kindergarten through five (K-5), six elementary schools-grades Kindergarten through eight (K-8), seven middle schools-grades six through eight (6-8), six high schools-grades nine through twelve (9-12), two Early College High Schools-grades nine through twelve (9-12), and three alternative educational programs-- Academy A (pseudonym) , Academy B (pseudonym), and Academy C (pseudonym).

Academy A (District PNC, 2019b) is an alternative educational program that utilizes a personalized online learning platform which “allows options for students who do not fit into the traditional school model an advantage to earn credits, to obtain a high school diploma, and to provide students with additional opportunities, flexibility, and convenience to progress at a proficient rate towards graduation requirements” (District PNC, 2019b) Each week students are given the current week’s assignments and lecture materials to submit to their teacher in a timely manner. Students also interact with

classmates to discuss a focus topic, followed by participation in online learning modules. If a student is inactive in a course after five consecutive school days, the teacher reaches out to both the student and the parent(s) to notify and encourage engagement in the course. If a student is inactive in a course after ten consecutive school days, a parent conference is required at the home school with a school counselor. During this meeting, the student is provided a Student Success Plan to assist him or her in getting back on track with their coursework. Students are required to meet all expectations documented in this plan. Failure to comply with the terms of the Student Success Plan could result in the student earning a failing grade in the course and being prohibited from taking an online course with Academy A in the future. The second alternative educational program in District PNC is Academy B. At the time of this study, this program was using OdysseyWare, which is an online learning platform. In this program, OdysseyWare is managed at the school level either during school hours in the distance learning classroom or after school. It is also an online course option that is used when students fail a course(s). It delivers a subset of the Standard Course of Study or blueprint of the original course in order to specifically address deficiencies in a student's mastery of the course and targets specific components of the course necessary for completion. Students must either be enrolled in Academy B at the beginning of the semester or be a new transfer student into the school. Students can only enroll in Academy B after they have failed courses first taught face-to-face, and must have scored less than 60% on a course to be eligible for Academy B. After two failed attempts in OdysseyWare during the school day or after school in Academy B, students must take the course again face-to-face during the school day (District PNC, 2019c).

Academy C is the third alternative educational program in District PNC, and will serve as the focus of this program evaluation. Academy C admits middle and high school students who are referred to the center because of chronic behavior challenges or to prevent dropout (high school students only). Academy C is a “full day alternative placement option for students who need to be removed from their home schools for any of the following at-risk reasons: “long-term suspension, chronic misbehavior, felony pending, exceptional children hearing for disciplinary reasons, exceptional children hearing for academic reasons, academic difficulty, academic acceleration, student and/or parent choice, employment related, pregnancy related, attendance problems, personal and/or family problems, emotional and/or psychological problems, transfer from another alternative educational program or therapeutic/correctional facility, and dropout prevention” (District PNC, 2019d, para. 6). Academy C is designed to help students become more successful and to help traditional schools move past behavior problems and challenges that may have been disrupting the educational process. Additionally, Academy C offers a 3-Tiered program. Tier I is the most recommended tier due to the level of services provided. It operates Monday through Friday, 8:00 am until 2:00 pm. This tier also has the largest alternative environment available with two classrooms, nine certified teachers, and three teacher assistants. It can accept approximately 50 middle and 50 high school students at a time at their respective locations. Tier II is a higher level of service for students who are not successful in Tier I. These are students who have not made behavioral or academic progress and require more individualization and monitoring in smaller class environments. Students in Tier II attend the program Monday through Thursday, 3:45 pm until 5:45 pm. Tier III, the least desirable program, is for students

who require the highest level of service. These are students who have failed to be successful in Tier I and Tier II. Students in Tier III are often placed on homebound in which they continue their academic courses at home. Students referred to Academy C often received either a long-term, out-of-school suspension of ten or more days or an out-of-school suspension for the remainder of the school year. Oftentimes, these students fall behind academically because they do not complete assignments and do not work during their suspension. Lack of school attendance also plays a major role for many of these students who fall behind academically (District PNC, 2019d). In North Carolina, a high school student receives a failing grade for every course for which he or she misses ten or more unexcused absences in each class during each semester (NCDPI, 2016). Students who successfully complete the terms of assigned alternative placement by remaining in good academic standing and having no major behavior challenges that cause a disruption in the learning environment can return to their home school to complete their education, or have the option to remain at Academy C and graduate. Because Academy C also offers a differentiated diploma requiring 22-credits, many students desire to remain there and graduate (District PNC, 2019d).

Table 1 depicts the percentages of high school students, males and females, which account for the total enrollment of students in the alternative educational programs in District PNC between 2016 and 2019. Data indicated that more females were enrolled in Academy A than males. Students in Academy A are enrolled 100% online. These students are enrolled in a traditional school for allotment purposes, but do not attend their traditional home school. Students in Academy A still have the same graduation requirements as students in the traditional school and in alternative educational programs.

On the other hand, Academy B's highest enrollment was in the 2018-2019 school year, with 187 females and 132 males. Students are enrolled in Academy B to take a course(s) they need to graduate with their cohort or to recover credits because they failed the course(s) in a face-to-face classroom setting. Students in Academy B have the choice of taking these courses at their traditional school during the school day as a class period in the distance learning classroom or after school.

Table 1 also shows that more male students were being referred to Academy C than females. The majority of the students referred to Academy C are students who have been suspended ten or more days or expelled from their home school. The length of enrollment at Academy C can range from 45 days to the entire semester, or the remainder of the school year, depending on the behavior that contributed to the referral to the alternative educational program. Regardless of the choice of alternative educational program, OdysseyWare was the primary use of online educational software at the time of this study. Certified teachers are assigned to each course for the purpose of grading assignments and monitoring students' course activity.

Table 1*Percentage of Students Referred to Alternative Educational Programs in 2016-2019*

Alternative Educational Program	Year	Total	Females	Males
Academy A	2016 -- 2017	196 (100%)	119 (61%)	77 (39%)
	2017 -- 2018	263 (100%)	147 (56%)	116 (44%)
	2018 -- 2019	319 (100%)	187 (59%)	132 (41%)
Academy B	2016 -- 2017	336 (100%)	201 (46%)	135 (54%)
	2017 -- 2018	418 (100%)	258 (59%)	160 (41%)
	2018 -- 2019	505 (100%)	293 (58%)	212 (42%)
Academy C	2016 -- 2017	426 (100%)	118 (28%)	308 (72%)
	2017 -- 2018	228 (100%)	48 (21%)	180 (79%)
	2018 -- 2019	190 (100%)	38 (20%)	152 (80%)

Each academy has its specific mission. Academy A's mission is "to provide 21st century learning opportunities in both online and blended environments." Academy B's mission is "to help students recover classes that they have previously failed or to help students graduate closer to on-time if they have fallen behind." The mission of Academy C, the alternative educational program researched in this study, is "to empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life and to give them a second chance to succeed" (District PNC, 2019d).

It is evident by the preceding data that District PNC has expended extensive financial and human resources in non-traditional schooling. When school districts allocate valuable resources on any initiative, taxpayers and stakeholders deserve accountability. Therefore, evaluative procedures for ensuring quality are essential. To that end, this program evaluation proposed to assess Academy C, an alternative educational program in District PNC, using the Context, Input, Process, and Product Evaluation Model. Academy C was chosen for this study because it is the only alternative

educational program in District PNC that holds a graduation ceremony for students enrolled in the program.

Problem Statement

Many school districts have limited financial resources to support alternative educational programs and schools. However, alternative educational programs, in comparison to traditional schools, cost more per student to operate (Mendenez, 2007). Despite these challenges, the need for program evaluation and improvement in alternative educational programs have never been greater (Reimer & Cash, 2003). District PNC, the school district chosen for this study, has three alternative educational programs that have been operating since 2011. Since the inception of the three alternative educational programs, a comprehensive program evaluation has not been conducted. An analysis of the overall quality of District PNC's alternative educational program is far overdue. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study, the focus was Academy C. Although 123 students have graduated from the Academy C between 2016 and 2019, the numerical representation does not depict the overall quality of educational services rendered to students. As society changes, it is critical to evaluate educational programs, and to make essential adjustments.

Between 2016 and 2019, 844 referrals have been submitted to Academy C, but only 123 students have actually graduated from the Academy. However, students are allowed to remain at Academy C for an extensive period in order to acquire the necessary credits for graduation. Academy C is the only alternative program in District PNC that holds a graduation ceremony independent of the traditional high schools. Typically,

students in Academy C are eligible to participate in a graduation ceremony in January or June of each year, pending their completion of the necessary requirements.

Conceptual Framework

The mission of District PNC is “to ensure that all students are provided a rigorous and personalized education that prepares them for the ever-changing challenges of the 21st century.” Goal one of District PNC’s Strategic Plan states “every student graduate from high school prepared for work, further education, and citizenship” (2019a). Whereas the district’s mission and strategic plan drive the operational character of the schools and programs from day to day, each school/program must find ways to support the attainment of the district initiatives through individual missions, visions, and goals. The mission of Academy C is “to empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life and to give them a second chance to succeed” (District PNC, 2019d).

The theoretical basis for this study was founded upon a clearly defined mission statement within an organization. The foundation of mission statements can be attributed to Peter Drucker, who is often called the “father of modern management (1974, p. 61).” The mission statement provides an overview of the steps planned to achieve an organization’s stated goals and objectives. Therefore, an organization’s effectiveness can be linked to a well-written mission statement.

Mission statements have been examined for many decades. However, they have received less attention in the literature despite the importance of mission statements in every organization (Amato & Amato, 2002). Mission statements within an organization answers questions such as who are we, what our values are, and what direction we are going. Bart, Bontis, & Taggar (2001) contended that organizations with coherent,

explanatory, and shared mission statements perform better than those without it. Mission statements are vital to an organization because it communicates why the organization exists as well as how it serves the community.

Overall, mission statements play three integral functions: 1) convey the goals and objectives of the organization to the community, 2) communication plan of action, and 3) establish attainable goals and objectives (Schmitz, 2012). Although a mission statement is one key indicator to an organization's achievement, researchers argued that there is a small correlation between mission statements and measures of financial production within an organization, but is influenced by the decisions in how an organization operates (Desmidt, Prinzie, & Decramer, 2011). Other researchers such as Devasagayarm, Stark, & Valestin believed customer satisfaction is a strong indicator of positive accomplishments within an organization (2013).

The major focus of this research study was to determine through qualitative and quantitative data collection, the extent to which Academy C is achieving its stated mission. This study was significant because the results of the evaluation will assist district leaders in making informed decisions about Academy C as well as the necessary resources needed for sustainability and growth in the future. Academy C has been in existence for eight years. In the absence of a formal evaluation, existing challenges may develop into unresolvable challenges, and eventually contribute to the decline or demise of the academy. Furthermore, this program evaluation investigated, from the perspective of administrators, teachers, and staff, strategies necessary to ensure and sustain the accomplishment of the mission. This evaluation helped identify academic, behavioral,

and social practices that contributed to the realization or hindrance of the Academy C's mission.

Program Evaluation Model

I selected the CIPP model as a formal comprehensive evaluation tool to serve as evidence in describing the effectiveness of an alternative educational program as it related to preventing at-risk students from dropping out. CIPP is an acronym that stands for Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) evaluation. CIPP was developed because other evaluation models were inefficient when “evaluating emergent programs in dynamic social contexts” (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, p. 328). The CIPP is the mixed method approach, which utilizes quantitative and qualitative data to determine outcomes. “Evaluation is the systematic process of delineating, obtaining, reporting, and applying descriptive and judgmental information about some object’s merit, worth, probity, feasibility, safety, significance, or equity” (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, p. 698). The effectiveness of the CIPP is that a program does not need to be completed before evaluation takes place, but can be evaluated at any time decision makers need to determine ways to improve a program or its strength. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) argued that CIPP evaluations provide information that will help decision makers assess and improve their services to meet the needs of those being served. Therefore, this program evaluation will give valuable information to District PNC to make informed decisions about its alternative educational program.

The purpose of this program evaluation was to examine the effectiveness of Academy C in achieving its mission. This evaluation qualified for the CIPP model because it explained both expected and unexpected outcomes of the alternative

educational program. Decision makers are able to pinpoint any needs that are not being met and identify possible barriers that have been inadvertently generated, while helping the alternative educational program concentrate on accomplishing the desired program outcomes. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) noted that “accomplishments, lack of accomplishments, and side effects command the attention of product evaluations, which ultimately issue judgments of outcomes and identify needs for achieving better results” (p. 332). The information gathered by this evaluation will be used to communicate with decision makers about program changes, and provide valuable data that may guide their discussions about subsequent alternative educational programs.

I have been an educator for more than twenty-five years and have worked with students with serious emotional disabilities who were placed in an alternative educational program. In addition, I have been in an administrative position in a high school setting for more than six years, have referred students to an alternative educational program, and have collaborated with administrators and educators at the alternative educational program. Therefore, I have the expertise necessary for investigating the effectiveness of the alternative educational program and determining the extent to which it is fulfilling its mission.

Research Questions

1. What academic, behavioral, and social practices facilitated the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
2. What academic, behavioral or social practices impeded the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this study.

Alternative Education

Alternative education refers to a temporary school setting for students' behavior management or academic performance needs which cannot be met in the traditional educational setting (Raywid, 1994).

Alternative Educational Programs

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's definition of an alternative educational program is defined as: "a school or program that serves students at any level, serves suspended or expelled students, serves students whose learning styles are better served in an alternative program, or provides individualized programs outside of a standard classroom setting in a caring atmosphere in which students learn the skills necessary to redirect their lives" (2016).

Although there are many types of alternative educational settings, this evaluation will only address alternative educational programs. The first type of alternative educational setting is an alternative educational program. An alternative educational program may be housed within a school, on the same site, or at a different location within the school district. The second type of alternative educational setting is an alternative school. An alternative school is defined as: "a public elementary or secondary school that addresses the needs of students that typically, cannot be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special, or vocational education" (Sable, Plotts, & Mitchell, 2010, p. C-1). Since the 1970s, alternative educational programs and schools have been

designed to meet the needs of students who have challenges learning effectively in a traditional high school environment because of learning disabilities, some medical conditions, and psychological and behavioral issues (Raywid, 1999). According to Wehlage, students at-risk for dropping out can be inspired to high academic achievements by creating an environment conducive to learning (1987). Researchers, such as Milner (2004) and Olsen (2009) have accused traditional high schools for the rise in at-risk behaviors of students. Neumann contended that deficiencies in the traditional high schools are just one element of the challenges at-risk students face (2003). Even though there is little data to support that alternative educational programs are more effective than traditional, public schools, alternative educational programs are becoming more recognized as an answer to increasing academic achievement and graduation rate for at-risk students. Regardless of the limited information about the effectiveness of alternative educational programs, Raywid contends that students in these types of settings experience an increase in self-esteem and eagerness to show up for school (1999). In this document, alternative educational programs refer to both alternative educational programs and alternative schools.

Alternative Educational Setting

Alternative educational setting is the program or school where students are assigned for a long-term suspension beyond 10 school days. It is designed to meet the needs of students at-risk of school failure due to poor grades, poor attendance, and behavioral issues (Saunders & Saunder, 2001).

At-Risk Student

A student with poor grades, disruptive behavior, and poor attendance who are at-risk for failing or dropping out of school (Carver, P. R. et al., 2010).

Drop Out

A student who stopped attending school prior to obtaining a diploma (Paglin, et al., 2008).

Edgenuity

A comprehensive online platform that provides schools with the tools and support they need to maximize learning and improve student success” (Edgenuity, 2020).

Long-term Suspension

89475 Long-term suspension is an out-of-school suspension that is beyond 10 school days (District PNC, 2019a).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002. NCLB sets performance guidelines for all schools and also stipulates what must be included in accountability reports to parents. It mandates annual student testing, includes guidelines for underperforming schools, and requires states to train all teachers and assistants to be “highly qualified” (NCLB, 2002).

OdysseyWare

An online curriculum for students in grades 3-12 used in schools. OdysseyWare is a student-paced, mastery-based, teacher-interactive library of standards-aligned, dynamic and pedagogically sound curriculum. The curriculum is designed to empower students to

build proficiency, achieve content mastery, and engage in rich and challenging real-world applications (2019).

Out-of-school Suspension

Out-of-school suspension identifies the disciplinary alternative wherein disruptive or deviant students are excluded from school for a specific period of time (District PNC, 2019a).

PowerSchool

PowerSchool is a web-based student information system designed to help districts and educators efficiently manage instruction, learning, grading, attendance, assessments, state reporting, special education, student registration, and finances. In addition, students and parents are able to view selected data, such as instruction, grades, and attendance (PowerSchool, 2019)

Program Evaluation

The process for collecting, evaluating, and using information to answer questions about a particular program (Fitzpatrick, Saunders, & Worthen, 2012).

Recidivism

Recidivism occurs if, within one school year, a student returns to the alternative education setting one or more times after successfully completing his or her first assignment and returning to the traditional education setting (Aron, 2006).

Success

Success occurs when students return to their traditional education setting without returning to the alternative education setting.

Traditional Education Setting

Traditional education setting is the school where students in a school district are assigned at the beginning of the school year and each semester.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are inherent to most research studies. This program evaluation was limited by the willingness or unwillingness of participants (administrators, teachers, and staff) to provide truthful data. Another limitation was the small number of participants in this study. Because the number of participants was limited to administrators, teachers, and staff, the results failed to generalize to alternative settings in other geographical locations or of similar size alternative programs.

Delimitations of the Study

The following delimitations were considered for this study. This evaluation did not measure data over a long period of time, but was limited to data resulting from the past three years (2016-2019) in the alternative educational program. Additionally, the sample was not random and represented a sample of convenience. The data included student enrollment in the alternative educational program from 2016-2019. The data used in the study derived from only one alternative educational program, Academy C, in a school district located in the eastern part of North Carolina. Therefore, the results of the study were not generalized to other alternative educational programs. I chose to evaluate Academy C because the number of students enrolled in Academy C each year increased, but only a small number of students graduated.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This evaluation was organized into five chapters. Chapter One included an introduction to the problem, purpose of the evaluation, background and significance of the evaluation, program evaluation model, evaluation questions, definition of terms, and definition of alternative educational programs. Chapter Two presented a literature review of the theories of mission statements, history, purpose, types, characteristics, and future of alternative educational programs as well as an evaluation of alternative educational programs. Chapter Three described the methodology of the evaluation, which was selected to describe the problem. Chapter Four gave the results of the interviews and surveys. Lastly, Chapter Five provided conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The percentage of students attending high school versus those who do not has steadily increased. However, among lower socioeconomic families, students dropping out of school are very prominent (Mottaz, 2002). Miller (2011, para. 5) noted that “every year over 1.2 million students drop out of high school in the United States, equaling one student every 26 seconds or 7,000 a day, and approximately 25% of high school freshmen fail to graduate from high school on time.” The United States ranks 22nd out of 27 developed countries for students completing high school. A student who drops out of high school will make two hundred thousand dollars less than a student who graduates from high school, and a million dollars less than a student who graduates from college. Also, high school dropouts commit 75% of all crimes (Silver, Saunders, Zarate, 2008). Because of these alarming statistics, it is vital that school districts work endlessly to ensure all students are provided a good education in the school environment is key to the American economy.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2016) defines alternative educational programs as services for students at-risk of truancy, of academic failure, of behavior problems, and/or of dropping out of school. In today’s society, alternative educational programs are a huge undertaking for districts. Alternative educational programs have been established to meet the needs of students who are not being successful in the traditional school setting. The structure of alternative programs differs from location to location, depending on the school district and the students the programs serve.

Although many alternative educational programs are available to help at-risk students be successful in the school setting, little is known about what constitutes their effectiveness when alternative educational programs are still evolving (Cordell, 2005). The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of a North Carolina school district's alternative educational program. District PNC established Academy C in 2011 to decrease the dropout rate of at-risk high school students. The following research questions guided this study:

Research Questions

1. What academic, behavioral, and social practices facilitated the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
2. What academic, behavioral or social practice impeded the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

This literature review was organized into seven sections: theories of mission statements, purpose of alternative educational programs, types of alternative educational programs, characteristics of success of alternative educational programs, future of alternative educational programs, and the evaluation of alternative educational programs. The theories of mission statements provided an overview of the concept driving the structure of this study. The other sections provided an overview of the research pertaining to alternative educational programs. These sections worked together to accurately illustrate how mission statements are used in the alternative educational program evaluated in this study.

Theories of Mission Statements

An understanding of a program's mission statement can be seen in the early literature (Cady et al., 2011). The creation or modification of a mission statement as the starting point of the strategic planning process may suggest a crucial aspect on the connection between mission statements and school performance. Figure 1 details the relationship between mission statements and school survival from “Strategic Management,” by Miller and Dess (1996). A well-adapted model of the relationship between the mission statement and school survival describes how organizational statements lead to operationalization. This directs staff behaviors, which determine how the school or program performs and survives. This relationship can be diagrammed as

Figure 1.

The Relationship between Mission Statements and School Survival



Drucker (1974) stated that defining the mission statement is the only thing that allows the organization, “to set objectives, to develop strategies, to concentrate its resources, and to go to work” (p. 94). Strategic planning allows district personnel to better understand how the mission statement is operationalized within the school or program.

King, Case, and Premo (2013) investigated Drucker’s 1974 research to better understand the purpose of a stated mission within an organization. They determined that Drucker’s work recognized a crucial first step in the development of a mission statement

and the success of the organization. A well-planned mission statement consists of four components: “who we are, what we do, what we stand for, and why we do it” (King, Case, & Premo, 2013, p. 78). This served as the framework around which all else is centered within the organization. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, mission statements were revised from not only referring to businesses, but also referring to the direction in education (Kosmutzky, 2012). School districts began implementing mission statements as tools to measure a school’s performance toward strategic planning and goals (Barker, 2015; Chapple, 2015; Kosmutzky, 2012).

A school’s mission statement is essential in defining core values and direction. The mission of a school or program must be established on the values of the school and its community. Mission statements are the underlying reason why an organization or school exists. It reflects what the school or program does every day. The mission statement should reflect the purpose of the school or program. It needs to be the cornerstone of every aspect of decision making. It is primarily the leaders who are responsible for communicating the mission, but mission permeates through successful schools from the highest administrator to the ground level worker. McTighe and Wiggins (2007) argued that every aspect of curriculum, instruction, and assessment should be linked to the school’s mission statement describing schools without mission as, “a home for freelance tutors of subjects” (p. 25). If a school does not have a mission, it will lack direction and purpose. The significance of a mission statement in an organization is irrefutable. Becoming the focal point, the target for when the goal is met or the outcome is accomplished, the mission is vital in a school. Therefore, one of the responsibilities of a leader is to assist in developing a strong mission statement which can help stakeholders

in an organization reach a common understanding of the academic achievement expectations. The mission statement provides an overview of the steps planned to achieve that goal. A mission statement may describe its broad academic and operational assurances as well as its commitment to its students and community (Edglossory, 2015). Fullan (1992), an educational leader and researcher, recommended the following eight guidelines for establishing the mission statement within the educational setting. He recommended the following suggestions to working with school staff and the community: 1) understand the culture of the school before trying to change it, 2) value teachers and staff professional growth, 3) extend what is valued within the mission setting, 4) express the school's values and what the outcomes will determine, 5) promote collaboration with all stakeholders, 6) offer options within the process and outcomes, 7) use managerial means to facilitate, and 8) connect with the school environment and community (Fullan, 1992).

Therefore, an effective school leader gives priority to the mission statement at the beginning of the year, as well as throughout the school year, as a means of explaining expectations and providing policy and procedures within the school. The delivery of the mission of the school to school staff and other stakeholders will enhance the outcome of decisions or program changes. The mission statement must be a key component to decisions made both within the district as well as within the school or program (Education World, 2015). Therefore, school leaders should focus on the mission statement when discussing and establishing academic programs and decisions.

School mission statements have been the subject of limited empirical study (Stemler & Bebell, 2012) as well as the correlation between mission components and

student outcomes (Weiss & Piderit, 1999). In 2010, mission statements ranked as the third most popular means for administration and have consistently ranked as one of the top executive tools over the last 20 years (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2011). Several reasons for having a mission statement have been articulated in the literature, including: defining organizational direction and purpose, focusing the allocation of resources, communicating with internal and external stakeholders, and describing the values of the organization in order to inspire the organization's staff members (Bartkus, Glassman, & McAfee, 2000; Desmidt et al., 2011).

The investigation of a mission statement starts with an analysis of its length and structure. David and David (2003) noted the importance of having adequate structure to interpret the mission statement and to influence desired outcome, but forewarned against having a mission statement that is too long or detailed that it prevents productivity or divides stakeholders. Likewise, Bartkus et al. (2000) urged that mission statements can create limitations within a program, and that the mission statement should reflect where "the [program] is and where it is likely to be headed" (p. 27). Therefore, updating the mission statement of an organization is essential for avoiding the organization itself from being dissolved and obsolete (Midgett, 2007). Further, Fiegenbaum et al. (1996) argued that leaders must regularly readjust organizational reference points in order to push the organization toward growth and learning. Similarly, Sidhu (2003) concluded that the process of revisiting and revising the mission statement can lead to increased benefits of the mission statement relative to organizational performance. The mission statement in this sense may be viewed as a powerful reference point for the organization or program. Mission statements can also provide guidance on the issues of concern on a particular

program, from allocating resources and devising a plan for the future to holding administrators liable for program outcomes. However, a mission statement should not be viewed as an inventory of responsibilities enforced from the top down, but rather as a public affirmation of accountability that stakeholders intentionally adopt for themselves.

Furthermore, some critics have suggested that organizations that have a mission statement are more effective in their achievements of the stated goals (Williams, 1996). The goals expressed in the school's mission statement outlines the values the school or program agrees to uphold. While desired outcomes are stated in the mission statement, a district's purpose looks further into the future defining the end result of the desired outcome, such as implementing well-informed information to improve the community. As Covey (1989) coined, "begin with the end in mind" (p. 20).

History of Alternative Educational Programs

Alternative education has existed since the establishment of public education with private schools, parochial schools, home schools, and most recently, charter schools for those who believe in a particular approach, or those who can afford to offer options to their children (Young, 1990). Often, the primary concern of parents is student discipline (Reimer & Cash, 2003). Traditionally, schools dealt with inappropriate student behavior through in-school suspension, after school detention, and out-of-school suspensions (Hadderman, 2002). As society has progressed, not all of these methods are still accepted in traditional schools (Young, 1990). The organizational structure of traditional and alternative education, which is ever evolving and changing differs based on race, gender, needs and social status of students (Young, 1990).

Various forms of alternative education began evolving in the 1800s, but did not become widely accepted until the 1950s. During the 1950s, the United States' public education system was condemned as being segregated, racist, and elitist institutions (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Educational reform ideas, such as longer school days, site-based management, achievement testing, better assessment practices, and alternative education strategies began to be discussed throughout America (Gregory, 1998). Communities began designing options for the groups of students, parents, and educators who were unwilling or unable to participate in the traditional school setting (Miller, 1994).

Alternative education served diverse populations of students who were unsuccessful in the traditional school setting as well as those whose family's academic, social, political, or religious values were different from the mainstream population (Raywid, 1981). Alternative education was desired by some parents due to public criticism of racist and exclusive promotion in traditional public education (Raywid, 1981). An accurate description of United States' public schools during this time period came from Raywid (1981) who described schools as distant, corrupt, unimportant institutions impartial to society.

Schools which offered a quality education to minorities were known as freedom schools, and were part of the Freedom Movement. Freedom schools were housed in churches or storefronts, and were established to provide a free quality education to students who were not being served adequately in the public school system (Young, 1990). Freedom schools were believed to offer privilege to study without restrictions; however, the schools were short-lived (Raywid, 1981). While Freedom schools did not survive, they did provide a framework for the alternative school movement. In addition to

being viewed as the first alternative education outside the public education system, the early Freedom schools also inspired reform within the public school system (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

As alternative educational programs continued to evolve inside and outside the public education system during the 1960s, alternative educational programs began changing to address present day trends (Good, 2008). Concurrently, the United States was dealing with the alarming issues of poverty, in conjunction with the authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which enhanced further social stratification by emphasizing excellence over equity (Lange & Sletten, 2002). During the late 1960s, alternative forms of education appeared increasingly more widespread within the United States (Miller, 1994). The number of alternative schools exploded from 100 to over 10,000 during the early 1970s (Raywid, 1981). This rapid growth in alternative educational programs caused schools to take many forms; yet, two traits were present from the beginning: schools were designed to respond to a certain group of students who were not being adequately served by traditional school, and schools represented a varying degree of withdrawal from traditional school organizations, programs and environments (Raywid, 1994).

The alternative schools of the 1970s were developed during a period of innovation and change in curriculum, delivery, and structure of education (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Alternative schools were co-opted into a broader political agenda of desegregation (Mottaz, 2002). Schools were then called choice-based learning alternatives facilitating the open school concept and resembling the alternative schools referenced by Raywid which responded to a certain group of students who were not adequately served in

traditional schools (Young, 1990). Another school composition established granted parent, student, and teacher with an alternative, progressive, noncompetitive assessment, and student-centered curriculum by highlighting content and instructional planning (Young, 1990).

With the choice-based learning and open school concepts, education began to see the creation of programs that provided a more nontraditional approach to education, including schools without walls, schools within a school, multicultural schools, and magnet schools (Lange & Sletten, 2002). As the definition of alternative educational programs began to evolve, open schools became more conservative and remedial, and students performed below average achievement levels (Tissington, 2006). While the original characterizations of freedom schools and open schools have become outdated, components and ideologies have remained in place (Van Acker, 2007).

Hefner-Packer (1991) and Chalker (1997) have identified five models of alternative educational programs to serve students' needs, and which are functioning with a diverse degree of success. The first model is the Alternative Classroom. This is a self-contained classroom housed in the traditional school that offers a variety of programs in different environments. The second model is the School-Within-a-School, which is also located in the traditional school, but has some degree of independence or specialized educational programs. Students in this program normally attend for part of the school day and participate in regular school activities within the traditional school. The Separate Alternate School, the third model, is separated from the traditional school, and has varied academic and social skills programs. These schools mainly provide services to habitually disruptive students and students who are involved in the juvenile justice system. The

fourth model Hefner-Packer and Chalker discussed is the Continuation School. These programs are normally held in the evening or in the summer, and serve students who no longer can attend the traditional school due to significant behaviors, students who need additional courses in order to graduate, or students who are no longer enrolled in the traditional school. The goal of these schools is to give students time to obtain their high school diploma or GED certificate. In addition, these programs are generally aimed at preparing students for the workforce. The fifth model of alternative schools is the Magnet School. The Magnet School is a self-contained program that offers an enhanced curriculum in academic areas, such as science or the arts. Three other alternative educational program options Raywid discussed are Schools of Choice, Last-Chance, and Remedial (1994). Schools of Choice were programs that provide diverse specialized learning opportunities for students. Last-Chance offered continued educational options for students with disruptive behaviors. The third option, the Remediation program, focused on remediation in academics and rehabilitation in socialization.

Alternative education is certainly not a new concept. John Dewey is considered “the father of the modern alternative school movement” (Reimer & Cash, 2003). Dewey noted that the value of individualized and experiential education occur because students do not have the same learning styles or skills. He encouraged educators to move from the “School as Factory” approach to education to a more progressive school philosophy that views students as individuals.

During the 1980s, the definition of alternative educational programs began to narrow and focus on serving students identified as at-risk (Lange & Sletten, 2002). In the late 1980s, the focus of alternative schools began to shift from the creativity of the open

school to serving students who were not performing as expected or who were disrupting the traditional school environment (Tissington, 2006). Alternative school began to shift to teaching the basics, which provided the backbone for most of today's alternative educational programs. The fundamental approach to teaching the basic skills of reading, writing, and math, and ditching the humanistic approach of the earlier decades began to reign as the number of alternative schools increased (Lange & Sletten, 2002). In 1983, the release of *A Nation at Risk* supported the return to fundamental basics of education as a method to increase student achievement in making students more prepared to compete globally (Good, 2008).

In the 1990s increased public attention to school violence, dropout rates, and behavior problems in public schools, the definition of alternative schools changed depending on the audience. Many legislative acts during the 1990s influenced public perception. For example, The Gun-Free Schools Act (1994, PL 103-882) and the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (1994, Title IV, Part A) required school districts to expel students for a minimum of one year for bringing a firearm to school. However, districts were given the option to place expelled students in an alternative school during the period of expulsion to allow students to continue their education and graduate with their cohort (Good, 2008).

Although first intended to be viewed as an alternative education with individualized opportunities for students at risk of school failure, alternative schools in the 1990s were settings for disruptive youth who, for some reason, were not conforming to the behavioral expectations of the traditional school setting (Epstein, 2008). During this decade, state-level legislation involving alternative schools began to change the focus

of how alternative schools operated and who would be served, thus making alternative schools an absolute need for every community (Dynarski & Gleason, 2009):

“Alternative schooling opportunities will be needed to accommodate the educational needs of its youth because the traditional school system, and particularly the traditional high school, can no longer serve the needs of the students and their family lifestyles common in the 1990s” (p. 6).

The alternative educational programs and schools founded in 2000 are more synonymous with “dropout prevention programs,” focusing on remediation instead of individual growth and creativity. Though still linked as a measure of dropout prevention, alternative educational programs are designed to provide an “alternative to dropping out, with special attention to the student’s individual social needs and the academic requirements for a high school diploma” (Reimer & Cash, 2003, p.2).

The President's Commission on School Finance of 2001 called for an increase in options in the form of alternative education resulting in the increase on the number of alternative schools nationwide (Mottaz, 2002.) In addition, mandates of the NCLB and The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) (2004) directed educators to hold all students to the same high academic standards in reading and math, as well as graduation requirements (Good, 2008). NCLB mandated that programs be developed to prevent at-risk students from dropping out of school, and to provide dropouts and students returning from correctional facilities or institutions for neglected, or delinquent students, with a support system to ensure their continued education. The NCLB (2002) legislation also mandated accountability of at-risk youth by increasing the number of students being served in an alternative school setting. These mandates hold

districts responsible for ensuring that all students in the district are educated. Those students who are not being successful must be educated in some manner, making the development of effective alternative educational programs even more critical (Good, 2008).

Modern legislation has focused on alternative education due to an increase in at-risk students and to alternative placement of students (Good, 2008). Districts with high poverty concentrations are likely to have alternative educational programs and schools for at-risk students (Carver, Lewis, & Tice, 2010). Students placed in alternative educational programs are at-risk for academic failure, have poor grades, attendance issues, disruptive behavior, long term suspensions, or other reasons associated with early withdrawal from school (Paglin & Fager, 1997). While students' issues make education challenging, districts cannot choose to ignore their needs and are held accountable for the success of all students (Good, 2008). Lehr and Lange (2003) contended that the key criterion for building a successful alternative educational program is small class sizes, small student to teacher ratio, one to one instruction to meet individual learning needs, a supportive environment that includes student/teacher relationships that are developed and nurtured, and helping students become successful and work towards future goals. In a study of several alternative programs that successfully involved students, Frishberg et al. found that smaller classes provide flexibility and allow teachers to be responsive to the students' needs (2010). Therefore, a positive school and classroom environment contribute to high and equitable levels of student achievement (Bennett, 2000).

Purpose of Alternative Educational Programs

The pressure on school leaders to increase achievement levels of students has created a 21st century educational system which appears extremely different from prior educational

systems. The tasks of school administrators have become more challenging due to increased accountability with the NCLB Act of 2001, the latest authorization of the ESEA of 1965 (P.L. 89-10). The United States Department of Education defined an alternative education school as a:

“Public elementary or secondary school that addresses the needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education alternative learning programs as services for students at risk of truancy, academic failure, behavior problems, or dropping out of school” (2002, p. 55).

Recently, alternative educational programs have been perceived as programs for students who are too disruptive to remain in traditional schools (Foley & Pang, 2006). These schools were designed to better meet the needs of students who have not been successful in traditional school settings. Alternative educational programs within North Carolina’s public school districts are developed to serve students at various levels who are suspended or expelled, at-risk of participating in juvenile crime, have dropped out, have a history of truancy, are returning from a juvenile detention setting or psychiatric hospital, or whose learning styles are better served in an alternative setting (NCDPI, 2016). Alternative educational programs were developed to maintain school safety in traditional schools and to preserve a non-disruptive learning environment within the traditional education setting (Barnes, 2010).

While the success of reward systems was noted by researchers as far back as B.F. Skinner’s theory of operant conditioning, traditional schools may not recognize the need for positive reinforcement or only recognize top students while struggling students who desire recognition go unnoticed (Carswell et al, 2009). A multi-tiered system of support

(MTSS) has become the leading intervention strategy to assist struggling students (Terrell, 2017). One multi-tier approach to support students with academic and behavior challenges is Response to Intervention (RTI). Struggling students are provided with interventions at various levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. RTI is generally characterized by a three-tier model of school support that uses research-based academic and/or behavioral interventions. Tier I of RTI is instruction, screening, and group interventions conducted by highly qualified educators to ensure that students' difficulties are not due to inadequate instruction (Stephens, 2013). Students who do not demonstrate satisfactory progress are moved to Tier II. In Tier II, student instruction is increased and intensified to match their needs according to their performance level and rate of progress (Stephens, 2013). These interventions are provided in small groups and in classroom settings. Students who continue to perform below a proficient rate at Tier II interventions are considered for more intensive interventions as part of Tier III. At this level, students receive individualized, intensive interventions that target the students' skill deficits (Stephen, 2013). Students who do not achieve the desired level of progress in response to Tier III interventions are referred for a comprehensive psychoeducational evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services (Stahl, 2016).

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is another multi-tiered system of support that focuses on changing student behavior (Terrell, 2017). PBIS is an intervention strategy geared towards enhancing the ability of schools to design effective environments that are conducive to quality teaching and learning. Attention is directed towards creating and sustaining Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III systems of support that improve results for desired behaviors. Tier I of PBIS is a school-wide approach for all

students, staff and settings. It is used as an early intervention. The progress of student behavior is monitored, and data is used to make decisions about whether or not students require more intense behavior interventions (Terrell, 2017). Tier II classroom support focuses on a specialized group of students who exhibit at-risk behaviors, and are not responding to Tier I support (Terrell, 2017). Tier III is specialized, individualized support for at-risk behaviors. These students typically do not respond to Tier I or Tier II efforts designed to reduce behavior challenges school-wide and in the classroom setting (Terrell, 2017). The MTSS intervention strategies are tailored to support struggling students who, without these interventions, will be in danger of school failure, and at risk of dropping out of school (Terrell, 2017).

Types of Alternative Educational Programs

Alternative educational programs exhibit unique characteristics and best practices that are attributed to the success of at-risk students (Aron, 2006). Additionally, alternative educational programs are structured differently depending on the community and students it serves. A wide variety of alternative educational programs exist and numerous researchers have identified various types of school structures. Raywid's (1999) research was the first to divide modern alternative educational programs into three categories. While not all programs clearly belong in one specific category, most have dominant characteristics that fit more closely into one category. Raywid (1999) identified and labeled the categories as: Type I, Type II, and Type III.

Type I programs, also known as Popular Innovation Programs, focus on educational organization and programming. Students who attend these programs, attend by choice. Schools are based around themes such as arts and instructional strategies such

as learning styles or multiple intelligences (Raywid, 1999). The goal is to make learning fun and exciting for students by focusing education on the student's interest level. Type I programs believe that students will perform and achieve at a higher level by changing the school to meet the desires and learning styles of students (Raywid, 1999). Furthermore, Type I programs provide a more caring environment with smaller student to teacher ratios. Examples of these types of schools are magnet schools, charter schools, schools within schools, schools without walls, experiential, and gifted education schools.

Students in Type II or Last Chance Programs, are usually assigned to the program because they are not behaving and complying with school policies. These students do not choose to attend and there is little focus on changing the curriculum for the student. The focus of Type II programs is primarily behavior modification that utilizes lessons that teach behavior components to assist students in learning and understanding the behaviors needed to succeed in their home school (Raywid, 1994). Such programs also allow students to work toward earning graduation credits with the goal of returning students to their home schools on track for graduating with their cohorts and with a better understanding of appropriate school behavior (Raywid, 1999). Examples of Type II schools are last-chance and in-school suspension programs.

Type III alternative educational programs, also called Remedial Focus Programs, offer remediation and rehabilitation to students who have academic, social, or emotional issues. Students are referred to the program but have the choice to attend. The desired outcome is that through remediation and rehabilitation students will return to their home schools and successfully complete the academic requirements for graduation (Raywid, 1994). These programs may offer additional evening classes, vocational training, and

credit recovery options (Raywid, 1999). By addressing students' issues, Type III schools hope that students will correct their behavior, improve academic standing, return to home schools, and achieve success (Raywid, 1999). Raywid suggested that Type I programs experience the greatest academic success, while alternative educational programs focusing on discipline results experience minimal gains (1999). He also contended that in Type II, Last Chance Programs, academic progress is difficult to determine because students often make gains while in the program, but regress when returned to mainstream classrooms or their home school (1999). Aron believed that there is a correlation between the length of placement and long-term success for Type III programs (2006).

More recent research conducted by Raywid (2001) has considered the overlap of categories and has expanded on previous research of alternative educational settings adding a Type IV category. Type IV combines characteristics from Type II and Type III programs including a focus on behavior modification and remediation. Many more recent alternative programs today are hybrid programs offering similar curriculum and programs in a different, smaller setting (Kochhar-Bryant & White, 2007). Adding to Raywid's research, Aron (2003) introduced an additional type of alternative program, Type V, emphasizing a student's educational needs above risk factors, demographics, or program characteristics. As alternative programs continue to evolve, categories will overlap more and broaden as educators struggle to educate all students and offer the most conducive learning environment to meet unique needs of their students (Kochhar-Bryant & White, 2007).

Characteristics of Successful Alternative Educational Programs

Alternative educational programs differ from traditional schools in student-teacher ratios, emphasis on behavior modification, linkage of school to community or workplace, presentation of subject matter, emphasis on counseling, and comprehensive support services (Mottaz, 2002). While some alternative educational programs seek to prepare students to return to their home school, other alternative educational programs prepare students to graduate from high school and enter the workforce or to pursue postsecondary education directly from the alternative educational program (Smith, 2005). Effective alternative educational programs place students in a structured academic environment and help students build skills to succeed.

Moreover, it is essential to remember alternative educational programs intended as punitive measures are not successful (Mottaz, 2002). Programs should be designed to create a positive learning experience for students. In addition, placing teachers in an alternative educational program because they are not succeeding in the traditional school is a formula for disaster (Mottaz, 2002). Students who are in alternative educational programs need the best teachers who will ensure their experience in the school is positive. Mottaz's (2002) research suggested several guiding principles that effective alternative educational programs appear to have in common. These principles are high academic standards established prior to opening, curriculum in line with graduation requirements of the traditional school and aligned with state and federal guidelines, early diagnosis to detect strengths and weaknesses of students, and remedial courses to address student deficiencies in reading, math, writing or technology. Other principles also include behavior modification training and character education programs; learning style; multiple

intelligences analysis; class variety to appeal to student interests; and courses which reinforce knowledge and pride in students' ethnic backgrounds. Additional principles include, cultural awareness and sensitivity classes for students and professional development for teachers, opportunities to explore careers and education options upon high school graduation, and home and community support.

Franklin et al. (2007) described alternative educational programs as unconventional with the ability to use community resources more creatively allowing greater freedom in operations. They identified eight effective characteristics of quality alternative educational programs. The first characteristic of alternative educational programs is the enrollment of 200 students or less in order to provide a personalized and supportive school environment. Another characteristic is that socio-emotional support provided to produce positive educational outcomes for at-risk students. The relationships developed in this type of setting allows students the opportunity for social support, a sense of belonging, and a connection which extends beyond interpersonal experiences found in traditional schools. The third characteristic is personalized educational plans that are used to address academic, social, and emotional needs. These plans provide students the opportunity to work at their own pace and focus on course mastery. In addition, alternate scheduling is offered to accommodate work and family demands. Diverse educational options to accommodate student needs and life circumstances is the fourth characteristic of alternative education. Franklin, et. al discussed that when choices concerning programming are available, positive self-confidence increases in students, and provides them with autonomy in the educational experience (2007). The fifth characteristic focuses on flexibility and unrestricted environments that allow students to

determine their own learning objectives. A participatory decision-making model gives teachers and students opportunities to be involved when deciding classroom goals and school activities. Engaging parents or guardians as well as the community in the school experience, such as organizing and attending open houses or conference nights with teachers, and understanding the role of the alternative educational program is the sixth characteristic. Another characteristic is counseling sessions at school, which are available for students and their families to address personal issues as needed. The school curriculum is designed as a community service component which allows students to complete community service with the option of earning course credits. The last characteristic of alternative educational programs is that the program must clearly communicate standards required for student success. Rules and consequences should be clearly stated and enforced. Rules should be kept to a minimum with an understanding of the informal structure of the program. There should also be a strong emphasis on maintaining good academic standing. Positive student performances should be immediately acknowledged. Alternative educational programs should be individualized to ensure they are effective at educating the students served.

Powell suggested that measuring the effect of alternative educational programs on students can be difficult because little research exists on the effectiveness of specific program characteristics with specific student outcomes (2003). Aron argued that the effectiveness of alternative educational programs is generally measured in terms of improvements by the students being served. He further pointed out that completion of credits, higher grades and attendance, and lower disciplinary rates are indicators of a successful alternative educational program (2006). However, measuring the effectiveness

based on standard accountability and standardized tests is not practical for alternative educational programs because students who are at risk with a history of low academic achievement make up the majority of alternative educational programs.

Alternative educational programs should have an evaluation process to assess how students are progressing which examines where the student was academically prior to attending the alternative educational program. Alternative educational programs are reportedly under constant scrutiny and have to prove their right to exist; therefore, assessing a program solely on standardized tests will not give an accurate reflection of the program. (Franklin, 1992)

The Future of Alternative Educational Programs

Since the beginning of the 21st century, alternative educational programs in the United States have grown at a substantial rate. The majority of Type II or “Last Chance” programs for at-risk high school students exist in order that students can continue earning credits towards graduation despite their behavioral challenges in the traditional school setting. According to the US Census Bureau (McFarland et al., 2018), in 2016, 13.9% of high school students who dropped out were unemployed compared to nine percent (9%) of graduates. Frishberg et al. found that “improved student graduation rates appeared to result from three types of educational practices that increase student engagement and progress” (2010, p. 18). These practices include the strategic structure of the alternative educational program experience, school culture, and specific programs designed to address the needs of struggling students (Frishberg et al, 2010).

As more and more alternative educational programs are being established, they can assist in reducing behavior challenges without losing academic instruction, assist in rectifying student behavior and academics, and assist students in remaining in school

instead of dropping out. In addition, alternative educational programs are reducing the number of students who drop out, and are making an impact in education as they are contributing to students' success and graduation rate where traditional school settings have not been able to meet those needs. McGee contended that while alternative educational programs have made an influence in education, they still have several obstacles to overcome in order to rid themselves of negative criticism from much of the public and from the academic community as well (2001).

Alternative educational programs have been able to address the needs of many at-risk students by encouraging them to be successful and challenging them to obtain their high school diploma. The significance this has made on the dropout rate in United States schools is compelling enough to allow alternative educational programs to become a relevant stakeholder in the educational system.

Moving towards the future, many researchers believe that connections between curriculum and the real-world will provide at-risk students with a sense of purpose and encourage buy-in. Cox's findings suggested that there is a positive relationship between alternative educational programs and grade point average, school attendance, and self-esteem (1999). Gold and Mann (1984) studied the effects of academic experiences on delinquent and disruptive behaviors. Jenkins (1997) researched the effect of school bonds on school delinquency. Cox (1999), Gold and Mann (1984), and Jenkins (1997) agree that the more involved and successful students are in school, the less likely they are to exhibit disruptive behaviors. A large portion of these programs target at-risk students as well as students who fail to blossom in the traditional school setting (McDonald, 2002).

As alternative educational programs continue to emerge, Raywid has redefined the classification of alternative educational programs into three categories (1999). The first category is *Change the Student* programs. These programs try to reform student behavior. While they focus on discipline and are highly structured, some are therapeutic and provide in-depth academic and social remediation. The secondary category, *Change the School*, focuses more on changing the curriculum and the school structure. These programs believe that the program or school is at fault rather than the students. *Change the Educational System* is the third category. These programs aim at creating system wide changes. Such innovations as “schools within schools” are among the larger initiatives for alternative educational programs. If these initiatives can coexist in the larger system, there is evidence they may inspire changes in the larger system (Raywid, 1999).

Evaluation of Alternative Educational Programs

Because each alternative educational program caters to the needs of a specific community it is difficult to have a universal method of evaluation. Even the state of North Carolina gives alternative educational programs and schools a choice of evaluation, and allows the district to select the evaluation method which best fits their role in the district (NCDPI, 2016). Mottaz (2002) offered some guidance to researchers examining alternative educational programs. She stated, “One of the most important features of an alternative school program is that the curriculum is delivered in a manner different from the local high school” (Mottaz, 2002, p.37). She emphasized the second most important thing is to have a curriculum that is meaningful and relevant for students. Mottaz (2002) stated, “The only common factor about learners in alternative educational programs is that they did not thrive in their previous settings” (p.38). Therefore, it is critical that as

alternative educational programs are evaluated, the focus should be on the students' needs for academic success.

Summary of the Literature Review

Chapter Two began with the introduction of the literature and proceeded with theories of mission statements. Chapter Two also provided the history, purpose, and summary of the types of alternative educational programs that exist not only in North Carolina, but also across the United States. The common school reform and the progressive education made lasting contributions to alternative educational programs. However, these contributions began a dialogue with researchers about the characteristics of successful alternative educational programs. Today, alternative educational programs serve at-risk students; however, evidence showed that students who fail to be successful in the traditional school setting also benefited from alternative educational programs either online or through distance learning. Furthermore, Chapter Two discussed the characteristics and future of alternative educational programs. These programs are on the horizon to decrease at-risk students from dropping out and earning their high school diploma despite their behavior challenges. The final section in Chapter Two explained the evaluation of alternative educational programs. The literature suggested evidence that alternative educational programs are improving the curriculum and methods of educating at-risk students. Their focal point is becoming more about the students' needs for academic achievement whether students are at-risk of dropping out or not.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Alternative educational programs in North Carolina resulted from a state mandate that “each local board of education shall establish at least one alternative learning program and shall adopt guidelines for assigning students to alternative learning programs” (NCDPI, 2016). The North Carolina school district designated for this study has three alternative educational programs. For the purpose of this study and confidentiality, the alternative programs were issued the following pseudo names, Academy A, Academy B, and Academy C. This program evaluation focused on Academy C.

Prior to the inception of Academy C, there were no opportunities for earning credits towards graduation when students were long-term suspended or missed ten consecutive school days. Most students were withdrawn from school for missing too many days. Over the past three years, Academy C experienced structural changes in its location which impacted student assignment. In the 2016-17 school year, Academy C was housed at the local Boys and Girls Club. A combined total of 100 students were assigned from each of the local six high schools. During the 2017-18 school year, Academy C was moved to the same facility as the alternative program for middle school students, thus reducing the high school population from 100 to 50 at any given time. In the 2018-19 school year, Academy C encountered another relocation to a facility that housed multiple alternative programs. Due to decreased space, Academy C presently only serves a total of 50-60 students at any given time. The significant down-sizing in the number of students assigned to Academy C negatively impacted the graduation rate and the dropout rate of their home school.

Academy C operates a 3-Tier system (District PNC, 2019d). Tier I operates Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, and is designed for students who require a minimal level of support. Tier II operates Monday through Thursday, 3:45pm to 5:45pm for students not successful in Tier I or who need more intensive support. Tier III is home-based delivery in which students complete all coursework in the home environment. Tier III is designed for students who are unsuccessful in both Tier I and II, charged with felonies, or require very intensive support.

The goal for Academy C is based on District PNC's strategic plan, goal one, which states "Every student in District PNC graduates from high school prepared for work, further education, and citizenship." Academy C also follows District PNC's objective to "increase cohort graduation rate" (District PNC, 2019a, para 1). The overall mission of Academy C is to "to empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life and to give them a second chance to succeed" (Academy C, 2019d, para 1). Areas of life as specified in the mission statement refer to academic, behavioral, and social well-being. Academy C has two school-level goals. The first one is "to help educate the mind, shape the character, and nurture the creativity of young men and women, while encouraging them to display values, characteristics, and behaviors of good citizens." The second goal is "to provide a safe, orderly, and caring environment and stress that each student is capable of effecting positive change in his world" (Academy C, 2019d, para 1). Academy C has three objectives which support its mission. The first objective is to increase the percentage of students who successfully complete the program and return to their home school or graduate by three percent (3%). Successful completion includes promotion to the next grade level or graduation, demonstration of satisfactory attendance,

and the return and attendance at their home school at the conclusion of their assignment to Academy C. The next objective is to implement a tiered instructional system that allows teachers to deliver evidenced-based learning online that is aligned with the individual needs of students across all tiers. The final objective is to decrease discipline referrals that result in missed instruction due to out-of-school suspension by five percent (5%).

The purpose of this program evaluation was to assess the extent to which the mission of Academy C is being implemented. An assessment of the degree to which the previously stated goals and objectives are being accomplished was essential in determining mission attainment. The quantitative data collected from sources listed under the context, input, process, and product evaluations, as well as the qualitative data collected from surveys of teachers and support staff supported the overall program evaluation.

Chapter Three provided an explanation of procedures that was used in completing the program evaluation for Academy C. The Context, Input, Process, and Product Evaluation (CIPP) model served as the framework for critiquing Academy C. Furthermore, the CIPP model investigated the following core concepts: the program's contexts, inputs, processes, and products. In general, these four segments of the evaluation tool queried respectively: "What needs to be done? How should it be done? Is it being done? Did it succeed?" (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). The CIPP model also measured the academic and behavior success of high school students in this alternative school setting where course content was delivered through an online curriculum, and students received specific daily interventions through a defined social skills training

period.

Context Evaluation

Context evaluation helped decision-makers assess needs, problems, assets and opportunities while defining goals and objectives (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). In addition, context evaluation helped to determine strategies necessary for implementing the program's mission or overcoming barriers.

Table 2 is the matrix used for evaluating the context of Academy C. Qualitative data from District PNC district- and school-level leaders, Academy C staff and selected staff from six high schools, and quantitative data from NCDPI website, and local report card were obtained to answer both research questions in this program evaluation. The data collected, through one-on-one interviews (see appendices A-C) and surveys, (see appendix D) established whether Academy C is achieving its mission as well as what was needed to achieve the mission.

Table 2

Matrix for Evaluating the Contexts of Academy C: What academic, behavioral, and social practices facilitate and impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

Mission: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

CONTEXT EVALUATION

CONTEXT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral, or social practices facilitated the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impeded the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees. (Common Themes)
What specific student services promoted/impeded mission attainment?	Findings from interviewee: 8 District- and School-Level Leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
What additional student services are needed for mission attainment?	Findings from interviewee: 8 District- and School-Level Leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
What educational practices or strategies support the mission attainment?	Findings from interviewee: 8 District- and School-Level Leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
List educational practices that need to be implemented in order to attain its mission				

(continued)

CONTEXT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral, or social practices facilitated the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impeded the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees. (Common Themes)
District graduation rate and dropout data 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years NCDPI website Local report card			
Academy C graduation rate and dropout data 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years NCDPI website Local report card			
Number graduated at home school after attending Academy C 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years Local report card			
Number graduated at Academy C 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years Local report card			
Discipline referrals at Academy C 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years Local report card			

Input Evaluation

Stufflebeam believed that the inputs indicate *how it should be done*, and which resources are essential *for it to be done that way*. Inputs were the resources required for Academy C to attain its mission. Examples of inputs that impacted the accomplishment of the mission of Academy C included financial and human resources, informational resources, and physical resources.

Financial and Human Resources

To assess the impact of financial resources, it was important to examine the yearly budget of Academy C. The annual budget included teachers and staff pay, curriculum cost, and other incidental costs associated with operating Academy C. I interviewed (see appendix A) district-level leaders to obtain information about the budget for the past three years. This data provided information about administrator, teacher, and support staff salaries required to operate Academy C and whether the financial inputs were sufficient for the needs discussed in the context. The cost of OdysseyWare and the materials involved in the social skills training period was also investigated. Other miscellaneous and incidental expenditures were discussed when interviewing the district-level leaders.

Informational Resources

Informational resources referred to an organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies used to retain, to store, and to use information. The intention of informational resources is to be able to improve decisions. In addition, it is used to accomplish an organization's mission and to improve performance. I interviewed (see appendix B) nine district- and school-level leaders to examine how efficient and cost-effective Academy C used its informational resources. These included any information in electronic, audio-visual or physical form, or any hardware or software that

made it possible to store and use information (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). By definition, this included, but was not limited to, electronic mail, phone mail, local databases, externally accessed databases, photographs, digitized information, other resources used in transmitting electronic communications, and any equipment that electronically stores such communications. Over the past three years, the growth of Academy C necessitated increases in informational resources and procedural changes to improve delivery of services to increase the number of students who graduated. The most significant change in informational resources was the increased use of electronic media and online databases. The efficient use of informational resources to improve program management and productivity through 1) improved delivery of programs; and 2) sharing of information common to Academy C, the eight district- and school-level leaders were interviewed. Databases that were utilized as historical data included PowerSchool, OdysseyWare, Educator's Handbook, and Google Drive. Informational resources associated with systems needed to support Academy C was identified by Leader 8. This information derived from analyses, such as a needs assessment, related to the implementation and management of the various programs, and any support activities required by the success of Academy C. These activities ranged from district information planning to application system development and operation, and maintenance and support of end-user computing. In order to prevent at-risk students from dropping out, plans for growth and maintenance needed to be data driven in terms of referrals, enrollment, demand, and need. I reviewed the informational resources that were available for Academy C to determine how they contributed to the success of students and of Academy C.

Physical Resources

Physical resources were crucial to the overall management of Academy C. In Academy C, physical resources refer to the distribution of the physical environment in order to assemble learning workstations and to set up laptops in the classroom for one-on-one student use. Physical resources played a key role in the attainment of the goals and objectives of Academy C. The cost incurred for the physical environment included the lease and upkeep of the building, technology costs, and furniture.

Table 3 depicts the procedures for evaluating the inputs: financial and human, informational, and physical resources expended between 2016 and 2019. I collected qualitative and quantitative data to determine if the inputs adequately supported the mission of Academy C. Findings were grouped in common themes based on the information obtained from the interviews of three district-level and six school-level leaders (see Appendices A-C).

Table 3

Matrix for Evaluating the Inputs of Academy C: What academic, behavioral, and social expenditures facilitate and impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

Mission: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

INPUT EVALUATION

INPUT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral, or social expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
How many people have been employed at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19	Findings from interviewee: 8 District- and School-Level Leaders			
What has been the cost of employees at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?	Findings from interviewee: 1 District-Level Leader			
What has been the cost of OdysseyWare in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?	Findings from interviewee: 2 District-Level Leader			

(continued)

INPUT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral, or social expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
What has been the cost of the informational resources of Academy C, such as the organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?	Findings from interviewee: 8 District- and School-Level Leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
How efficient and cost-effective Academy C uses its informal resources (electronic, audio-visual, physical form, hardware, software)?	Findings from interviewee: 8 District- and School-Level Leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
What has been the cost of physical resources (learning workstations, laptops, lease, upkeep of the building, technology costs, and furniture) at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?	Findings from interviewee: 8 District- and School-Level Leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	

Process Evaluation

Process evaluation refers to how an organization is operating its programs.

Implementation is a crucial phase in which the inputs are utilized in appropriate ways to achieve the desired product. Processes examine whether or not the established processes of the program are being followed. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) argued that evaluators should predict, assess, and observe irregularities in the plan or in its implementation, and then give feedback on how to execute improvement in the action plan. The process evaluation will help district-leaders and Academy C's school-level leader assess service delivery.

During this process phase, information such as details about program operation, quality of services provided, context and community in which the program is delivered, demographic information of program participants, and staffing and training was collected. Although district- and school-level leaders believed that the program was effective, without an ongoing evaluation plan, it was difficult to assess objectivity of the program. Developing a process evaluation plan provided the framework and served an important first step in the evaluation effort. The process evaluation provided an opportunity to explore all aspects of Academy C and enabled the district to investigate how the program was delivered, including alternative ways of providing program service, such as Tiers I, II and III. It was vital for Academy C to examine the program, specifically, how the program was administered and, ultimately, whether the program was unfolding as intended.

Table 4 details the process of collecting information about the physical resources. Information about the implementation of the program components was collected through

surveys and short answer responses. Themes from the surveys were considered to be a strong response when occurring five or more times; a moderate response when occurring three to four times; and a weak response when occurring one or two times.

Surveys were analyzed by determining central tendencies of responses by respondents. The results of the percentage of positive responses for each item was reviewed. Results were analyzed using triangulation to determine answers to the following questions: a) what academic, behavioral or social processes facilitated the attainment of the mission of Academy C; b) what academic, behavioral or social processes impeded the attainment of the mission of Academy C; and c) what three strategies are necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program's mission?

Table 4

Matrix for Evaluating the Processes of Academy C: What academic, behavioral, and social processes facilitate and impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

Mission: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

PROCESS EVALUATION

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondents (Who)	Did this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Did this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 1</u> On a scale of 1-4, How well are goals and strategies being executed at Academy C?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 2</u> On a scale of 1-4, How well are you utilizing appropriate strategies to achieve the mission of Academy C?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 3</u> On a scale of 1-4, How do you rate the quality of services to students at Academy C?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondents (Who)	Did this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Did this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 4</u> On a scale of 1-4, how do you rate the impact Tiers I, II, and III have on assisting students with required courses at Academy C?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 5</u> On a scale of 1-4, how do you rate the processes of Tiers I, II, and III in facilitating or impeding the mission of Academy C?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 6</u> On a scale of 1-4, How well are processes in Academy C organized and executed according to guidelines?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 7</u> On a scale of 1-4, how well are the programs and inputs (to address the needs of the school and needs of the students) being implemented as planned?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondents (Who)	Did this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Did this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 8</u> On a scale of 1-4, How well is Academy C using OdysseyWare according to guidelines?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 9</u> On a scale of 1-4, How would you rate the quality of OdysseyWare?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 10</u> On a scale of 1-4, how well, overall, is Academy C operating?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Short Response</u> What academic, behavioral or social processes facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
<u>Short Response</u> What academic, behavioral or social processes impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
<u>Short Response</u> What three strategies are necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program's mission?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff			

The process evaluation also determined whether the program was reaching targeted populations and whether both the number and frequency of program activities were adequate. The reasons for successful or unsuccessful performance were assessed in order to provide information for potential replication of successful strategies. Processes investigated how effectively the online curriculum is being implemented as well as the impact of the social skills training on improving the graduation rate and ultimately accomplishing the mission of Academy C. I also examined the impact Tiers I, II and III have on assisting students with completing the required courses for graduating. Particular attention was given to the amount of time students were able to achieve the desired outcome in each Tier. In evaluating the processes that facilitated or impeded the accomplishment of the mission of Academy C, I surveyed nine (9) teachers, six (6) counselors, five (5) social workers, and (5) support staff. The survey took approximately 15-30 minutes to complete. Names and identities remained anonymous for confidential purposes.

Product Evaluation

Lastly, product evaluation aids in identifying and assessing outcomes, those intended and unintended, short-term and long-term. Product evaluation also provides a platform for decision makers to stay focused on their goals and to gauge the effort's success in meeting targeted needs. The product information gathered from evaluating the program contains evidence about the effectiveness in attaining short- and long-range goals, and can also be used to compare with that of another program. Product evaluation assesses the outcomes of the selected inputs and processes (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). The product evaluation phase of this study was central in determining if the

curriculum, social skills training, and all inputs were helping to attain the mission of Academy C.

Product evaluation also collected information as to ascertain whether or not the intended goals of the program are being met. The question addressed was: “How effective has Academy C been in achieving its mission?” The increase in the number of students who graduated versus the number of students who dropped out or returned to their home school was determined through the information provided by Leader 8. Quantitative data from surveys, as well as qualitative data collected through interviews, were analyzed to measure the total effectiveness of the program. Identified, recurring themes from all sources were analyzed in narrative form. The validity of the data was determined through triangulation, comparison of findings from all sources, and determination of the strength of the identified themes. According to Creswell (2012), “Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories and themes from the “bottom up,” by organizing the data inductively into increasing more abstract units of information. This inductive process involves researchers working back and forth between themes and the data bases until they establish a comprehensive set of themes” (p.45). The inductive process helped me lessen the information into minimal topics (Creswell, 2012). Table 5 outlines the academic, behavioral, and social products that substantiated or fail to substantiate the mission of Academy C.

Table 5

Matrix for Evaluating the Products of Academy C: What academic, behavioral, and social products substantiate facilitate and impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

Mission: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

PRODUCT EVALUATION

PRODUCTS	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social product results substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social product results fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees:
Findings	Findings from interviewee: 8 District- and School-Level Leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
3-Year Graduation Rate: 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19	Findings from interviewee: 1 District-Level Leader Local report card			
3-Year Drop-out Rate: 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19	Findings from interviewee: 1 District-Level Leader Local report card			

Limited funding was needed to complete this program evaluation. Surveys were made accessible through an electronic mail service in a Google form. Email was also used to contact participants in order to set up individual interviews. An audio recorder was used to record each interview.

Participants

The target population for the program evaluation included district-level leaders, school level leaders, teachers, counselors, social workers, and support staff employed with District PNC for the past three years (2016-2019). An open-ended questionnaire was provided to allow interviewees the opportunity to provide detailed recommendations and critique. The results were coded and analyzed by the percentage of positive responses from each noted theme. Individual interviews were conducted with three district-level leaders and six school-level leaders. Participants were given the interview questions prior to the interview. Interactions were recorded and transcribed. Responses were coded and sorted according to categories or themes so that patterns could be ascertained.

Methodological triangulation was used by analyzing the collected data from multiple sources. Common themes, patterns, and relationships were identified and coded. Results were tabulated using frequency tables from data collected through interviews and surveys. Data was analyzed by reviewing dominant themes that became evident from various sources and procedures. The purpose of analytical interpretation was to balance themes against data files (Creswell, 2013). Narrative form was used to disseminate all findings.

Table 6 illustrates the overall organization of information and data to be collected. The chart is based on the research of Jody Fitzpatrick, James Sanders and Blaine R. Worthens (2011), *Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines*. Findings from the data analysis in the context, input, process, and product of the CIPP will help me evaluate if Academy C is achieving its mission.

Table 6

Matrix Procedures for Evaluating the Product of Academy C: What academic, behavioral or social practices substantiate or fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

(Organization of Information of the CIPP Evaluation)

Mission Statement: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

	Variables for measures	Data Collection Method: Source of Data? Instrument Used?	Sampling Procedures: Who Will Be Interviewed/S urveyed and Why? What Quantitative Data Will Be Collected?	Procedures for Data Analysis	Findings/ Common Themes:	Based on Findings from Data Analysis, is the Alternative Program Attaining the Mission of Academy C
Context:						
What are the needs of Academy C?	Academic Behavioral Social	One-to-One interview	3 District- Level Leaders 6 School- Level Leaders	Research questions		
What are the needs of the students?	Academic Behavioral Social	One-to-One interview		Research questions		
Input:						
Strategies being implemented by the school district to address needs and attain mission.	Costs: Financial inputs	One-to-One interview	3 District- Level Leaders 6 School- Level Leaders	Research questions		
Process:						
Are programs and inputs (to address needs school and needs of students) being implemented as planned?	Academic: Environmen t Behavior: Environmen t Social: Structural	Review of historical data Survey	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	Research questions		

(continued)

	Variables for measures	Data Collection Method: Source of Data? Instrument Used?	Sampling Procedures: Who Will Be Interviewed/S urveyed and Why? What Quantitative Data Will Be Collected?	Procedures for Data Analysis	Findings/ Common Themes:	Based on Findings from Data Analysis, is the Alternative Program Attaining the Mission of Academy C
Product: How well are the needs of alternative programs and the needs of students being addressed?	Graduation rate, number of dropouts, of past three years,	Historical data	Review of historical data 3 District- Level Leaders 6 School- Level Leaders	Research questions		

Data Analysis

As the program evaluator, I maintained an impartial and unbiased position. Table 7 depicts the data collection procedure, classified by CIPP typology. The findings in each category were summarized and, in many cases, further authenticated through the voices of the participants. Participants were able to review the summarization and analysis of interviews in order to ensure that the data correctly reflects the intent of their message.

Table 7*Methodology Matrix for CIPP Data Collection*

Mission: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

CONTEXT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? (<i>Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes</i>)	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? (<i>Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.</i>)	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
What specific student services promote/ impede mission attainment?	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 6 School-level leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
What additional student services are needed for mission attainment?	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 6 School-level leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
What educational practices or strategies support the mission attainment?	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 6 School-level leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
List educational practices that need to be implemented in order to attain its mission				

(continued)

CONTEXT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? (<i>Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes</i>)	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? (<i>Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.</i>)	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
What are the academic, behavior, and social strengths that help accomplish the mission?	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 6 School-level leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
What are the academic, behavior, and social challenges to mission attainment	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 6 School-level leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
District graduation rate and dropout data	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years NCDPI website Local report card			
Academy C graduation rate and dropout data	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years NCDPI website Local report card			

(continued)

CONTEXT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? (<i>Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes</i>)	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? (<i>Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.</i>)	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Number graduated at base school after attending Academy C	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years Local report card			
Number graduated at Academy C	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years Local report card			
Discipline referrals at Academy C	Findings from public domain data from past 3 years Local report card			
INPUT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? (<i>Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes</i>)	What academic, behavioral or social expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? (<i>Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.</i>)	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
How many people have been employed at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 5 School-level leaders			

(continued)

INPUT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
What has been the cost of employees at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017- 18, and 2018- 19?	Findings from interviewee: 1 District-level leader			
What has been the cost of OdysseyWare in 20-16-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?	Findings from interviewee: 1 District-level leader			
What has been the cost of the informational resources of Academy C, such as the organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 5 School-level leaders			
How efficient and cost- effective Academy C uses its informal resources (electronic, audio-visual, physical form, hardware, software)?	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 5 School-level leaders			

(continued)

INPUT	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
What has been the cost of physical resources (learning workstations, laptops, lease, upkeep of the building, technology costs, and furniture) at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017- 18, and 2018- 19?	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 5 School-level leaders			
PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondents (Who)	What academic, behavioral, and social process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 1</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How well are goals and strategies being executed at Academy C?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondents (Who)	What academic, behavioral, and social process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 2</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How well are you utilizing appropriate strategies to achieve the mission of Academy C?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 3</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How do you rate the quality of services to students at Academy C?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 4</u> On a scale of 1- 4, how do you rate the impact Tiers I, II, and III have on assisting students with required courses at Academy C?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 5</u> On a scale of 1- 4, how do you rate the processes of Tiers I, II, and III in facilitating or impeding the mission of Academy C?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondents (Who)	What academic, behavioral, and social process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 6</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How well are processes in Academy C organized and executed according to guidelines?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 7</u> On a scale of 1- 4, how well are the programs and inputs (to address the needs of the school and needs of the students) being implemented as planned?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 8</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How well is Academy C using OdysseyWare according to guidelines?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 9</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How would you rate the quality of OdysseyWare?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondents (Who)	What academic, behavioral, and social process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 10</u> On a scale of 1- 4, how well, overall, is Academy C operating?	9 Teachers, 6 Counselors 5 Social Workers 5 Support Staff	4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Short Response</u> What academic, behavioral or social processes facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? Environment (behaviors)	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
<u>Short Response</u> What academic, behavioral or social processes impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? Environment (behaviors)	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
<u>Short Response</u> What three strategies are necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program's mission?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	

(continued)

PRODUCT	Interviewee and Respondents (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social product results substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social product results fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees and respondents:
	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 6 School-level leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 6 School-level leaders	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	Academic: Behavioral: Social:	
Academy C 3-Year Graduation Rate 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19	Findings from interviewee: District-level leaders Review of historical data			
Academy C 3-Year Drop-out Rate 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19	Findings from interviewee: 3 District-level leaders 6 School-level leaders Review of historical data			

Summary of the Methodology

To evaluate the alternative educational program, the context, input, process, and product (CIPP) evaluation model was used. Zhang et. al. (2011) believed that “the CIPP evaluation model has been used to evaluate numerous education projects and entities” (p.


61). Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) contended that the CIPP model is a “comprehensive framework for conducting formative and summative evaluations of projects, personnel, products, organizations, and evaluation systems” (p. 325). Even though the intent of this evaluation was formative, the information gathered has the potential to be used for summative evaluations by the district. The results of the study will add to the body of knowledge surrounding the effectiveness of Academy C in fulfilling its mission and in preventing at-risk students from dropping out. Procedures and strategies identified as favorable in increasing the number of at-risk students who graduate should be reviewed and replicated in the future as well as in systems faced with similar difficulties. Those procedures and strategies shown to be ineffective or detrimental to preventing students from dropping out are recommended for elimination or revision in an effort to improve the attainment of the mission of Academy C. Such improvements may reduce operational costs, improve student learning and achievement, and ensure that quality teachers are retained for the instruction of future students. The ultimate purpose of this evaluation was not only to confirm, but to enhance the program evaluated.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of an alternative educational program in an eastern North Carolina from 2016 to 2019 to determine the effectiveness of the program for at-risk students in meeting its stated mission. Because of the state and federal guidelines to decrease school dropout rates, reduce school disruption, and increase school completion rate (NCLB, 2002), outcome measures were critical to determine program results. However, because Academy C, the alternative program under study had never been evaluated, the effectiveness of the program in meeting its mission and goals was unknown.

After presenting the introduction of the study, Chapter Two provided theories on mission statements, history of alternative educational programs, types of alternative educational programs, characteristics of successful alternative educational programs, and the future of alternative educational programs. Chapter Three described the CIPP (context, input, process, and product) model used during the evaluation process.

Sample

In the data collection process, District PNC's district- and school-level leaders were asked to participate in an open-end interview questionnaire because they were the ones who could provide the most reliable information about the alternative educational program. The purpose of the study, including the informed consent (See Appendix ) , was electronically emailed to the participants. Each participant was asked to sign the informed consent form, electronically email it back to me with their signature, and schedule a date and time for the interview. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted via Zoom. Ten administrators were electronically emailed

information about the purpose of the study and a request to assist in the data collecting process with a 90% response rate. Nine out of ten leaders consented to the interview. One leader was unavailable because the position was vacant at the time of this study. The open-ended interview questionnaire allowed me an opportunity to access data and provided a rich content for analysis. Also, the interviews provided for conversation with the participants in an exploration of improving the program. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for common themes. Themes from the interviews were considered to be a strong response when occurring five or more times; a moderate response when occurring three to four times; and a weak response when occurring one or two times. The themes served as the basis for the context, input, process, and product evaluations.

Certified and classified staff from the traditional high schools and from Academy C participated in a survey (See Appendix ____) with an 83% (25 out of 30) response rate. The purpose of the study, including the informed consent (See Appendix ____), and survey made accessible in Google form were electronically emailed to the respondents. Respondents were required to submit their email address on the Google form to serve as their consent to participate in the study. If participants did not respond to the survey, they were not included in this study. Due to anonymity and confidentiality, demographic and identifying information of each respondent were not disclosed. Respondents who completed the survey were chosen because they were the individuals who were able to provide the most reliable information regarding the performance of Academy C as it relates to the mission and students earning a high school diploma.

Surveys were analyzed by determining central tendencies of responses by respondents. The results of the percentage of positive responses for each item was reviewed and coded for common themes. The themes served as the basis for the process evaluation. In addition, participants of the survey were asked to respond to three short answer questions about the mission of Academy C. Results were analyzed using triangulation to determine answers to questions such as: (a) Which educational practices are contributing to the achievement of the program's mission, according to the perception of alternative educational program teachers and staff supports? (b) Which practices are hindering the attainment of the program's mission, according to the perception of alternative educational program teachers and support staff? (c) What three strategies are necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program's mission?

The purpose of this program evaluation was to identify the extent to which Academy C is achieving its stated mission, "to empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life and to give them a second chance to succeed" (District PNC, 2019d). This study sought the answers to the following research questions:

1. What academic, behavioral, and social practices facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
2. What academic, behavioral or social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

Chapter Four presents the data that were gathered, and the results are displayed in the charts according to the four components of the CIPP model. Data were derived from three sources: open-ended interview questionnaires with district-level and high school-level leaders, an electronic survey given to select certified staff at the high schools and at

Academy C, and historical documentations regarding the alternative educational program provided by the site administrator. Interviews provided more detailed and descriptive information about the same topics in the survey questions. The interview and survey questions were aligned to the research questions.

Context Evaluation

Context Evaluation

Context is the first component of the CIPP model for a program evaluation. It provided planning decisions by identifying unmet needs, unused opportunities and underlying problems that prevented the needs from being met or revealed opportunities available that were not being used. In addition, the context evaluation provided information about the strengths and weaknesses of the program to improve its function for growth and sustainability. In order to effectively evaluate the alternative educational program, it was important to have a clear understanding of the rationale for the mission of Academy C. In addition, it was necessary to understand participants' perceptions of the resources, needs, and problem background to determine if the academics, behavioral, and social practices that facilitate or impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C. Therefore, I organized interviews with district- and school-level leaders, and the following guiding questions were used in the context evaluation:

1. What academic, behavioral, or social practices facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
2. What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

The majority of the responses for the context evaluation were gathered through a Zoom format due to the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the interviews. At the onset of each interview, I discussed the mission of Academy C with each participant. According to district leaders, Academy C has evolved over the past eight years. It was initially implemented to prevent students from dropping out of school. Later, its focus was on students recovering credits from failed courses in order to graduate with their

cohort and prevent them from dropping out. In order to determine the academic practices that facilitated the attainment of the mission of Academy C, I interviewed eight district- and school-level leaders. One school-level leader was invited to interview, but did not respond to the invitation after multiple attempts.

Facilitate the Attainment of the Mission

From data collected in response to research question one, what academic, behavioral, and social practices facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C, three themes emerged: small class size, OdysseyWare, and the IMPACT social skills period. These themes were an integral part of Academy C fulfilling its mission “to empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life and to have a second chance to succeed” (District PNC, 2019d).

Small Class Size (Academic). Small class sizes was a high priority academic practice that facilitated the mission of Academy C. Eight out of the eight (100%) leaders agreed that the small class size allowed for more one-to-one interaction between the teacher and student in order to complete the necessary courses for credit. The small class size made it easier for the students to obtain more personalized instruction and one-to-one assistance. Leader 3 indicated that Academy C is “a much smaller setting compared to the settings at the high schools where there are 25-30 students in a class.” He noted that Academy C has approximately six or seven students for every staff person. The smaller environment also provided more teaching and learning opportunities with the students. The “majority of the time, students are already behind academically when they are referred to Academy C,” explained Leader 1 during the interview. Leader 4 contended that having the small group instruction helped close the academic achievement gap.

OdysseyWare Software (Academic). Five leaders (63%) believed that OdysseyWare is a method to help students with credit recovery; however, two leaders also contended that there is a need for a better software program. Through OdysseyWare, students are able to complete their failed course while at the same time, take other courses needed for first time credit. OdysseyWare also provides an opportunity for students to graduate with a 22-credit diploma with their four year or five year cohort. This diploma allows students to attend a two-year college or to complete a two-year college then transfer to a four-year university if they desire to continue their education.

When interviewing district leaders, they indicated that a new online educational software program was introduced in the Fall 2020 called, Edgenuity. This program consists of career and technical education courses not currently available with OdysseyWare. At the writing of this study, OdysseyWare was phased out at the end of the Fall 2020 semester as explained by a district-level leader.

IMPACT Social Skills Period (Behavioral/Social). According to the site administrator of the alternative program, IMPACT stands for “Individuals Making Personal Addjustments to Change Things.” According to the policy, it is an embedded support system for every student at Academy C. The IMPACT period is held daily for 30 minutes with approximately five to six students in a group at a time. It is also designed so that each student has a staff member who advocates and monitors his or her academic and behavioral progress during their time at Academy C. Students must participate in the IMPACT period to meet the goals of the program. Topics discussed include study skills, organizational skills, note taking, interest inventories, career and college exploration, service learning, interview skills, resume writing, scholarship opportunities, leadership

development, team building, and the behavior that contributed to them being referred to Academy C. The Total Responsible Person curriculum is used at times during the IMPACT period.

All eight (100%) of the leaders interviewed agreed that the IMPACT period is vital to carrying out the mission of Academy C and students' success when they return to their home school. Leader 1 felt that the IMPACT period is an opportunity to implement SEL in order to help students with life stresses and issues. Leader 7 said that the IMPACT period is beneficial because it "focuses on life experiences. The students need to learn how to work in the modern world. They are able to learn some skills for life after high school, such as proper etiquettes, financial responsibilities, and how to not get ripped off. This will help prepare them for the future." One benefit of the IMPACT period, as told by Leader 7, is that not only do students discuss the behavior that contributed to their referral to Academy C, but also learn replacement behaviors to prevent them from being referred again once they are able to return to their home school. For students who graduate, the goal of the IMPACT period is to teach life skills that will help prevent them from engaging in negative and inappropriate behaviors; thus, preventing criminal activity. Another benefit of the IMPACT period four out of eight (50%) interviewees believed is also an integral part of the social practices is family engagement. From the perception of the leaders, when parents are engaged in their students' school lives, students have the home support and knowledge they need to not only finish their assignments, but also develop a lifelong love of learning. They also felt that the more the parents involved in their students' education, the better motivation, behavior, and grades become. Leaders 1 and 2 pointed out that Academy C should be a place where students can go and feel safe.

Impede the Attainment of the Mission

From data collected in response to research question two, what academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the mission of Academy C, several themes emerged. The academic practices that materialized from the interviews included the 1) usage of OdysseyWare, 2) program's location, 3) additional staff, and 4) professional development. The behavioral practices that have negatively impacted the mission of Academy C are 1) policies and procedures, 2) students' motivation, and 3) gang activity. The social practices that impede the mission of the program from the perception of the interviewees are the lack of social-emotional learning and mental health services.

Usage of OdysseyWare (Academic). One academic impediment to attaining the mission is the way OdysseyWare is being used in the program. Five out of eight (63%) leaders agreed that OdysseyWare is not being completed by the students to standards. It is interesting to note that four of the interviewees not only believed that OdysseyWare is a good program to help students recover credit; but they also stated that OdysseyWare is not being utilized with fidelity. Leader 1 indicated that "students lack the skills needed to get the most out of OdysseyWare. Over the years, Academy C has changed its online educational software from Ed Options to OdysseyWare, and is now implementing a new software called Edgenuity. In an interview with Leader 4, he believed that "some classes OdysseyWare offers are not well-suited for online learning." With OdysseyWare, interviewees felt that students are not completing and not mastering the course content. Leader 3 believed that, "Students need more accountability to complete the courses in OdysseyWare." Leader 5 questioned, "If the students were mastering the course content or just completing the course to get the credit?" To complete a course, it often takes

students all school year rather than a semester. The new program, Edgenuity, has career-technical courses in which the other software do not have. Other software, such as Ed Options and OdysseyWare have been a major challenge for the program because students were not able to earn 28 credits if they remained at Academy C until they graduated. At the time of this study, when a student graduated, they received a 22-credit diploma that they can use to enroll in a community college, but not a four-year college or university regardless of their grade-point average (GPA).

Location (Academic). The centralized location of Academy C creates an impediment to its mission because many students live far away from its location. This makes it impossible for them to walk to school and even challenging if families do not have reliable transportation. Although Academy C provides transportation, the amount of time students spend riding the bus to school and home is overwhelming as told by interviewees. Two leaders felt that Academy C is too far from many of the students' home environment. In an interview with Leader 2 he stated, "all students in the county who are referred to Academy C must go to one centralized location. This makes it more challenging for some of the students to attend because they live too far from where the alternative program is located." He further argued that "there are times when students are on the bus for two hours before they get to Academy C. Some students leave their house at 5:30am or 6:00am to ride the bus just to get to Academy C by 8:00am." It was noted that buses go several places throughout the district in order to transport students to the alternative program.

Additional Staff (Academic). The third academic practice all eight (100%) interviewees believed hinder Academy C's mission is the lack of an additional

administrator and limited staff. While there is currently one principal with enormous responsibilities, there is a need for an assistant principal. Leader 1 mentioned that “The assistant principal could play an integral role in the intake and exit processes, student accountability, and program structure.” Leader 3 cited that, “More teachers, teacher assistants, and support staff are needed to provide one-to-one instruction for students.” Many interviewees felt that one-to-one student-teacher interaction will help set high expectations for the students. For this reason, the interviewees believed that more staff is needed for the academic success of students at Academy C. According to two leaders interviewed, teachers need enough resources to provide direct instruction and remediation to students in order to help them earn course credits.” Leader 8 believed that, “having more one-to-one student-teacher interaction will allow students the opportunity for mastery subject areas. As Leader 3 stated, “District PNC needs to place more staff at Academy C” in order to attain its stated mission by giving the students “a second chance to succeed.”

The lack of additional staff also limits the communication and support students need as well as the overall functioning of Academy C. All eight interviewees believed that students benefit from having a trusted staff member whom they can communicate with about school and home issues. Leader 4 indicated that “the open communication between the student and teacher would motivate students to do better academically and behaviorally.” Leader 2 stated that, “many times students do not have that trusted adult they can talk to about life stresses; therefore, having a trusted adult at Academy C will help the students open up about issues honestly.”

Professional Development (Academic). The fourth academic practice that impedes the mission of Academy C is a failure to train teachers how to provide instruction using online educational software, how to work with students with disabilities, and how to work with a diverse population in an alternative educational setting. According to two leaders, one of the reasons students lack direct instruction is because they are on the computer completing OdysseyWare courses for the majority of time they are at the alternative program even when they do not understand the content or the lesson. Leader 2 contended that students need to learn how to appropriately complete online courses. He stated that, “many students complete the classes by simply clicking A, B, C, or D, and do not really understand the content. Then, the questions that are incorrect are reset by the teachers to give the students other opportunities to make a 60 or better.” Students are often behind academically because they are not trained on how to use OdysseyWare, explained Leader 3. Each day while at Academy C many students fail to complete the course(s) before their term ends. Students are allowed to self-pace which can lead to them returning to their home school unprepared for face-to-face instruction, and they will oftentimes exhibit the same behaviors in their home school that contributed to them being referred to the alternative program. In an interview with Leader 2, he stressed that “this format does not benefit the students because they need help in learning how to correctly complete the online courses and to master its content. Teachers should be trained on how to use OdysseyWare with fidelity and how to teach students the content through online means.” Oftentimes, teachers are assigned an online course regardless of whether they are licensed to teach in that content area or not. Teacher training, especially in working with students with disabilities, is also a major obstacle and hinders Academy

C's mission as reported by three leaders. Leader 5 believed that "teachers can benefit from knowing the major components of a student's IEP, such as the students' present level of performance, annual goals, specially designed instruction, classroom accommodations and behavior intervention plan." In order to effectively provide instruction to students with disabilities, it is necessary for teachers to know how to meet the students' educational needs. One of the reasons for insufficient training for teachers, according to two interviewees, is the lack of resources and funding. According to Guthrie (1996), to improve equity and instruction efficiency, districts should allocate more funding of resources to schools based on need rather than staffing positions and allotments contributed to school size. The Academy can then determine what inputs are needed to specify the training and resources available to the teachers to obtain its mission.

Policies and Procedures (Behavioral). The first behavioral practice that impedes the mission of Academy C is the current policies and procedures. Leader 4 explained that "revising the policies and procedures from the referral process to the exiting of students from the program" is vital because "the revisions will help make academic and behavioral changes within the program." Leader 5 reported that it will also "help students learn positive behaviors rather than continuing to exhibit behaviors they were accustomed to displaying at their home school." Three of the eight interviewees felt that the procedures used to refer a student to Academy C is a good method, but it needs to be refined due to the extensive length of time students must wait for the intake meeting. The interviewees also noted that the intake and exit processes are other policies and procedures that will facilitate the mission of Academy C much better when it is refined. Leader 8 explained that "from the intake meeting until the student graduates or returns to their home school is

the foundation of the program's mission." Therefore, the parent(s) and the student are required to attend the intake meeting. At this meeting the principal discusses the mission of the alternative program and the expected outcome of the program. As Leader 8 puts it, "It gives the staff time to establish a rapport with the parent and student so that the student can have a smooth transition into the alternative program." Likewise, the exit meeting is a vital process for when students meet the requirements for graduation or are able to return to his or her home school. Leader 5 explained the procedure of the exit meeting. He stated that "during the meeting Academy C's principal reviews the students' courses taken and completed, grades, discipline report, if any, and whether or not the student has met the criteria to graduate or to return to their home school." He further pointed out that "before students return to their home school, they should be prepared and know what is expected of them." At least five interviewees indicated that appropriate transitioning to the alternative program and to the home school are two of the most important aspects of the Academy C's procedures, but currently is lacking in its structure. Leader 5 suggested a point system to denote how students are progressing behaviorally. He stated, "For example, each day students start off with ten points. When they violate rules then they lose points. The goal would be to have a certain number of points in order to be considered for transitioning back to their high school after the term has ended. If they do not have the appropriate points then they will have to stay until they have learned appropriate or acceptable behaviors. This gives the student accountability and autonomy in their behaviors." As indicated by four out of eight leaders, the consistency in the Code of Conduct and how behaviors are handled are other policies and procedures that need to be reviewed and revised. Even though Academy C is an alternative program, there still

should be set rules and expectations as well as consequences if those expectations are not followed. Leader 2 believed that the behavioral expectations should be enforced more. According to Leader 3, behavior expectations must be raised so that the students will be better prepared to return to their home school. He also believed that Academy C “should have a militant style; more of a no nonsense approach.” All eight of the leaders felt that appropriate behaviors are necessary before students re-enter their home school; otherwise, they will repeat the same behaviors, and return to the alternative program.

Student Motivation (Behavioral). A second behavioral practice that hinders the mission of Academy C, according to leaders, is a lack of student motivation. Leader 4 stated that “most of the time students who are referred [to Academy C] are not motivated to succeed academically or even behaviorally. Therefore, it makes it challenging to get students to complete the courses and assignments.” Leader 1 contended that “students need to be motivated to learn, and complete courses to earn a high school diploma. They need to value education. Many students come from homes in which education is not valued or is not the main focus for the home.” Yet, Leader 3 noted that there are some students who are in homes in which the main focus is getting the next meal or paying rent so they can have somewhere to stay. He stated that students, “need to be able to see the benefits of school, obtaining their high school diploma; just education period.” The lack of student motivation stems from the students being non-compliant to expectations and directives.

When students do not adhere to the behavior expectations and goals, it creates a chaotic environment. Leader 2 felt that students need to “buy into” the program and realize that Academy C is designed to help them succeed in high school and after they

graduate. At least two leaders felt that students must be motivated to maintain appropriate behaviors. Leader 3 believed that students' behavior will not change unless the students truly want to change. The students' lack of motivation causes behaviors to manifest at times. Leader 4 also believed that "more students could be successful in the program if they do not follow the crowd. Most of the time when students get into trouble, it is because they are following the crowd; they are right there in the mix." Based on the consensus of the interviewees, when students are motivated, the majority of them complete their courses and assignments, and earn the necessary credits to graduate. According to Aron (2006), successful programs have a clear focus on academic learning that combines high academic standards with high behavioral expectations.

Gang Activity (Behavioral). The third behavioral practice that impedes the mission of Academy C according to leaders interviewed is gang activity. At least four leaders contended that gang activity among the students prevents the "second chance" component of the mission from being fulfilled. Because of a lack of adequate space, oftentimes rivalry gang members are present in the same classroom. Leader 7 noted that students who identify as gang members have to work too close together, which creates friction between them. Staff at Academy C makes every attempt to keep rivalry gang members separated to avoid major disruptions in the school environment. However, it becomes difficult to manage the student behavior, especially when there is a lack of space and they are short-staffed. In an interview with Leader 8, he stated that "there are gang members from different sets all in one program and classroom. We try to keep the ones we know are high volume separated, but that doesn't always happen." Three leaders also emphasized that many times students who are in rivalry gangs are referred and accepted

to Academy C, and it becomes cumbersome to keep the groups separate or to avoid altercations. Leader 8 said that oftentimes, gang members are transitioned to Tier II or Tier III because they refuse to comply with the behavioral expectations. Some of the expectations include, but is not limited to a) refraining from wearing red attire (prohibited), b) refrain from bringing electronic devices, and c) random searches upon arriving. From the interviewee's perspective, some students change the dynamics of the program when they attend. This causes a major setback in the progress Academy C makes with other students who really want to learn, be able to return to their home school, or even graduate. At least four interviewees agreed that gang activity really hinders Academy C from fulfilling its mission. They believed that gang activity is very prevalent within the program, and it takes the focus off that "second chance" at school or even life.

Social-Emotional Learning (Social). When the leaders were asked, "What social practices impede the mission of Academy C?" All eight of the leaders stated that social-emotional learning, a lack of counselors and therapists trained in mental health issues, and mental health services availability in the program were significant concerns that need to be addressed in order to assist students in these areas. The leaders continued to stress that the lack of social-emotional learning within the program has hindered its mission from being fulfilled. Three leaders agreed that social-emotional learning needs to be coupled with trained social workers, counselors, and/or therapists and family engagement. This will help students have a better opportunity to return to their home school or graduate with the necessary skills to be successful in other environments.

At the time of these interviews, the alternative educational program was not implementing the IMPACT period consistently with the students. While it was noted that

Academy C stated that there is an IMPACT period, interviewees agreed that it is not utilized on a daily basis. Leader 2 stated that, “Academy C needs to construct a follow up plan on how to make use of the IMPACT period to improve student behaviors.” Leader 7 also pointed out that the IMPACT period is an opportunity for students to “discuss the behaviors that contributed to them being referred to the alternative program. Each session is approximately 30 minutes. The students need the SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) component to help them with life stresses and issues.” In an interview with Leader 5, he reported that “last school year before COVID-19, other leaders and I had the opportunity to create a SEL team. We were getting prepared to present our matrix and rating scales to district leaders to be implemented throughout the schools. This would have allowed each school to address SEL issues with students and their families or even the staff. We were never able to fully implement SEL within the schools or alternative program.” Leader 4 explained the importance of SEL in the alternative program and gave a reason why its mission is being hindered. He said, “There needs to be conversations about the alternative program and district-level leaders. We need to stop the gap between the number of racial groups, especially blacks, that are being referred and are attending Academy C. By far, there are more blacks being suspended, more blacks being referred to Academy C, and more blacks being admitted. We need to investigate that to see why? Once we locate potential errors, then we, as a school and as a district, can help those students in needed areas. That’s the importance of the SEL piece.” The overall conclusion of SEL at Academy C, according to interviewees, is that the students lack the social-emotional skills needed to help them be successful. Unfortunately, many of the students have known

and unknown mental health challenges, in which the SEL component will help Academy C locate the needs of each student referred there.

Mental Health Services (Social). Mental health services was a huge topic in the interviews and survey of the participants. Five out of eight (63%) leaders agreed that Academy C should provide a psychological evaluation for each student upon entering. Leader 7 recommended that Academy C outsource the service from a mental health agency. He also believed that Academy C should invest in more of the behavior sciences for their students. This is the importance of the need for counselors to be trained to deal with the significant behavior of the students. It was noted by one interviewee that the students' behavior and emotional needs must be met and more individualized. Leader 1 also believed that individual and group counseling can help decrease many of the behaviors exhibited by the students.

Table 8 highlights the academic, behavioral, and social practices that either facilitated or impeded the mission of Academy C based on the perception of select participants. Common themes are listed in the summary of findings from all participants.

Table 8*Methodology Matrix for CIPP Data Collection: Context Evaluation*

Mission: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

CONTEXT	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Interviewee (Who)			
Findings from interviewee:			<i>(Common Themes)</i>
Leader 1	<u>Leader 1</u> Facilitate (academic): *Small class sizes *OdysseyWare (earning credits) *Additional staff Facilitate (behavioral): *Policies and procedures *Student-staff relationship building Facilitate (social): *IMPACT social skills time	<u>Leader 1</u> Impede (academic): *Transitioning to home school *Academically behind; increased behaviors *Not enough staff *Location; Lack of space *Vocational program; Co-op experience *Limited student admission *Vocational program; CTE courses offered Impede (behavioral): *Behavior expectations and goals not enforced *Social-emotional learning *Family engagement *Lack of space *Gang activity Impede (social): *Social-emotional learning *Family engagement *Mental health services	<u>Facilitate Mission:</u> Academic *Small class size *OdysseyWare Behavioral *Impact social skills time Social *Impact social skills times <u>Impede Mission:</u> Academic *Usage of OdysseyWare *Program's location *Additional staff Behavioral *Policies/procedures *Students' motivation *Gang activity Social *Lack of SEL *Lack of mental health services

(continued)

CONTEXT	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Interviewee (Who)			
Leader 2	<p><u>Leader 2</u> Facilitate (academic): *OdysseyWare (course completion for graduation) *One-to-one interaction with student/staff *Additional staff (need for full time administrator)</p> <p>Facilitate (behavioral): *One-to-one interaction with student/staff *Student-Teachers engagement *Positive behaviors emphasized *Student motivation</p> <p>Social: *Counselors and social workers trained in SEL and mental health services</p>	<p><u>Leader 2</u> Impede (academic): *Not enough staff *Lack of funding *Policies/procedures *Need for CTE teachers and courses *Lack of skills needed for OW *Need another administrator *Remediation for academics *Direct instruction *Trained in exceptional children</p> <p>Impede (behavioral): *Lack of therapists/counselors *Mental health services *Access to one-to-one and group counseling (students) *ACES training for staff</p> <p>Impede (social): *Lack of therapists/counselors *Mental health services *Lack social-emotional learning</p>	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <p><u>Facilitate Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Small class size *OdysseyWare</p> <p>Behavioral *Impact social skills time</p> <p>Social *Impact social skills times</p> <p><u>Impede Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Usage of OdysseyWare *Program's location *Additional staff</p> <p>Behavioral *Policies/procedures *Students' motivation *Gang activity</p> <p>Social *Lack of SEL *Lack of mental</p>

(continued)

CONTEXT	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Interviewee (Who)			
Leader 3	<p><u>Leader 3</u> Facilitate (academic): *Small environment *Small ratio of student/teacher *Better program than OW *OW good for recovering credits; not good for first time courses</p> <p>Facilitate (behavioral): *Behavior expectations not enforced *Program environment mimics home environment</p> <p>Facilitate (social): *Family engagement *Community center (similar) *Teacher training on social-emotional learning</p>	<p><u>Leader 3</u> Impede (academic): *More web-based *Location (centralized) *Bus ride to school too long *Using OW with fidelity *Lack of communication between home school and Academy C *Training for OW (students)</p> <p>Impede (behavioral): *Student compliance issues *Psychological evaluations *Training for teachers on identifying negative student behaviors; intervention strategies *Psychological evaluation</p> <p>Impede (social): *Liaison (bridge between student-school-home) *Psychological evaluations *Staff training on dealing with behaviors</p>	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <p><u>Facilitate Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Small class size *OdysseyWare</p> <p>Behavioral *Impact social skills time</p> <p>Social *Impact social skills times</p> <p><u>Impede Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Usage of OdysseyWare *Program's location *Additional staff</p> <p>Behavioral *Policies/procedures *Students' motivation *Gang activity</p> <p>Social *Lack of SEL *Lack of mental health services</p>

(continued)

CONTEXT	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Interviewee (Who)			
Leader 4	<p><u>Leader 4</u> Facilitate (academic): *Staff to assist students with academics *Educational resources *More staff *Need structure *Have a strong leadership *Teacher training in content subjects</p> <p>Facilitate (behavioral): *Transition from Academy C to home school *Refine rules and regulations</p> <p>Facilitate (social): *Social skills taught effectively *Social-emotional learning *Home environment (need stability) *Social-emotional learning *Militant, but loving environment *Social-emotional learning *Militant, but loving environment</p>	<p><u>Leader 4</u> Impede (academic): *Transition from homeschool to Academy C *Lack of motivation to be at Academy C *More accountability and structure *Lack of resources *Need for more teachers *Lack direct instruction *Lack of resources *Need for more teachers *Lack direct instruction</p> <p>Impede (behavioral): *Students exited from program to early *No input from homeschool *Students return back to Academy C for same behaviors *Increase in suspension rate at home school</p> <p>Impede (social): *No counselor or social worker trained in social-emotional learning *Family engagement</p>	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <p><u>Facilitate Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Small class size *OdysseyWare</p> <p>Behavioral *Impact social skills time</p> <p>Social *Impact social skills times</p> <p><u>Impede Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Usage of OdysseyWare *Program's location *Additional staff</p> <p>Behavioral *Policies/procedures *Students' motivation *Gang activity</p> <p>Social *Lack of SEL *Lack of mental health services</p>

(continued)

CONTEXT	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Interviewee (Who)			
Leader 5	<p><u>Leader 5</u> Facilitate (academic): *Smaller environment *OdysseyWare</p> <p>Facilitate (behavioral): *Student motivation *Peer influence *Family engagement</p> <p>Facilitate (social): *Social-emotional learning *Trained counselors and social workers in social-emotional, mental health, and family stressors *ACES program *Close gap between racial groups *Social-emotional learning</p>	<p><u>Leader 5</u> Impede (academic): *Selective about who gets admitted *Increase suspension rate at home school</p> <p>Impede (behavioral): *Lack of student motivation *Negative peer influence *Poor student-staff relationship</p> <p>Impede (social): *Need a true alternative school *More funding</p>	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <p><u>Facilitate Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Small class size *OdysseyWare</p> <p>Behavioral *Impact social skills time</p> <p>Social *Impact social skills times</p> <p><u>Impede Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Usage of OdysseyWare *Program's location *Additional staff</p> <p>Behavioral *Policies/procedures *Students' motivation *Gang activity</p> <p>Social *Lack of SEL *Lack of mental health services</p>

(continues)

CONTEXT	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Interviewee (Who)			
Leader 6	<p><u>Leader 6</u></p> <p>Facilitate (academic):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Student accountability in completing OdysseyWare *OdysseyWare with fidelity *Staff training on OW <p>Facilitate (behavioral):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Consistency with Code of Conduct *Set rules and expectations <p>Facilitate (social):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Social-emotional learning *Family engagement 	<p><u>Leader 6:</u></p> <p>Impede (academic):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Failure to complete OW courses by end of term *New location *Limited student admission *Lack of adequate space <p>Impede (behavioral):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Lack of student behavior improvements *Gang activity; (takes the focus off “second chance”) <p>Impede (social):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Social-emotional learning 	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <p>Facilitate Mission:</p> <p>Academic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Small class size *OdysseyWare <p>Behavioral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Impact social skills time <p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Impact social skills times <p><u>Impede Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Usage of OdysseyWare *Program’s location *Additional staff <p>Behavioral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Policies/procedures *Students’ motivation *Gang activity <p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Lack of SEL *Lack of mental health services
Leader 7	<u>Leader 7</u> No response from this leader	<u>Leader 7</u> No response from this leader	<u>Leader 7</u> No response from this leader

(continued)

CONTEXT	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Interviewee (Who)			
Leader 8	<p><u>Leader 8</u> Facilitate (academic): *Mastery-based learning. The 3-Tier system (credit recovery) *Intake/exit process *Family engagement *Personalized education *Smaller setting, 6-7 students per staff *Caring staff *New online software; Edgenuity *CTE courses to begin Fall 2020 *One-to-one technology *TI-183 calculators available</p> <p>Facilitate (behavioral): *Student need consistency in staff *Consistency in processes *Need for more space *EC BST (Exceptional Children Behavior Support Teacher) built a short and long term</p>	<p><u>Leader 8</u> Impede (academic): *OW completion *Changes in online software; Ed Options to OdysseyWare to Edgenuity *Lack of space at times *Need for training on new software (students) *Need assistance in completing online courses *Change in teacher mindset *Need access to more career training</p> <p>Impede (behavioral): *Gang activity</p> <p>Impede (social): *Students need help with transitioning from homeschool to Academy C *Lack of motivation from students *Need for a mentor *Positive student-teacher relationship *Social-emotional learning *Assessment tool *Need for therapist to address COVID-19 and racial tension *Need for a transition coordinator after graduating</p>	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <p><u>Facilitate Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Small class size *OdysseyWare</p> <p>Behavioral *Impact social skills time</p> <p>Social *Impact social skills times</p> <p><u>Impede Mission:</u></p> <p>Academic *Usage of OdysseyWare *Program's location *Additional staff</p> <p>Behavioral *Policies/procedures *Students' motivation *Gang activity</p> <p>Social *Lack of SEL *Lack of mental health services</p>

(continued)

CONTEXT	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Interviewee (Who)			

Facilitate (social):

- *Lack of space
- *Help with transitioning from homeschool to Academy C
- *Lack of student motivation
- *Mentor
- *Training for students in online software
- *Transition coordinator after high school
- *Teaching training in online software
- *More educational resources
- *Social-emotional learning
- *Assessment or evaluation tool for students
- *Recreational space; gym
- *SRO; currently shared
- *One-to-one technology, but are used
- *Increase in monthly payments of previous location
- *Need for vocational program
- *Access to career-type programs and apprenticeship
- *Need for student self-efficacy

(continued)

CONTEXT	What academic, behavioral, or social practices are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees.
Interviewee (Who)			
Findings from public domain data from past 3 years NCDPI website Local report card	<u>District graduation rate:</u> 2016-17: 86.2% 2017-18: 84.7% 2018-19: 83.3% <u>District dropout rate:</u> 2016-17: 2.10% (158 students) 2017-18: 0.58% (69 students) 2018-19: 1.56% (116 students)		
Findings from public domain data from past 3 years NCDPI website Local report card	<u>Academy C graduation rate:</u> 2016-17: 0.80% (67 students) 2017-18: 0.71% (32 students) 2018-19: 0.63% (24 students) <u>Academy C dropout rate:</u> 2016-17: 0.21% (8 students) 2017-18: 0.29% (13 students) 2018-19: 0.38% (15 students)		
Findings from historical data of Academy C	<u># Graduated at home school:</u> 16-17: 1 student 17-18: 1 student 18-19: 2 students		
Findings from historical data of Academy C	<u># Graduated at Academy C:</u> 16-17 = 67 students 17-18 = 32 students 18-19 = 24 students		
Findings from historical data of Academy C	<u>Discipline referrals at Academy C:</u> 2016-17: 111 referrals 2017-18: 133 referrals 2018-19: 327 referrals		

Input Evaluation

Input Evaluation

Input is the second component of the CIPP model for program evaluation. To complete the input evaluation, it was vital to examine the perceptions of district and school leaders about what academic, behavioral, and social expenditures exist or need to be implemented in Academy C. To conduct an input evaluation, I conducted interviews with district and school-level leaders to answer the following questions:

1. What academic, behavioral, or social expenditures are needed to facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

2. What academic, behavioral, and social expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

Input evaluation helps prescribe a blueprint to address the identified needs. It asks, “How should it be done?” and identifies procedural plans and educational strategies that will most likely achieve the desired results. Consequently, its main directions are 1) to identify and assess current academic, behavioral, and social expenditures that facilitate and/or impede the mission of the alternative educational program, 2) to critically examine potentially relevant expenditures, and 3) to recommend alternative strategies. The results of the input evaluation are designed to meet the identified needs. The success of Academy C requires a good plan that, if implemented correctly, will benefit both the students and the staff. Methods used to execute the input evaluation included inventorying and analyzing human and instructional resources, budgets, and recommended strategies and procedural designs from interviews of district and school leaders.

Budget

The budget is an expenditure that contributes to or hinders the mission of Academy C. The budget expenditures in this study are between 2016 and 2019 school years. According to Leader 9, District PNC spent \$1,450,000 on staffing which included salaries and benefits. In 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, District PNC spent \$18,000 per year at one location where the high school students attended, and \$14,625 at another location where the middle school students attended. However, as the program moved to another location in 2018-2019, the building cost was \$385,000. This expense was shared with two other alternative programs within the building. To help alleviate some of the expenditures at Academy C, the furniture was donated from a nonprofit organization. In addition, Academy C received grants to help support the expenditures. As it relates to instructional expenses, Leader 8, reported that the District PNC spent \$60,000 yearly on the online educational software, OdysseyWare, that consisted of 125 licenses. Two leaders stated that the main priorities of the alternative educational program is to reduce the suspension rate, reduce the dropout rate, and use OdysseyWare every day. The operating budget for Academy C, as reported by Leader 8 is \$5,000 per month and \$200 each semester for graduation, which include the graduation programs and refreshments. Although annual conferences for alternative schools and programs are another expenditure yearly, at this time only the site principal attends conferences. This expense is paid out of the at-risk money from District PNC, according to Leader 8.

Human, Instructional, and Informational Resources

Human Resources. When addressing the human resources through interviews, it was noted that in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, Academy C employed 20.5 staff members. This consisted of two administrators, three counselors, nine teachers, one special education teacher, four full time and one part-time teacher assistants, one part-time (contracted) teacher assistant, and one secretary. In the 2018-2019 school year, the number of employees decreased by one staff member. It consisted of one administrator instead of two, two counselors instead of three. However, an instructional coach was added. Nine teachers, one special education teacher, four full-time and one part-time teacher assistants, one part-time (contracted) teacher assistant, and one secretary still remained.

Instructional Resources. The primary instructional resources between 2016 and 2019 was OdysseyWare, an online educational software. According to Leaders 7 and 8, Academy C moved from the Boys and Girls club to a District PNC facility that created a downsize in staffing and building space. Academy C currently shares a building with other alternative programs which contributed to a lack of space for students and staff.

Informational Resources. When leaders were asked, “What has been the cost of informational resources, such as the organization’s structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?” the majority of the leaders responded by addressing what needs to be in place in order for the mission to be accomplished. Seven out of eight (88%) leaders indicated that the program’s policies and procedures need to be revisited and revised. They contended that Academy C will benefit from a systematic approach in order to run smoother. Leader 4 reported that the intake and referral processes should be

revised. He argued that these processes need to be better because the program continues to “operate on the old way of doing things from when the program first started.” Leader 4 also recommended that the referral timeframe be changed due to the three-week waiting period from the time the home school refers a student to the time the intake appointment takes place. He claimed that the current process leaves that student at home not learning. Therefore, it is necessary for the program to be more objective than subjective in which criteria for student enrollment are revised. Leader 3 believed that the program’s current criteria select students based on the severity of the behavior rather than on the basis of the referral from the schools.

In order to effectively evaluate the alternative educational program, it was important to understand the academic, behavioral, and social processes that facilitated or impeded its mission. During the interviews, leaders recommended that home schools intervene early in order to assist students before being referred to Academy C. Communication is vital between the home school and Academy C to motivate students, and fulfill the program’s mission. The second process that impedes the mission of Academy C is the limited space. Because the space is limited at Academy C, less than 50 students are able to attend the program at a time. Some schools reported having at least ten students referred at a given time. The failure to implement social-emotional learning to support the students who struggle academically and behaviorally impedes the mission. Several leaders interviewed believed that the addition of psychological evaluations, mental health services, and trained counselors and social workers will facilitate the mission of Academy C being fulfilled. Leaders 2, 7, and 8 also identified that a vocational or technical program will aid in increasing life skills and will focus on life experiences for

students. Another process that impedes the mission of Academy C is the push back from students with disabilities. One reason for this dilemma is the lack of educational resources designed to assist students with disabilities with academic, behavioral, and social skills. One of the suggested methods to change this situation is to close the educational gap between disabled and nondisabled students and to revise policies about how to provide support for students with disabilities.

In the interviews, leaders were also asked, “How efficient and cost-effective Academy C uses its informational resources. Examples of informational resources include the technology, equipment, funding, hardware, and software. Leader 5 believed that Academy C is making good use of OdysseyWare and technology, while other leaders contended that Academy C would benefit from proper equipment for staff and students. During the interview, Leader 8 indicated that Academy C was in the process of replacing Chrombooks with more up-to-date laptops. The addition of an Instructional Coach has helped more students graduate and prevented them from dropping out. In the interview, Leader 8 also confirmed that from 2016 to 2019, Academy C graduated 123 students; however, the graduation rate decreased from .80% to .63%. In addition, three leaders agreed that Academy C prevents students from dropping out, and students display more appropriate behaviors when they return to their home school. The referring process to the program is another efficient and cost-effective informational resource. When high schools refer students to Academy C, a Google form is submitted that goes directly to the designated staff at Academy C for processing. This is the fastest way to refer students to the alternative program. Another informational resource that facilitates the mission is the 30-day reviews for students with disabilities. When students with disabilities are assigned

to Academy C, every 30 days, the designated staff from Academy C is invited to a meeting at the home school with the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) team. At the meeting, they discuss the student's academic standing, behavioral reports, and social history to determine if Academy C is the most appropriate placement. One of the drawbacks is that nondisabled students do not get the opportunity to have 30-day review meetings to discuss progression. The goal of Academy C, as reported by Leader 8, is to return students with disabilities to their home school within 45 days provided that there are no behavior issues while in the program. In addition, their academic, behavioral, and social data are shared with the home school at the end of the student's term at Academy C. Two leaders also believed that the IMPACT period is a positive informational resource, but contended that more social-emotional learning would be beneficial to the students.

Just as there are informational resources that facilitate the mission of Academy C, there are also informational resources that impede its mission. One resource mentioned in the interviews was the funding. Leaders 1 and 4 agreed that there is not sufficient funding within the program to help students in the areas of academics, behavioral, and social. Leader 1 stated that Academy C is "doing the best they can with what they have." Leader 4 recognized that funding for the alternative program is time-efficiency versus cost-efficiency. Another informational resource discussed was the discipline referrals. As mentioned in the context evaluation, leaders felt that the turnaround time, from referral from high schools due to significant behaviors until the time Academy C conducts an intake, is too long of a timespan; approximately three weeks for students to wait for entrance. This process causes students to be unsuccessful academically and contributes to

them having too much time to misbehave within their community. Other informational resources that are hindering the attainment of the program's mission are 1) students' attendance not being reported to home school on a weekly basis. This information must be requested by the home school or it is shared with the home school at the end of the student's term at Academy C. 2) There are no extra custodians. The current custodians are shared with the other alternative programs that are also located in the building with Academy C. 3) There are no workstations for the students. Within each classroom, students sit together at a table with a laptop to complete their coursework in OdysseyWare. In addition, the IMPACT period is held in a conference room that is currently used as a classroom. 4) There are currently no brochures about the program. Four leaders concurred that high schools do not have brochures to give to families when students are referred. In addition, families are not given a brochure about the program at the intake meeting. Information about the program is normally discussed at the intake meeting, as reported by the interviewees. Table 9 gives details about whether the interviewees response correlated with the mission attainment to the noted inputs.

Table 9*Methodology Matrix for CIPP Data Collection: Input Evaluation*

Mission: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

INPUT	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
Findings from interviewee (Who)			
How many people have been employed at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19	<p>Leader 8 Number of people employed:</p> <p>2016-17: 20.5 employed and .5 contracted (2 admin, 3 counselors, 9 teachers, 1 special education teacher, 4.5 teacher assistants, and 1 secretary and .5 TA contracted not employed)</p> <p>2017-18: 20.5 employed and .5 contracted (2 admin, 3 counselors, 9 teachers, 1 special education teacher, 4.5 teacher assistants, and 1 secretary and .5 TA contracted not employed)</p> <p>2018-19: 19.5 employed and .5 contracted (1 admin, 2 counselors, 1 instructional coach, 9 teachers, 1 special education teacher, 4.5 teacher assistants, and 1 secretary and .5 TA contracted not employed)</p>		

(continued)

INPUT	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
Findings from interviewee (Who)			
What has been the cost of employees at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?	Leader 9 The staffing alone is approximately \$1,450,000 at Academy C yearly. This covers salaries and benefits of staff. In addition, the building costs are approximately \$385,000 yearly; however, these costs would include expenses for Academy C, Pre-K and Alpha.		
What has been the cost of OdysseyWare in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?	Leader 8 2016-17: \$60,000 with 125 site licenses 2017-18: \$60,000 with 125 site licenses 2018-19: \$60,000 with 125 site licenses		
What has been the cost of the informational resources of Academy C, such as the organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?	Leader 1: No access to information Leader 2: Facilitate: *Input from high schools to make decisions about policy and procedures *Good technology to share information between the Academy and high schools	Leader 1 No access to information Leader 2: Impede: *Policies revision *Communication about students' progress *Value the mission of Academy C	<i>(Common Themes)</i> *Policies and procedures (referral, intake, and exit processes) *Communication between Academy C and home school *Educational resources

(continued)

INPUT	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
Findings from interviewee (Who)			
What has been the cost of the informational resources of Academy C, such as the organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?	<p><u>Leader 3</u> Academic: *Be more like NC Virtual Academy.</p> <p>Behavioral: *Invest in psychological evaluations for each student *Mental health *Counselors trained to deal with student with behaviors</p> <p>Social: *Opportunities to focus on life experiences *Field trips *Vocational program *Learn life skills</p>	<p><u>Leader 3</u> *Limited space</p>	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <p>*Policies and procedures (referral, intake, and exit processes)</p> <p>*Communication between Academy C and home school</p> <p>*Educational resources</p>
What has been the cost of the informational resources of Academy C, such as the organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?	<p><u>Leader 4</u> *Good policies *Need a better way to refer students *Early intervention</p> <p><u>Leader 5</u> *More structure *Intake and referral process</p>	<p><u>Leader 4:</u> *Transition to home school (social-emotional support) *Vocational program</p> <p><u>Leader 5</u> *Resources for students with disabilities</p>	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <p>*Policies and procedures (referral, intake, and exit processes)</p> <p>*Communication between Academy C and home school</p> <p>*Educational resources</p>

(continued)

INPUT	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
Findings from interviewee (Who)			
What has been the cost of the informational resources of Academy C, such as the organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?	<u>Leader 6</u> * Policies revision <u>Leader 7</u> No response from this leader	<u>Leader 6</u> *Educational gap between nondisabled students and students with disabilities *Policies about behavior expectations *Mental health services <u>Leader 7</u> No response from this leader	<i>(Common Themes)</i> *Policies and procedures (referral, intake, and exit processes) *Communication between Academy C and home school *Educational resources
What has been the cost of the informational resources of Academy C, such as the organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?	<u>Leader 8</u> *Usage of OdysseyWare *Annual conferences for staff *Operating budget is \$5000.00 per month *Cost of graduation is \$200.00 per semester, <u>Leader 9</u> No information provided		
How efficient and cost-effective Academy C uses its informal resources (electronic, audio-visual, physical form, hardware, software)?	Facilitate: <u>Leader 1</u> *OdysseyWare *Instructional Coach. *Resources have expanded <u>Leader 2</u> No response	Impede: <u>Leader 1</u> *Staff have not been given proper equipment. <u>Leader 2</u> I believe that the current funding they have to operate the Academy is not efficient or sufficient to do all that needs to be done. Because of this, the Academy is "doing the best they can." It comes down to time-efficiency versus cost-efficiency.	<i>(Common Themes)</i> *Equipment and technology (OdysseyWare) *Impact social skills time *Funding *Discipline referrals *Student attendance *Additional staff (custodians) *Student workstations *Brochures

(continued)

INPUT	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
Findings from interviewee (Who)			
How efficient and cost-effective Academy C uses its informal resources (electronic, audio-visual, physical form, hardware, software)?	<p><u>Leader 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Help students graduate *Prevents dropping out of school *Better when returning to home school <p><u>Leader 4</u> No response</p>	<p><u>Leader 3</u> No response</p> <p><u>Leader 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Discipline referrals not handled in a timely manner 	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Equipment and technology (OdysseyWare) *Impact social skills time *Funding *Discipline referrals *Student attendance *Additional staff (custodians) *Student workstations *Brochures
How efficient and cost-effective Academy C uses its informal resources (electronic, audio-visual, physical form, hardware, software)?	<p><u>Leader 5</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Referring process to get into Academy C *30-day reviews take place for the EC students *Data, such as academics and behavior are provided, but it's at the end of the student's term. <p><u>Leader 6</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Social skills training *Consistent use of IMPACT social skills period 	<p><u>Leader 5</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Technology usage *Communication between the Academy and high schools *Student exit process *Reporting of attendance <p><u>Leader 6</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Use of resources *No brochure for students and parents 	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Equipment and technology (OdysseyWare) *Impact social skills time *Funding *Discipline referrals *Student attendance *Additional staff (custodians) *Student workstations *Brochures

(continued)

INPUT	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
Findings from interviewee (Who)			
How efficient and cost-effective Academy C uses its informal resources (electronic, audio-visual, physical form, hardware, software)?	<p><u>Leader 7</u> No information provided</p> <p><u>Leader 8</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Centrally located in the county. *Bus costs handled through transportation dept. *Access to iReady and iStation. *Replacing Chromebook *Instructional Coach *Graduated close to 30 students each year. *Graduation rate has increased at least 1.7% as a result of students being able to graduate from Academy C. *One of our goals is to get students back in school the first 40 days. This determines the amount of money we get in our budget. <p><u>Leader 9</u> No response</p>	<p><u>Leader 7</u> No information provided</p> <p><u>Leader 8</u> No response</p> <p><u>Leader 9</u> No response</p>	<p><i>(Common Themes)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Equipment and technology (OdysseyWare) *Impact social skills time *Funding *Discipline referrals *Student attendance *Additional staff (custodians) *Student workstations *Brochures

(continued)

INPUT	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Did interviewee correlate mission attainment (or not) to this input? Explain
Findings from interviewee (Who)			
What has been the cost of physical resources (learning workstations, laptops, lease, upkeep of the building, technology costs, furniture) at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?	<p><u>Leader 1--Leader 7</u> Do not have the information about the physical resources</p> <p><u>Leader 8</u> *\$18,000 per year to be housed at the Boys and Girls Club in Winterville *\$14,625 to be housed at the other Boys and Girls Club in Greenville. *Furniture donated from PCC (Pitt Community College). *125 licenses for technology software. *Grant from the Educational Foundation for the first couple of years of us opening *Fundraisers, but no longer have them.</p> <p><u>Leader 9</u> No response</p>	<p><u>Leader 1--Leader 7</u> Does not have the information about the physical resources</p> <p><u>Leader 8</u> *No extra custodians *No workstations</p> <p><u>Leader 9</u> No response</p>	

Process Evaluation

Process Evaluation

Process is the third component of the CIPP model for program evaluation. The process evaluation monitors the implementation of the program. It asks, “Is it being done?” and provides district leaders with ongoing monitoring on whether Academy C is attaining its stated mission. The important goals of the process evaluation include documenting the process and providing feedback regarding a) the extent to which the strategies and activities are carried out and b) whether adjustments or revisions of the program are necessary.

To evaluate the processes, I surveyed selected staff from each of the six high schools and staff from Academy C. A total of 25 out of 30 participants responded to the survey. The survey was sent to each participant via a Google form. For confidentiality purposes, respondents’ name and email address were not recorded. In addition, each respondent was allowed to submit only one survey. The respondents replied to each question using a scale of zero to four, with zero meaning not sure; one meaning not very well; two meaning well, three meaning very well, and four meaning extremely well. The following survey data findings were collected from the respondents. The first question asked, “How well are goals and strategies being executed at Academy C?” There were seven respondents who agreed that goals and strategies were being executed very well or extremely well. Eight out of 25 respondents believed that the goals and strategies were being executed well, while ten respondents felt that the goals and strategies were not being executed well or were unsure. The second question asked, “How well are participants utilizing appropriate strategies to achieve the mission of Academy C?” There were 15 respondents who believed they were utilizing appropriate strategies to accomplish the mission of Academy C either well, very well, or extremely well. Ten out

the 25 respondents acknowledged that they were unsure or not utilizing strategies very well as it relates to accomplishing Academy C's mission. Question three asked respondents, "How do they rate the quality of services to students at Academy C?" 17 out of 25 respondents rated the quality of service at Academy C between well and extremely well. There were eight respondents who indicated that the quality of services at Academy C were not very well or they were unsure. Question four pertained to the 3-Tier system at Academy C. Each respondent answered, on a scale from zero to four, "How they rated the impact Tiers I, II, and III have on assisting students with required courses at Academy C?" Of the 25 respondents, 18 indicated that the impact of Tiers I, II, and III are assisting students with required courses well, very well or extremely well, and seven respondents agreed that the 3-Tier system impact was not very well or they were not sure if it assisted students with the required courses. The fifth question asked, "How do participants rate the processes of Tiers I, II, and III in facilitating or impeding the mission of Academy C?" 16 of 25 respondents indicated that the 3-Tier system processes facilitated the mission of Academy C well, very well or extremely well. There were nine respondents who felt that the 3-Tier processes impeded the mission of Academy C. In question six, "How well are processes in Academy C organized and executed according to guidelines?" 17 of the 25 respondents who completed the survey indicated that the processes in Academy C are well, very well, or extremely well organized and executed according to guidelines. However, eight respondents believed that the processes in Academy C are not well organized and executed according to guidelines or they were unsure. Question seven asked, "How well are the programs and inputs to address the needs of Academy C and the needs of the students being implemented as planned?" Eight

respondents answered very well or extremely well, nine answered well, and eight answered not very well or unsure about whether the programs and inputs implemented as planned address the needs of Academy C and the needs of the students. In the eighth question of the survey, respondents were asked, “How well is Academy C using OdysseyWare according to guidelines?” According to the answers submitted by 25 respondents, 19 indicated that Academy C is using OdysseyWare according to guidelines well, very well, or extremely well. Only six respondents were unsure or did not feel that OdysseyWare was used according to guidelines. Question nine asked respondents to rate the quality of OdysseyWare. 15 respondents rated it well, very well, or extremely well, and ten rated the use of OdysseyWare according to guidelines as not very well or they were unsure. The last question in the survey, question ten asked respondents, “How well is Academy C operating overall?” Regardless of whether or not Academy C is attaining its mission, 16 respondents indicated that Academy C is operating well, very well, or extremely well overall. Nine respondents contended that Academy C is not operating well or they were unsure about its overall mission attainment.

Academic, Behavioral, and Social Processes

At the end of the ten-question survey, the respondents were also given three short answer questions. The first question asked respondents, “What academic, behavioral or social processes facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?” According to the survey, 80% (20 out of 25) respondents indicated that small class sizes facilitated the fulfillment of Academy C’s mission. They believed that in a small classroom setting students are able to achieve their goal, which is to earn credits towards graduation or to return to their home school. The second question asked, “What academic, behavioral or

social processes impede the program's mission?" Respondents reported discrepancies in all three areas.

Academic Processes. The academic processes included lack of appropriate staff and the need to update policies and procedures. 92% (23 out of 25) respondents agreed that the lack of staff available to provide one-to-one assistance and support hindered students from being successful academically. The overcrowding of students due to limited space is problematic. Since transitioning to the shared location in 2018, the number of students Academy C can house at any given time decreased from 100 students to 50 students. This makes it challenging for the program to have the maximum number of students at any given time. There is an absence of a liaison between Academy C and the high schools that could provide home schools with students' progress before they are considered to return. Respondent 2 noted that, "a liaison would benefit the students with making a smooth transition back to his or her home school." Respondent 8 suggested that, "having a liaison will keep the student's academic team abreast about their progress and help create a plan of action as they work towards meeting the requirements for graduation."

19 of the 25 respondents indicated that the current policies and procedures hindered the mission from being fulfilled. Policies regarding the intake and exit process are examples of the processes that hindered the mission attainment. Respondents reported that the wait time between school referrals and the intake meeting was too long. Their concern was primarily the amount of time students are away from the school setting and instruction awaiting to attend the program. Nine respondents agreed that the turnaround time is approximately a three-week period from the referral to the intake meeting at

Academy C. The exit meeting process was another concern. Respondents shared that oftentimes, academic and behavioral progress is discussed at the exit meeting rather than periodically throughout the time students attend Academy C. Of the 25 respondents, 17 agreed that the inconsistency in the exit process hinders the home school from making recommendations to keep the student at Academy C and not return to their home school. They also reported that there was a lack of student accountability. 22 respondents agreed that there are currently no policies in place regarding the pacing guides for each course taken by the student. Because of this, students get behind academically, and do not always display behaviors of improvement to return to their home school. Academic and behavior progress reporting is limited to reporting only during the exit meeting or at other times when requested by the home school. It was reported by five respondents that the home schools only receive student progress reports at the exit meeting instead of weekly or bi-weekly. This includes students' grades, behavior and attendance. Overall, the majority of the respondents agreed that Academy C lacks the appropriate structure to be effective at fulfilling its stated mission.

Behavioral Processes. According to respondents of the survey, the behavioral processes that inhibited the program's mission were student motivation and disruptive behaviors. 16 respondents pointed out that the lack of student motivation hindered Academy C's mission attainment. One respondent felt that because of the "students' lack of motivation, they fail to complete their coursework, achieve academically, and display better outcomes." At least thirteen respondents felt that off-task, disruptive, and negative behaviors were tolerated at the program. They also reported that behavioral issues are not

shared with the home school unless the behaviors were extremely violent, such as assault on another student or staff member.

Social Processes. The social processes that prevented Academy C from fulfilling its mission, according to respondents of the survey, were SEL and mental health services. All 25 (100%) respondents indicated that the absence of SEL impeded the mission of Academy C. The respondents also indicated that the lack of mental health services or one-to-one counseling hindered the students from achieving their goals as well as meeting the mission statement of Academy C.

Academic, Behavioral, and Social Strategies

The third short answer question asked, “What three strategies are necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program’s mission?” From the survey, participants reported the following three top strategies: 1) policies and procedures, 2) student-teacher relationship, and 3) professional development

Policies and Procedures (Academics). The first strategy participants believed is necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on Academy C’s mission is the program’s policies and procedures. Participants noted that having a daily schedule will help prevent a chaotic school day. According to Staff 5, she explained that “by having a daily schedule, Academy C will be consistent in its day-to-day activities.” Improvements in the intake process will contribute to timely feedback and better communication between the home school and Academy C as recognized by four participants. Other participants felt that daily or weekly check-ins with staff as well as the reporting of students’ weekly attendance are procedures that are necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program’s mission. Students can benefit from one-to-one

interactions with a staff member on a daily basis. According to Staff 15, “the check-ins will help staff recognize potential challenges students may be encountering at the beginning of the school day until the students depart for home.” Several respondents of the survey indicated that attendance should be reported to the home schools on a weekly basis. Staff 8 explained that this “will help teachers be aware of students who are in attendance each day in order to properly plan for the day. It will also help track the student’s academic progress.” Historical documents noted that failure to attend the program on a daily basis jeopardized student from not earning the credits they need to graduate. Staff 7 also felt that the weekly attendance reports will help the high schools make informal decisions about whether or not students should return to their home school or remain at Academy C. Likewise, the implementation of a planning period will help ensure teachers remain focused on the program’s mission. Currently, teachers do not have a planning period. Teachers’ school day is from 8:00am to 2:00pm with no planning period. 20 out of 25 (80%) participants indicated that Academy C does not allot time out of the daily schedule for teachers to properly plan the school day or individual student lessons. Staff 8 noted that “teachers are with the students from the time they enter the building until the time they leave.” She also felt that a planning period would allow teachers time to assess students’ progress to determine what they have done and what they need to do to complete each course. Furthermore, respondents indicated that teachers need opportunities to work together to discuss the details of the day or week, students’ academic and behavior progress, and whether the students are meeting their goal of earning high school credits towards graduation or returning to their home school at the

end of their term. Staff 20 stated that “it is vital that teachers are included in this process because they interact with students on a day-to-day basis.”

Student-Teacher Relationship (Behavioral/Social). The second strategy that impedes teacher’s focus on the mission is establishing a good student-teacher relationship. 22 out of 25 (88%) respondents of the survey believed that students benefit from having a relationship with a trusted staff member with whom they can rely on to talk about issues and situations that may be stressors. When teachers are effectively trained in compassion and empathy, it opens the door to a positive relationship with students based on the consensus of the respondents. Therefore, it is necessary, according to respondents, to build capacity in staffing Academy C with more highly qualified teachers who are trained and licensed in the content area in which they teach. While there are some highly qualified teachers at Academy C, there are still others who provide instruction to students outside of their content area. Stephen (2013) believed that courses should be taught by highly qualified educators to ensure that students’ difficulties are not due to inadequate instruction.

Many participants agreed that the implementation of an effective PBIS system will help bridge the gap between students and staff. Without a structured PBIS system, it is a challenge for teachers to reinforce positive behaviors and increase academic achievement. A good PBIS reward system is designed to provide support to teachers in order for them to maintain appropriate student-teacher relationships in the classroom and total school environment (Terrell, 2017). At least three respondents suggested effective professional development for teachers and staff to understand how to establish a consistent, trusting relationship with students.

Another support system for student-teacher relationships respondents mentioned was remediation. Staff 1 pointed out that “supporting students through a remediation component will allow teachers the opportunity to observe students’ academic progress, and will generate a feeling of autonomy in the students’ success.” Based on the information provided in the surveys, respondents believed that remediation is needed for not only the students but also the teacher. Staff 21 emphasized that “when students are admitted into the program, they are often behind academically due to their behaviors. This makes it challenging for teachers to provide instruction in a large group setting because each student is at different academic and content levels.” Three other respondents believed that remediation support will allow Academy C staff to provide one-to-one assistance to students who are far behind in the course content. “When students’ academics increase, their behaviors will decrease most of the time,” reported by Staff 5 and 8. “The lack of program support for students has hindered students from reaching set goals to return to their home school,” Leader 22 emphasized in her short answer response.

Professional Development (Academic/Behavioral/Social). The third strategy respondents of the survey indicated is necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program’s mission is effective professional development and teacher training opportunities. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and professional development are currently not in place at the alternative program. 14 out of 25 participants (56%) believed that regular PLCs will help teachers remain focused on the program’s mission, determine an action plan, and maintain continuous improvements within the program. Because teachers do not have planning periods, this makes it difficult for PLCs to occur. 80% (20 out of 25) respondents recognized that there is an urgent need for the following

professional developments: providing appropriate mental health services, teaching online courses, working with students with disabilities, working in an alternative setting, training in the gang culture, and training in social-emotional learning (SEL). All 25 respondents (100%) agreed that the absence of students' needs within the program hinders the progress of the mission from being fulfilled. They include a lack of 1) mental health services, SEL, and Adverse Childhood Experiences {ACES} training; 2) group therapy, 3) trained social workers and counselors, and a lack of 4) mentors. A lack of funding and resources limit the program and teachers in remaining focused on the mission, according to the consensus of the participants.

Table 10 highlights the processes that contributed to or hindered the achievement of Academy C's mission based on the perception of the respondents. Summary of findings from respondents are listed in the last column.

Table 10*Methodology Matrix for CIPP Data Collection: Process Evaluation*

Mission: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondent (Who)	Does this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents)</i>	Does this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
		4 =Extremely Well 3 =Very Well 2=Well	1=Not Very Well 0=Not sure	
<u>Question 1</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How well are goals and strategies being executed at Academy C?	<u>Respondents:</u> Staff 1 Staff 2 Staff 3 Staff 4 Staff 5 Staff 6 Staff 7 Staff 8 Staff 9 Staff 10 Staff 11 Staff 12 Staff 13 Staff 14 Staff 15 Staff 16 Staff 17 Staff 18 Staff 19 Staff 20 Staff 21 Staff 22 Staff 23 Staff 24 Staff 25	<u>Question 1:</u> Well Very Well Very Well Well Well Very Well Well Well Very Well Extremely Well Very Well Well Very Well Well Well	<u>Question 1:</u> Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Sure Not Sure Not Sure Not Sure Not Sure Not Very Well	<u>Findings</u> 1 Extremely Well 6 Very Well 8 Well 5 Not Very Well 5 Not Sure

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondent (Who)	Does this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? (Answer from the perspective of the respondents)	Does this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? (Answer from the perspective of the respondents.)	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 2</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How well are you utilizing appropriate strategies to achieve the mission of Academy C?	<u>Respondents:</u> Staff 1 Staff 2 Staff 3 Staff 4 Staff 5 Staff 6 Staff 7 Staff 8 Staff 9 Staff 10 Staff 11 Staff 12 Staff 13 Staff 14 Staff 15 Staff 16 Staff 17 Staff 18 Staff 19 Staff 20 Staff 21 Staff 22 Staff 23 Staff 24 Staff 25	<u>Question 2:</u> Well Very Well Very Well Extremely Well Well Very Well Well Very Well Extremely Well Very Well Well Very Well Well Well Well	<u>Question 2:</u> Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Sure Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well	<u>Findings:</u> 2 Extremely Well 6 Very Well 7 Well 8 Not Very Well 2 Not Sure
<u>Question 3</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How do you rate the quality of services to students at Academy C?	<u>Respondents:</u> Staff 1 Staff 2 Staff 3 Staff 4 Staff 5 Staff 6 Staff 7 Staff 8 Staff 9 Staff 10 Staff 11 Staff 12	<u>Question 3:</u> Very Well Very Well Well Well Very Well Well Very Well	<u>Question 3:</u> Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well	<u>Findings:</u> 1 Extremely Well 8 Very Well 8 Well 8 Not Very Well 0 Not Sure

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondent (Who)	Does this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents)</i>	Does this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 3</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How do you rate the quality of services to students at Academy C?	<u>Respondents:</u> Staff 13 Staff 14 Staff 15 Staff 16 Staff 17 Staff 18 Staff 19 Staff 20 Staff 21 Staff 22 Staff 23 Staff 24 Staff 25	<u>Question 3:</u> Very Well Well Very Well Very Well Well Very Well Extremely Well Well Well Well Well	<u>Question 3:</u> Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well	<u>Findings:</u> 1 Extremely Well 8 Very Well 8 Well 8 Not Very Well 0 Not Sure
<u>Question 4</u> On a scale of 1- 4, how do you rate the impact Tiers I, II, and III have on assisting students with required courses at Academy C?	<u>Respondents:</u> Staff 1 Staff 2 Staff 3 Staff 4 Staff 5 Staff 6 Staff 7 Staff 8 Staff 9 Staff 10 Staff 11 Staff 12 Staff 13 Staff 14 Staff 15 Staff 16 Staff 17 Staff 18 Staff 19 Staff 20 Staff 21 Staff 22 Staff 23 Staff 24 Staff 25	<u>Question 4:</u> Well Well Well Very Well Well Well Very Well Well Well Well Extremely Well Very Well Well Well Well Extremely Well Extremely Well Very Well Well	<u>Question 4:</u> Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Sure Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well	<u>Findings:</u> 3 Extremely Well 4 Very Well 11 Well 6 Not Very Well 1 Not Sure

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondent (Who)	Does this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents)</i>	Does this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Question 6</u> On a scale of 1- 4, How well are processes in Academy C organized and executed according to guidelines?	<u>Respondents:</u> Staff 14 Staff 15 Staff 16 Staff 17 Staff 18 Staff 19 Staff 20 Staff 21 Staff 22 Staff 23 Staff 24 Staff 25	<u>Question 6:</u> Very Well Well Very Well Extremely Well Well Extremely Well Well Not Very Well Not Very Well Well	<u>Question 6:</u> Not Sure Not Very Well Not Very Well	<u>Findings:</u> 2 Extremely Well 4 Very Well 11 Well 7 Not Very Well 1 Not Sure
<u>Question 7</u> On a scale of 1- 4, how well are the programs and inputs (to address the needs of the school and needs of the students) being implemented as planned?	<u>Respondents:</u> Staff 1 Staff 2 Staff 3 Staff 4 Staff 5 Staff 6 Staff 7 Staff 8 Staff 9 Staff 10 Staff 11 Staff 12 Staff 13 Staff 14 Staff 15 Staff 16 Staff 17 Staff 18 Staff 19 Staff 20 Staff 21 Staff 22 Staff 23 Staff 24 Staff 25	<u>Question 7:</u> Well Well Very Well Well Extremely Well Very Well Well Very Well Very Well Well Very Well Very Well Well Well Extremely Well Well Well Well	<u>Question 7:</u> Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Sure Not Very Well Not Sure Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well	<u>Findings:</u> 2 Extremely Well 6 Very Well 9 Well 6 Not Very Well 2 Not Sure

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondent (Who)	Does this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents)</i>	Does this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
Question 8 On a scale of 1- 4, How well is Academy C using OdysseyWare according to guidelines?	<u>Respondents:</u> Staff 1 Staff 2 Staff 3 Staff 4 Staff 5 Staff 6 Staff 7 Staff 8 Staff 9 Staff 10 Staff 11 Staff 12 Staff 13 Staff 14 Staff 15 Staff 16 Staff 17 Staff 18 Staff 19 Staff 20 Staff 21 Staff 22 Staff 23 Staff 24 Staff 25	<u>Question 8:</u> Very Well Very Well Well Extremely Well Very Well Very Well Extremely Well Extremely Well Extremely Well Very Well Very Well Extremely Well Extremely Well Well Extremely Well Extremely Well Well Well Well	<u>Question 8:</u> Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Sure Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Very Well	<u>Findings:</u> 8 Extremely Well 6 Very Well 5 Well 5 Not Very Well 1 Not Sure
Question 9 On a scale of 1- 4, How would you rate the quality of OdysseyWare?	<u>Respondents:</u> Staff 1 Staff 2 Staff 3 Staff 4 Staff 5 Staff 6 Staff 7 Staff 8 Staff 9 Staff 10 Staff 11 Staff 12	<u>Question 9</u> Extremely Well Very Well Extremely Well Very Well Very Well Very Well Extremely Well	<u>Question 10:</u> Not Very Well Not Very Well Not Sure Not Very Well Not Sure	<u>Findings:</u> 7 Extremely Well 5 Very Well 3 Well 8 Not Very Well 2 Not Sure

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondent (Who)	Does this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents)</i>	Does this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Short Response</u> What academic, behavioral or social processes facilitate and/or impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?	<u>Respondents</u> 9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	<u>Facilitate</u> *Students are able to achieve their goals because they perform better in a smaller setting and able to focus on goals to complete the program and not return. *Motivating students to work on achievement and better actions during class. *One on one counseling *Proper communication	<u>Impede</u> *Students not kept on-task *Disruptive behaviors tolerated *Lack of mental health therapy/resources *Lack of streamlining intake/exit *Lack of quality liaison between Academy C and schools *Lack of staff *Lack of emotional support *Lack of communication or inconsistency *Students get behind academically *No reporting of academic progress *Overcrowding Lack of student accountability *Not always improvements after attending Academy C *A revolving door *Students have behavior issues and show little interest in pursuing their education	Facilitate Academic *Small class size Impede Academic *Lack of staff *Procedures for intake/exit meetings Behavioral *Lack of student motivation *Disruptive behaviors Social *Mental health services *SEL

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondent (Who)	Does this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents)</i>	Does this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Short Response</u> What academic, behavioral or social processes facilitate and/or impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?	<u>Respondents</u> 9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	<u>Facilitate</u> .	<u>Impede</u> *Social-emotional and behavior needs are not always met.	<u>Findings</u> Facilitate Academic *Small class size Impede Academic *Lack of staff *Procedures for intake/exit meetings Behavioral *Lack of student motivation *Disruptive behaviors Social *Mental health services *SEL
<u>Short Response</u> What three strategies are necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program's mission?	<u>Respondents</u> 9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	<u>Facilitate:</u> *Collaborative work *Timely feedback, better communication *Remediation *Highly qualified teachers with appropriate certifications *Consistency from admin (daily schedule, social skills training) *Better intake process *Trusted teacher-student relationship	<u>Impede:</u> *Daily structure *PD focused on mental health *Counselors/mental health professionals to assist with SEL *PD in teaching online courses *PD in working with students with disabilities *PD in SEL *PD in working in alternative settings *Funding *PD in gang culture *Community support	<u>Three Strategies:</u> *Policies and procedures *Student-teacher relationship *Professional development and teacher training

(continued)

PROCESS (Survey Questions)	Respondent (Who)	Does this process contribute to the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents)</i>	Does this process hinder the achievement of the program's mission? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the respondents.)</i>	Summary of findings from all respondents:
<u>Short Response</u>	<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Facilitate:</u>	<u>Impede:</u>	<u>Three Strategies:</u>
What three strategies are necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program's mission?	9 teachers 6 counselors 5 social workers 5 support staff	*Planning periods *PLCs *More district support *Versatility *Daily or weekly check-ins with staff about students *Modeling, mistakes, feedback *Update weekly on student's attendance. *Meticulously construct and follow a plan *Follow the mission and follow-up; *Compassion and empathy	*Appropriate resources *PBIS; reward system	*Policies and procedures *Student-teacher relationship *Professional development and teacher training

Product Evaluation

Product Evaluation

Product is the fourth and final component of the CIPP model for program evaluation. Product evaluation identifies and assesses the program outcomes. It asks, “Did the program succeed?” and is similar to outcome evaluation. The purpose of a product evaluation is to measure, interpret, and judge a program’s outcomes by assessing their merit, worth, significance, and probity. Its main purpose is to ascertain the extent to which the needs of all the participants were met.

Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) suggested that a combination of approaches should be used to assess a comprehensive set of outcomes. Doing so helps cross-check various findings. The approaches that are applicable in this product evaluation included interviews from district- and school-level leaders, surveys from certified and classified staff at Academy C and each high school, and the investigation of historical documents and records. The product evaluation served three important purposes. First, it provided summative information that can be used to determine the quality and impacts of the program. Second, it provided formative information that can be used to make adjustments and improvements to the program for future implementation. Third, it offered insights on Academy C’s sustainability and transferability, that is, whether it can be sustained long-term, and whether its methods can be transferred to different settings.

In order to determine the product evaluation, participants were asked the following questions:

- 1) What academic, behavioral, or social product results substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
- 2) What academic, behavioral, or social product results fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

Substantiate the Mission

Qualitative analysis of the interviews revealed product results that substantiated the attainment of the mission of Academy C from the participants' perspective. Through the interview process and survey, participants were able to share academic, behavioral, and social product results that contributed to or impeded the fulfillment of the mission of Academy C. The academic, behavioral, and social products that support the attainment of Academy C's mission attainment fell into the following categories:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Products</u>
Academics	Mastery-Based Learning Resources (human, instructional and informal)
Behavioral	Positive Behavior Interventions Support (PBIS) 3-Tier System
Social	Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Teacher-Student Relationship

Mastery-Based Learning (Academic). From the perception of the participants who participated in this study, data revealed that mastery-based learning is an academic product that affirms the attainment of the mission of Academy C. More than a third of the participants agreed that Academy C assisted students with earning credits to meet graduation requirements. The mastery-based learning provides students with a level of understanding of the course content in order to continue to progress in the subject areas. As noted by all participants, credit recovery allows students who attend Academy C opportunities to engage in master-based learning to recover credits from failed courses. In addition, it personalizes the learning experience, allowing some students additional time to develop a particular skill while allowing others to earn credit for knowledge and skills learned outside the classroom so they can move on to more challenging material. Because

of the opportunity to demonstrate skills mastered beyond traditional education settings, mastery-based learning encourages active participation of students in fostering learning. Thus, mastery-based learning has also prevented students from dropping out of Academy C. Oftentimes, students' continuous disruptive behavior have contributed to them not progressing in the general education curriculum because their behavior causes them to not be able to remain in the classroom for instruction. Their disruptive behaviors lead to multiple out-of-school or long-term suspensions. Leader 8 stated that early intervention in reading provided by Academy C contributed to an increase in academic success, course credits, and decreased behaviors. Emphasis was placed on the students' loss of academic instruction due to the disruptive behavior, which played a major part in students' reading fluency and comprehension. Leader 8 furthered explained that "without reading intervention strategies, students will have a challenge navigating their way through the online educational software as well as mastering the content." Seven out of eight interviewees agreed that the implementation and improvement of more online courses will help students be more successful at Academy C and earn the required credits to graduate. With more online courses being available, students will be able to graduate with 28 credits instead of earning a 22-credit diploma. Although the 22-credit diploma is accepted by community colleges, it will not get them into a four-year college or university, as reported by Leader 5. Five out of eight participants interviewed recognized that mastery-based learning will increase test scores, but all of the participants indicated that a small setting is a primary reason students succeed in the alternative program setting. According to the interviewees, the one-to-one interaction between the teacher and

student helps students better understand the course content, then they are able to improve academically.

Resources (Academic). The second academic product participants believed substantiate the mission of Academy C is the availability of resources; such as human, instructional and informational resources. Human resources are resources, such as staffing, compensation and benefits, safety and health, and employee and labor relations. At least six leaders pointed out that an increase in human resources will help obtain the mission of Academy C. This includes the addition of teachers who are licensed in specific content areas. This will allow Academy C to provide one-to-one or small group (less than five students) instruction for all students. Highly qualified teachers will be able to provide the instructional support and remediation to students who may be behind academically once they are admitted to the program. Two interviewees suggested the addition of another school administrator to help with the day-to-day activities of the program. Currently, the principal is the only administrator in the program, and he facilitates the majority of the intake and exit meetings for all students. Instructional resources include everything from printed materials, such as text books; to non-book resources, such as electronic devices, educational software, video and audio recordings. Instructional resources that will contribute to attaining the mission of Academy C from the perception of the participants included more up-to-date laptops, the addition of TI-83 calculators, and other resources for reading and math remediation. According to Leaders 7 and 8, students at Academy C are one-to-one with electronic devices; however, many of them are outdated and worn from multiple usage. Another instructional resource Academy C is considering in order to attain its mission is changing the educational

software. Leader 8 reported that the program changed from OdysseyWare to Edgenuity in the Fall of 2020. Students who take courses in the OdysseyWare program are not able to earn career and technical education courses, which is required for graduation. When students are admitted into Academy C, they follow the 22-credit diploma. This type of diploma does not require students to take career and technical courses. The drawback to this is that the students are not able to go to a four-year college immediately after graduating with this type of diploma due to the deficiency in high school credits. Students with the 22-credit diploma must earn at least 30 credits at a community college before they can transfer to a four-year college or university. With Edgenuity, students are able to take the required career and technical courses and earn 28 credits towards graduation requirements. These students, who receive 28 credits, are able to attend a four-year college or university immediately after high school. Informational resources are resources that are not directly related to human or instructional resources, but are resources designed to help support the program. Staff development is one informational resource that supports mission attainment at Academy C. Four interviewees out of eight indicated that teachers benefit from being trained on how to teach online courses with fidelity. Leader 2 stated, “we need to make sure that students are learning the course content and not just randomly selecting a choice. Then, when they get an answer wrong, the question is reset so they can attempt to select the correct answer the second time.” Leader 2 further pointed out that this method does not help students master the content. Professional development opportunities will allow teachers to obtain the appropriate training to be effective in teaching online courses and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of both them and the students. Vocational training is another informal resource discussed by

several interviewees. To prepare students for the real world, it is important that students set postsecondary goals after school. Academy C can play an integral part in the students' postsecondary endeavors by using skills in the program that are beneficial to the students. In an interview with Leader 3, he stated that Academy C needs to "collaborate with businesses so the students can learn a technical trade before they graduate. Many of the students need technical trade experiences." Leader 1 believed that, "When students feel that they have obtained something, such as a diploma, it motivates them to do better. Students will also get better opportunities after graduation" due to having the vocational training. The implementation of vocational training, according to the interviews, will focus on the skills required for a particular job function or trade. It will prepare students for specific careers according to the students' postsecondary goals.

Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) (Behavioral). Behavior products that will substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C are the PBIS program and the 3-Tier System. PBIS is a proactive approach that Academy C can use to improve school safety and promote positive behavior. The focus of PBIS is prevention, not punishment. By focusing on PBIS, teachers at Academy C can create an environment that is warm, nurturing, and that helps all students achieve important behavior changes. When implemented correctly, PBIS promotes a more positive school climate, safer learning environments, and a more trusting and respectful student-teacher relationships. Five of the leaders interviewed agreed that the implementation of PBIS will help lower the incarceration rate of students assigned to Academy C. PBIS can also be instrumental in providing strategies for students to engage in the classroom appropriately by setting behavioral expectations, positive rewards, and clear consequences. However, these

practices must be supported by the physical school environment (smaller class sizes), effective classroom routines (daily schedules), and behavioral expectations (IMPACT period).

3-Tier System (Behavioral). The 3-Tier system is also a product participants expressed substantiated the attainment of the mission of Academy C. When students are not successful in Tier I, they are transitioned into Tiers II or III. There are times when students engage in violent behaviors while attending Academy C or have pending felonies in which they are in danger of going to prison. Tier II has a much smaller setting and the amount of time students attend decreases. This allows them opportunities to complete their community service, meet with their probation officer, or attend behavior and mental health services within their community, as reported by an interviewee. Tier III is designed for students whose behaviors prevent them from remaining in a school setting. These students complete their courses at home, and their course work is monitored by teachers at Academy C. This tier is the last resort and has the least amount of student-teacher interaction. Leader 2 suggested “a hotline for students to use when they need someone to talk to before they exhibit disruptive or aggressive behaviors in the community or before they make a decision to commit a criminal act.” No matter what tier students are in, they all have access to Behavior Support Teachers trained to deal with students with significant behavior challenges. All Behavior Support Teachers are trained in the North Carolina Interventions A and B, which are techniques designed to de-escalate behaviors.

Social-Emotional Learning (Social). The social product participants reported that will confirm the attainment of the mission of Academy C are social-emotional

learning and student-teacher relationships. SEL is the process of developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for Academy C' staff and students' and their life success. One of the product interviewees believed will help fulfill Academy C's mission is having social workers and counselors trained in SEL. All of the interviews indicated that students as well as staff would benefit greatly from SEL. Leader 1 stated that, "Students will be able to handle social settings better than they do when they are in a traditional high school setting." Leader 2 felt that "social skills should be a vital part of the program. It needs to focus on how the students can be successful in life." The IMPACT social skills training period is an opportunity to implement SEL into Academy C. Yet Leader 5 stated that without the IMPACT period that includes SEL, "the students get lost in the shuffle with no one there to understand their feelings and emotions so they begin to act out in inappropriate ways." The evidenced-based framework of SEL is pioneered by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). It is made up of five core components: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.

Student-Teacher Relationship (Social). The second social product that contributes to the success of Academy C's mission is student-teacher relationships. Out of eight interviewees, four of them agreed that positive student-teacher relationships promote a warm and inviting environment for all. Because of the trusting relationships the staff and teachers are happier. Leader 1 declared that, "When your staff is happy, they tend to go above and beyond what is expected." Leader 5 believed that Academy C would benefit from more SEL resources for the IMPACT period.

Fails to Substantiate the Mission

Qualitative analysis of the interviews also revealed product results that failed to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C from the participants' perspective. Through the interview process, participants were able to share examples of academic, behavioral, and social products they believed hindered the fulfillment of the mission of Academy C, which fell into the following categories:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Factors</u>
Academics	Referral Process Software Usage and Training Student Failures
Behavioral	Student Legal Issues Discipline Procedures
Social	IMPACT Social Skills Period Home and Community Support

Referral Process (Academic). Five out of eight interviews indicated that the referral process should be revised. From the interviews, the interviewees reported that the process to get students admitted into the program is too long. Leader 5 stated that students who are referred to Academy C are not always accepted into the program. Oftentimes, being accepted into the program depends on the behavior that contributed to the referral rather than the school actually making the recommendation. When this occurs, the student is suspended for the behavior up to ten school days, but returns to his or her home school at the end of the suspension. Many times, the behavior is repeated. It is not until the student displays chronic behaviors when they are finally admitted into the program. Once the student is admitted, the student and their parent(s) still must attend an intake meeting at Academy C before the student can attend. From the time of the first referral until the intake meeting occurs, the timespan of the student out of school and waiting to be admitted is approximately three weeks. During this time, the student falls

behind academically even more because instruction is little to none because they are not in the classroom setting receiving instruction. Oftentimes, they are at home waiting for their first day at Academy C. After the intake meeting, the student has to wait another five days if they need to ride the bus to Academy C. If their parent can provide transportation, they can attend the next day after the intake meeting. For most parents, transportation is a barrier.

Software Usage and Training (Academic). The second academic product that fails to justify the attainment of Academy C is the software usage and training of OdysseyWare and other educational software. As reported in the interviews, staff and teachers do not receive training on how to utilize OdysseyWare with fidelity. Leader 2 explained that teachers learn how to navigate the software at the same time they are helping the students navigate through it. This hinders the teachers from using the software with fidelity. In order for Academy C to continue to increase the number of students earning credits and graduating, training in the educational software will need to be available and mandatory for all staff and teachers who are assigned to provide instruction or assistance to students in the classroom. In addition, students must be trained on how to properly use OdysseyWare. Leader 2 also reported that students are guessing at the answers or looking the answers up on the internet instead of taking notes on the lessons. Each unit has chapters and lessons. There is a quiz at the end of each lesson. At the completion of each chapter, students take a test. Likewise, at the end of all the units, there is a unit test. Oftentimes, students go through each step without taking notes which makes it challenging to complete the quizzes and tests with a 60 or better in order to earn credit for the course. In an interview, an interviewee stated that when the

students get the answer wrong, the teacher reset only the questions they missed instead of having the student to retest due to a lack of understanding the course content. Although the students have the opportunity to retry up to three to four times, three interviewees agreed that students are not actually mastering the content if the course information is being reset multiple times until they get the right answer. Some interviewees believed that this is a misrepresentation of the number of students who graduate understanding and mastering the subject areas.

Student Failures (Academic). According to historical documents, student failures are another academic product that fails to substantiate the mission of Academy C. Records indicated that between 2016 and 2019, there were from 190 students to 426 high school students referred to Academy C, yet less than 35% of the students graduate each year. In addition, Academy C's graduation rate decreased each year from 0.80% in 2016-17 to 0.71% in 2017-18 to 0.63% in 2018-19 school years. At the same time, according to historical documents, Academy C's dropout rate increased to 0.21% in 2016-17 to 0.29% in 2017-18 to 0.38% in 2018-19 school years. However, some struggle in earning credits towards graduation, and others either dropped out of school or were admitted into a youth development program or prison to complete their sentence in the judicial system. Findings showed that many students successfully completed their term and were able to return to their home school. There was little information to determine how successful the students were after graduating from Academy C. Majority of the students who returned to their home school continued to be academically behind and did not typically go back into the traditional classroom setting. Instead, they were assigned to a distance learning classroom where they could continue to complete the courses online. Documents

affirmed that when students return to a traditional classroom after being in an alternative educational program, their chances of passing the courses are significantly decreased.

Students' Legal Issues (Behavioral). A behavioral product that fails to substantiate the mission of Academy C is the legal issues of students. One of the largest groups of students who are referred to Academy C, according to historical documents, are students who are long-term suspended from their home school or have pending criminal charges. At the home schools, the principal has the authority to refer any student to Academy C if they have pending felonies or are awaiting trial. With many of these charges, the outcome is community service, probation, admission to a youth development center, or prison. Students who must complete community service or are placed on probation tend to remain at Academy C, but with very little academic success. Students who are confined to a youth development center or prison are considered dropouts unless they continue their education in those facilities. The students' legal issues contribute to much of the behavior challenges faced at Academy C. Leader 4 reported that, "Assaults on a school staff hinders us from meeting graduate goals because when this occurs, students are usually placed in either Tier II or Tier III programs. This limits the amount of interactions between teacher and student because students are normally left to complete online courses by themselves without having a teacher or teacher assistant on a daily basis beside them to coach and encourage them to complete the course." Yet, Leader 3 indicated that from the "time students are locked up until the time they return to Academy C, their absences play a significant role in earning credits and graduating." Oftentimes, the students do not end up graduating with their cohort, and unfortunately some even drop out of school. Leader 8 felt that there is a strong need for SRO

involvement. Academy C is limited to sharing one School Resource Office (SRO) with the other programs in the building. One of the drawbacks is that the SRO is not always available to handle an aggressive student immediately if they are dealing with another issue within the building. Leader 4 reported that the “crowds” students are hanging with is problematic to fulfilling the mission of Academy C. Normally, it is the same students who get referred to Academy C for the same behavioral issues with no changes. It was reported that some students are admitted into the program, then return to their home school, only to be referred again to the alternative educational program. Leader 4 also suggested that once they are referred to the alternative educational program, the students need to remain there until the end of the semester or school year. It was suggested by Leader 5 that a reassessment is completed before the students can return back to their traditional setting. Leader 8 noted that many students are habitual in being referred to Academy C. There are some students who have been referred to the program every year since middle school due to their behaviors.

Discipline Procedures (Behavioral). The second behavioral product that fails to substantiate the mission of Academy C is the discipline procedures. In an interview with three leaders, they agreed that all students referred to Academy C should have the same opportunity to attend based on the referral from their home school and not based on the level of the offense(s). As Leader 5 argued, “It should not be reserved for “more violent” behaviors or for students who commit criminal acts.” The interviewees contended that there are some students who exhibit behaviors that may not be violent, but remaining in the high school setting will hinder them from progressing towards graduation. Those students should be able to be accepted into the program as well. Leader 5 suggested that

each student be assigned to a staff member who will serve as their support person and help them when they begin to exhibit inappropriate behaviors. This individual will help the students process what it is that makes them behave the way they do, and what they can do to correct the behaviors.

According to historical documents and interviews with district and school leaders, there is currently no suspension program at Academy C. Leader 8 reported that Academy C does suspend students; however, it is a case-by-case situation. They reserve suspensions for extreme behaviors, such as weapons, drugs or seriously bodily injury. Unfortunately, when students misbehave based on District PNC's Code of Conduct policy, students are either sent home for the day or moved to Tier II or Tier III if their behavior becomes chronic within the program. The disadvantage to this method is that students' behavior remains unchanged with no intervention strategies.

IMPACT Social Skills Period (Social). The social product that fails to substantiate the mission of Academy C is the IMPACT Social Skills Period and Family and Community Support. IMPACT stands for “Individuals Making Personal Aadjustments to Change Things” ((District PNC, 2019d). Based on historical documents students are required to participate in IMPACT activities weekly in order to remain at the alternative educational program. Policy states that various materials, such as “Total Responsible Person training, the Pursuit of Happiness, Sanford Harmony social skills curriculum, and Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens” are some of the tools that should be used to provide social skills training. The IMPACT time is designed to be held daily or at least every other day based on the individual needs of the student or the group of students. However, interviews from leaders indicated that the IMPACT time is not

being implemented as stated in the program's policy. There is no data to support the success it has on student behavior. In addition, there is currently no curriculum for the social skills training which makes it challenging for teachers and staff to be effective leaders in social skills training. Failure to assist students in replacing negative and inappropriate behaviors will hinder students from being able to return to their home school successfully. As Leader 4 stated, "the same students get referred for the same behavior issues with no changes. Because of a lack of social skills, as Leader 3 stated, "students are admitted to Academy C then return back to their home school, only to get admitted into the program again." Two interviewees concurred that once students are referred to Academy C, they should remain there until the end of the semester or school year. All school leaders reported in the interview that this area should be reassessed before students can return to their home school.

One of the components that all of the interviewees reported that was missing in the IMPACT Social Skills period is the SEL needs of the students are not being addressed. SEL is the "process through which students achieve and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions and behaviors, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (CASEL, 2020). Research shows that there are benefits to implementing SEL in programs and schools. The first benefit is that it improves students' social and emotional skills, attitudes, relationships, academic performance, and perceptions of the classroom and/or school climate. The second benefit is that there will be a decline in students' anxiety, behavior challenges, and drug use. The third benefit is that there will be long-term improvements

in students' skills, attitudes, prosocial behavior, and academic performance. The fourth benefit is that it will be a wise financial investment for Academy C.

Family and Community Support (Social). Another important social product that fails to substantiate the mission of Academy C is family and community support. It is important for the families to be involved in their student's academic achievement and replacement behaviors. How much a family is involved in their student's education has a direct relationship to the success of the student while at Academy C and graduating from high school. According to the National Education Association (NEA) (2008), "when schools, parents, families, communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs." Leader 8 suggested a mentoring program. He believed that a mentoring program would be a cost-efficient way of increasing the positive relationships between the school, the family, and the community. It could also have the potential to boost factors that can lead to academic success, such as connectedness to the program environment and their peers, improved relationships with teachers and staff, improved feelings of academic competences, and greater access and use of other supports, such as tutoring, credit tracking, counseling, and postsecondary planning. Based on reports from interviewees, if Academy C focuses on building respectful and trusting relationships among the staff, families, and community, they will be effective in creating and sustaining family and community connections with the program. Table 11 illustrates the academic, behavioral, and social product results and substantiates and fails to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C from the perceptions of district- and school-level leaders.

Table 11*Methodology Matrix for CIPP Data Collection: Production Evaluation*

Mission: To empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life (academically, behaviorally, and socially) and to give them a second chance to succeed.

PRODUCTS	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social product results substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social product results fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees
	Leader 1	<u>Leader 1:</u> Academic *Small class size *Happy staff *Obtaining postsecondary goals Behavioral *Lower incarceration rate *Student motivation	<u>Leader 1:</u> No response provided	<u>Leader 1:</u> (Substantiate) Academic *Small class size *Happy staff Behavioral *Lower incarceration rate *Student motivation
	Leader 2	<u>Leader 2:</u> Academic: *Small class size *Liaison *Care packet Behavioral: *Hotline for students *Trusted adult; a “go- to” person. Social: *Focus on how the students can be successful in life.	<u>Leader 2:</u> Academic: *Students failures * Criminal activity Behavioral: No information provided Social: No information provided	<u>Leader 2:</u> (Substantiate): Academic *Small class size Behavioral: *Liaison *Care packet *Student motivation Social: *Social skills (Fails to Substantiate): *Criminal activity

(continued)

PRODUCTS	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social product results substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social product results fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees
	Leader 3	<u>Leader 3:</u> Academic *Small class size *Vocational training *Increase test scores *Close educational gap *Increase the instructional cost *More resources	<u>Leader 3:</u> No response provided	<u>Leader 3:</u> (Substantiate): *Small class size *Vocational training *More resources
	Leader 4	<u>Leader 4:</u> Academic: *Graduation rate *Smaller class size	<u>Leader 4:</u> Academic: *Negative peer influence (gang activity) *Revolving door (Academy C) *Referral process	<u>Leader 4:</u> (Substantiate): Academic: *Graduation rate *Smaller class sizes (Fails to Substantiate): Behavioral: *Gang activity *Re-entering the program
	Leader 5	<u>Leader 5:</u> Academic: *Improve online courses and software *Graduation credits Behavioral: *Behavior point system Social: *SEL	<u>Leader 5:</u> Academic: *Lack of training students and staff receive with OdysseyWare *Better communication between the Academy and the high schools Behavioral: *Entrance criteria	<u>Leader 5:</u> (Substantiate): Academic: *Improve online software Behavioral: *PBIS Social: *Social skills period

(continued)

PRODUCTS	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social product results substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social product results fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees
	Leader 5	<u>Leader 5:</u> Social: *Trained social workers and counselors in SEL	<u>Leader 5:</u> Social: *Students' social- emotional needs not being met	<u>Leader 5:</u> (Fails to Substantiate): Academic: *Lack of training *Lack of communication Behavioral: *Criminal activity *Suspension program Social: *Social-emotional learning
	Leader 6	<u>Leader 6:</u> No information provided	<u>Leader 6:</u> No information provided	
	Leader 7	<u>Leader 7:</u> No information provided	<u>Leader 7:</u> No information provided	
	Leader 8	<u>Leader 8:</u> Academic: *Small class size *Mastery-based learning. *3-Tier system *Increase graduation rate *Reduce the number of dropouts	<u>Leader 8:</u> Academic: *Not enough classes offered in OdysseyWare. *Limited staff *Number of credits earned *Early intervention in reading	<u>Leader 8:</u> (Substantiate): Academic: *Small class size *Mastery-based learning *Increased graduation rate *Dropout prevention *Credit recovery

(continued)

PRODUCTS	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social product results substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social product results fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees
	Leader 8	<p><u>Leader 8:</u> Behavioral: *Addition of an EC BST (Exceptional Children Behavior Support Teacher) *Professional development</p> <p>Social: *Trusting student- teacher relationship</p>	<p><u>Leader 8:</u> Behavioral: *Mediations program *Behavior issues *3-Tier system *Revolving door (Academy C) *Criminal activity *SRO involvement *Suspension program</p> <p><u>Social:</u> *Consistency of policies and procedures *Social skills resources *Lack of journaling. *Lack of mentoring program. *Lack of community support and outreach</p>	<p><u>Leader 8:</u> Behavior: *3-Tier system *PBIS</p> <p>Social: *Teacher-student relationships</p> <p>(Fails to substantiate): Academic: *Limited course offerings/OW *Limited staff *Number of failed courses *Literacy *Early intervention in reading</p> <p>Behavior: *Absence of mediation program *Assaults on school staff *Discipline issues *Habitual student referrals *Student legal issues *SRO Involvement *Lack of a suspension program 3-Tier system *Criminal issues</p>

(continued)

PRODUCTS	Interviewee (Who)	What academic, behavioral or social product results substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include direct quotes.)</i>	What academic, behavioral or social product results fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C? <i>(Answer from the perspective of the interviewee; include quotes.)</i>	Summary of findings from all interviewees
				Social: Inconsistency in policies and procedures *Community support
Academy C's 3-Year Drop-out Rate	2016-17 2017-18 2018-19			
Academy C's 3- Year Graduation Rate	2016-17 2017-18 2018-19			

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this program evaluation at an alternative educational program was to examine the effectiveness of Academy C of preventing at-risk students from dropping out. This study used a quantitative and qualitative approach that allowed me to go to sources and listen and learn, first-hand, from leaders and program's staff. The results were a powerful systematic inquiry to determine what academic, behavioral, and social practices are attaining or impeding the mission of Academy C. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with district- and school-level leaders, surveys completed by certified and classified staff at six high schools and at Academy C, and historical documents. This study was intended to determine whether the alternative program was achieving its mission, particularly the impact academic, behavioral, and social practices have on the success of the program and preventing students from dropping out. This study addressed a response to academic, behavioral, and social needs of at-risk students in order "to empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life and to give them a second chance to succeed" (District PNC, 2019d). It also provided information about improving the program's effectiveness in fulfilling its stated mission and identified practices to implement for future use within the program.

The findings of this program evaluation will disclose issues and concerns of the alternative program to the district's leadership directly from the persons most closely connected to the program. Gold's (1978) theory suggested that alternative schools offer successful experiences for students and assist in removing delinquent behaviors. Through this program evaluation, I will share these findings with a recommendation to implement some of the best practices found throughout the study.

Context Evaluation Summary

The first research question asked, “What academic, behavioral, and social practices facilitate the mission of Academy C?” The themes to emerge from the interviews included small class sizes, OdysseyWare, and the IMPACT social skills period. The small class sizes were a significant perceived influence on the mission of the program for students’ academic success. Based on the data, the small class sizes allowed for more one-to-one interaction between the teacher and student. Small class sizes help students ask questions, have direct instruction, and ultimately earn credits towards graduation. OdysseyWare is the online educational software the alternative program used to allow students opportunities to recover credits from failed courses. Data also showed that five out of eight (63 %) of the leaders believed that students benefited from OdysseyWare because without it, many students are at-risk from dropping out or not graduating with their cohort. Data revealed that 100% of the leaders indicated that the IMPACT social skills period is an integral part in carrying out the mission of Academy C because it is focused on the students’ life experiences, the behavior that contributed to students being referred, and the second chance students need in order to be successful in school and after high school.

After asking probing questions, I began to discover practices that impeded the mission of Academy C. It was determined through the findings and results of Chapter Four that the alternative educational program lacks several practices that can improve its mission in the future. The second research question asked, “What academic, behavioral, and social practices impede the mission of Academy C?” The following themes emerged from the interviews: 1) Academics-usage of OdysseyWare, location, additional staff,

professional development; Behavioral-policies and procedures, student motivation, gang activity; and Social-social-emotional learning, mental health services. According to the interviews, there were unmet needs for a program evaluation for Academy C. Ultimately, these unmet needs affect the overall mission of the alternative program.

The results of the interview showed that OdysseyWare is not being used by students with fidelity. One of the reasons for this challenge is because students lack the skills necessary to effectively complete the courses online. In addition, leaders expressed that OdysseyWare is not well-suited for many of the courses it currently has available. Therefore, there is a need for better online educational software other than OdysseyWare to aid in students recovering courses failed. One online educational software that is recommended based on the interviews is Edgenuity. Edgenuity will allow students to take career and technical courses needed for graduation requirements that are not offered through OdysseyWare. This is an important benefit because with OdysseyWare, students are only able to receive a 22-credit diploma that can only be used at a community college. With Edgenuity, students are able to earn 28 credits that are needed if a student desires to attend a four-year university after graduation. Data indicated that students are more apt to work harder on their courses in Edgenuity verses OdysseyWare because of the course offerings available.

Although small class sizes are a significant strength for Academy C, data showed that the location of Academy C created a challenge for students. Currently, all the students who are referred to an alternative setting attend Academy C, which is shared with two other alternative programs within District PNC. One of the challenges is that most students are not able to walk, and it is a challenge for parents to transport their

student. The second challenge I discovered during the interviews is that when students have to ride the bus to Academy C, they are on the bus for an extended period of time; one and half to two hours before school begins. Data revealed that the majority of the students rely on the school bus to attend the program. An interesting finding is that Academy C has a limited number of school buses which are used to pick up students from all six high schools' attendance areas. It is not known how many buses are needed to limit the amount of time students are on the bus between home to school.

In terms of staffing, there does not appear to be an adequate number of staff at Academy C. Findings revealed that there is currently only one administrator at the alternative program who attends the intake and exit meetings for students referred. If a student with disabilities is referred to Academy C, the administrator must also attend those meetings at the high school. This hinders the administrator from effectively attending to the daily operations of the program. Further examination of the findings affirmed that there is a strong need for another administrator at Academy C who can share in the daily operations of the program. Results of the interview also determined that additional teachers, teacher assistants, and support staff are needed at the program. 100% of the leaders reported that additional staff was needed to provide more direct instruction academically and behaviorally to enrolled students. This study showed that teachers licensed in content subject areas are needed for high school math, English, social studies, sciences, and special education to provide direct instruction and remediation. Likewise, teacher assistants are beneficial to providing additional academic support, classroom accommodations for special education students, and one-to-one interactions with students. Like teachers and teacher's assistants, findings show that support staff is needed

to help maintain the daily operations of the program. The lack of staff contributed to the limited communication and support within the overall function of Academy C. All leaders reported that students benefited from having a trust staff member whom they can communicate with about school and home issues versus not having an adult to monitor students' academic, behavioral, and social issues. Therefore, the results from the interviews support the need for a mentorship program between staff and students.

Further examination of the academic practices that impede the mission of Academy C concluded that teachers and support staff lack ongoing, effective training in how to provide instruction using online educational software, how to work with students with disabilities, and how to work with a diverse population in an alternative educational setting. The current format is not conducive to students learning. When students fail an assignment, teachers reset the incorrect answer, and the students are given multiple opportunities to select the correct multiple choice answer. This format is known as a process of elimination, and it does not allow teachers to gauge whether or not the students have mastered the content. Interviewees indicated that teachers should be trained on how to use OdysseyWare with fidelity and how to teach students the content through online means. It was also noted during the interviews that Academy C admitted students with disabilities, such as serious emotional, learning, and other health impairments (ADHD) in which the majority of the teachers are not trained to support. Findings suggest that teachers need to understand the major components of a student's IEP, such as the students' present level of performance, annual goals, specially designed instruction, classroom accommodations and behavior intervention plan in order to meet the students' educational needs.

In looking at the behavioral practices that impeded the mission, district- and school-level leaders reported that Academy C's current policies and procedures need to be reviewed and revised. The study showed that revisions are needed in the referral process, intake meeting and the students' initial date of attendance. The overall consensus from interviews conveyed is that when students are referred to the alternative program, the wait time for the intake meeting can be from one to three weeks. After the intake is completed, students are admitted into the program. However, if they need transportation, their wait time is an additional five days from the intake meeting. Potentially from the time students are referred to Academy C until the time of their first date of attendance can be nearly three to four weeks. Another procedure for Academy C to consider before a decision is made to exit students from the program is to share the students' progress with their home school. I recommend that the high school administrators be a part of the decision making process about whether or not students return to their school or continue at Academy C. Interviewees communicated that appropriate transitioning to the alternative program and to the home school and vice versa played an integral role in the students' success at the alternative program and when they returned to their high school. During the interviews, it was suggested that Academy C develop a point system as a way to give students accountability and autonomy in their behaviors. Each day students will begin with ten points. If they violate the rules then they lose points. The goal is to have a certain number of points in order to be considered for transitioning back to their high school after the term has ended. If the students do not have the appropriate points, then they remain at the alternative program until they have learned the appropriate or acceptable behaviors. Another revision to the policies and procedures is the consistency

of the Code of Conduct. While the Code of Conduct was created by the District PCS board members and district leaders, data showed that there is an inconsistency in how behaviors are handled at the alternative program. Interviewees reported that the rules and behavior expectations should be enforced more. All interviewees indicated that appropriate behaviors were necessary before students re-entered their home school; otherwise, they will repeat the same behaviors, and return to the alternative program.

The second behavior practice that hindered the mission of Academy C is student motivation. Data analysis in this program evaluation showed that many students who were referred to Academy C were not motivated to succeed academically or behaviorally. Interviewees consistently commented that students need to be motivated to learn and to complete courses to earn a high school diploma. One contributing factor for lack of motivation was that some students came from homes in which education was not valued or was not the main focus. Another contributing factor for lack of motivation was the students' non-compliance to expectations and authority figures. Interviewees reported that student motivation will increase if they "buy into" the program and realize that Academy C is designed to help them succeed in high school and after they graduate.

Gang activity was the third behavior practice that hindered the mission of Academy C. Findings from the interviews revealed that gang activity prevented the "second chance" component of the mission from being fulfilled. The number one contributing factor with gang activity was the close proximity of rivalry gang members. Because of the limited space at Academy C's current location, it created friction between students. Interviewees also reported that there was evidence of unmanageability of the student behaviors because of a lack of space and limited staff.

The lack of social-emotional learning was a social practice that has negatively impacted Academy C's mission. The interviewees indicated that SEL helped students have a better opportunity to return to their home school or graduate with the necessary skills to be successful in other environments. While there are more black students being suspended, being referred to Academy C, and being admitted to the alternative program, interviewees agreed that there needs to be an investigation of why? The results of the interviews suggested conversations made at the district level about the implementation of SEL in order to stop the gap between the number of students in each racial group that are being referred and are attending Academy C, especially black students. Interviewees agreed that once the gaps are located, the alternative program will be able to help those students in needed areas, which is the SEL component of the mission. To be effective in SEL for students, I recommend training for school counselors and social workers.

Another social practice that has hindered the mission of Academy C is the lack of mental health services for students. Five out of eight interviewees agreed that students should complete a psychological evaluation to serve as a baseline regarding students' social-emotional and mental health status. It was suggested in the interview that Academy C collaborate with mental health agencies within the community for services. Interviewees identified that students' behavior, emotional, and mental health needs must be met and more individualized in order for students to profit from the services offered. Services, such as individual and group counseling can help decrease many of the behaviors exhibited by the students.

Input Evaluation Summary

In answering the question, “What academic, behavioral, and social expenditures facilitated the mission of Academy C, interviewees agreed that staffing plays an integral part in the attainment of the mission. In examining the human resources, findings showed that in 2016-2017 and 2017-18 school years, there were 20.5 staff. This consisted of two administrators, three counselors, nine teachers, one special education teacher, four and a half teacher assistants, and one secretary. The amount of staff slightly decreased in the 2018-2019 school year to one administrator, two counselors, but with an Instructional Coach added to the staff. The decrease occurred during the year Academy C downsized in its location, which played a factor in the graduation and dropout rates. Interviewees indicated that the Boys and Girl Club facilities provided adequate space for the alternative program. The usage of both facilities allowed the middle school students to be at one Boys and Girls Club facility and the high school students to be at the other Boys and Girls Club facility. Spacing was sufficient enough to separate rivalry gang members and provided more opportunities for small group activities. Historical data revealed that in 2016-2017 school year, Academy C’s graduation rate was .80%. In the 2017-2018 school year, it decreased to .71%. However, when the program moved from the Boys and Girls Clubs to a District PNC facility that is shared by two other alternative programs, the graduation rate continued to decrease to .63% in 2018-2019 school year.

The budget was also a major factor in the attainment of Academy C’s mission. Historical data revealed that between 2016 and 2019, District PNC spent \$1,450,000 on staffing the alternative program which included salaries and benefits. \$18,000 per year was paid to the Boys and Girls Club that housed the high school students, and \$14,625

per year was paid to the other Boys and Girls Club that housed the middle school students. However, when the program moved to the new location in 2018-2019, the building cost was \$385,000. This expense is shared with two other alternative programs within the building. The increase in building expenses impacted the number of staff at Academy C as well as the number of students who could attend. To alleviate some of the expenditures, according to interviewee, the furniture was donated from a nonprofit organization. In addition, Academy C received mini grants to help support their expenditures. In terms of instructional resources, data revealed that the online educational software, OdysseyWare was an enormous expense. District PNC spent \$60,000 per year to use OdysseyWare that consisted of 125 licenses. OdysseyWare was a major instructional expenditure because it served to help students recover from failed courses and to graduate with a high school diploma. As indicated in the data, the operating budget for Academy C was \$5,000 per month.

In examining the informational resources, interviewees responded by addressing what needs to be implemented or revised for mission attainment. Examples of the informational resources included policies and procedures, referral process, and intake and exit meetings. Interviewees contended that Academy C is operating on the policies and procedure that was created at the conception of the program, which they agreed were outdated. Interviewees recommended that the high schools intervene early to assist students who are referred to Academy C. There was a need for ongoing communication between the home school and Academy C. The downsizing of the program has caused the program to have limited space and limited number of students able to be admitted into the program. Because the current space was being shared with two additional alternative

programs, Academy C downsized from being able to house 100 students at a time to housing 50 students at a time. This number is shared with middle school students as well. This was a major reduction in informational resources that played a role in students being able to graduate with their cohort when referred to Academy C. Historical data showed that the graduation rate decreased .17% between 2016 and 2019. The dropout rate increased .17% during the same years. In addition, the number of students who graduated decreased from 31 students in 2016-2017 school year to 25 students in the 2018-2019 school year. At the same time, data revealed that Academy C's referrals from the high schools increased from 111 students in 2016 to 327 students in 2018-2019. Due to the limited space, Academy C was selective in which students were admitted into the program. Interviewees agreed that this issue was a major concern because when students were suspended from school, they were not able to attend Tier I of Academy C. They were placed in Tier II or Tier III of Academy C. The Tier II program occurred Monday through Friday, 3:45pm--5:45pm with no transportation provided. When a student was placed in the Tier III program, they completed their coursework at home. According to data, it is unlikely that students earned credits through attending Tier II and Tier III programs because of the limited interaction with staff. Another information resource, interviewees suggested was a vocational program. A vocational or technical program will aid in increasing life skills and will focus on life experiences for students.

All interviews agreed that Academy C will benefit from additional resources that are designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities, social-emotional learning, and mental health services. Interviewees indicated that Academy C lacked sufficient funds to help students in the areas of academics, behavioral, and social. Attendance was

an informational resource that was not reported to the high schools on a weekly basis, as indicated by the interviewees. Weekly reporting of the students' attendance to the high school was one factor to determine whether the student is ready to return to his home school. In addition, interviewees felt that brochures about Academy C would benefit the parent and students when they were referred. Currently, the program does not have brochures about the program. Information about the program is shared during the intake meeting by the site administrator.

Process Evaluation Summary

A survey was conducted with certified and classified staff from the six high schools and Academy C. There were 30 participants selected to participate in the survey; however, 25 participants responded. The first questions on the survey was, "How well are goals and strategies being executed at Academy C?" Data revealed that seven respondents felt that the goals and strategies were being executed very well or extremely well, and eight respondents agreed that the goals and strategies were being executed well. However, ten out of 25 respondents indicated that the goals and strategies were not being executed well or they were unsure. Question two on the survey asked respondents, "How well are participants utilizing appropriate strategies to achieve the mission of Academy C?" Of the 25 respondents, eight indicated that appropriate strategies to achieve the mission were being used very well or extremely well. Yet, seven respondents agreed that appropriate strategies were used at a minimum. There were at least ten respondents who indicated that appropriate strategies to achieve Academy C's mission were not being used very well or they were unsure. The third question of the survey asked respondents, "How do you rate the quality of services to students at Academy C? Data showed that no

respondents indicated that the quality of services to students at Academy C were extremely well. Ten respondents believed that the quality of services to students were very well, and seven felt they were well. At least eight respondents reported that the quality of services to students were not very well or they were unsure. “How do you rate the impact Tiers I, II, and III have on assisting students with required courses at Academy C? Was the fourth questions asked on the survey. Although data showed that only five respondents agreed that Tiers I, II, and III had a very well or very extreme impact on assisting students with required courses, more than 16 respondents felt that Tiers I, II and III were assisting students with required courses at the minimum. Less than four respondents believed that Tiers I, II, and III were not assisting students with required courses or they were unsure. Data showed that more respondents felt that Tiers I, II, and III positively assisted students with required courses needed to earn credits towards graduation. In the fifth question of the survey, respondents were asked to rate the processes of Tiers I, II, and III in facilitating or impeding the mission of Academy C? Only five respondents reported that Academy C’s processes facilitated the mission of Academy C. On the other hand, 20 respondents reported that the processes of Tiers I, II, and III were negatively impacting Academy C’s mission. As previously noted, Tiers I is where the majority of the students are referred. Tiers II and III are the least desirable because students have limited staff interaction. Tier II meets 2 hours per day with no transportation provided to the student, and students placed in Tier III completes their coursework at home. Tiers II and III are typically for students with significant behaviors that prevent students from remaining in Tier I. Question six of the survey asked respondents, “How well are processes in Academy C organized and executed according

to guidelines?” Unlike the processes in Tiers I, II, and III, 18 respondents reported that the processes in Academy C are organized and being executed average to above average according to guidelines. Less than half of the respondents (seven) indicated that the processed or unorganized and not being executed well or respondents were unsure. “How well are the programs and inputs (to address the needs of the school and needs of the students) being implemented as planned?” was the seventh question on the survey to respondents. 68% of the respondents agreed that the programs and inputs were well, very well, or extremely well implemented as planned. Data showed a major difference of 32% in the respondents who indicated that the programs and inputs were not being implemented well or the respondents were unsure.

An important finding of the eighth question of the survey, “How well is Academy C using OdysseyWare according to guidelines? more than 88% of the respondents believed that Academy C was using OdysseyWare according to guidelines. Two respondents felt that OdysseyWare was not being used according to guidelines, and only one respondent reported that they were unsure about the questions. In question nine, respondents were asked to rate the quality of OdysseyWare. Analysis of the survey data revealed that six out of 25 respondents agreed that the quality of OdysseyWare was below average or they were unsure. 19 respondents positively rated that the quality of OdysseyWare was average to above average. Question ten asked respondents, “Overall, how well is Academy C operating?” While 19 respondents indicated that Academy C was operating well to very well, no respondents reported that the daily operation of Academy C was extremely well. Likewise, data showed that six respondents agreed that Academy C was not operating well with only one respondent being unsure.

The open-ended structured questionnaires provided a more in-depth look at the alternative program as well as the perceptions of the respondents about the effectiveness of the Academy C. Respondents were also asked three short-asked questions. These findings were consistent with the responses from the leaders in the interview process. The first question asked, "What academic, behavioral or social-skills processes facilitate the mission of Academy C?" According to the survey, 80% of the respondents agreed that small class sizes supported the mission of the program. They felt that the small class sizes allowed students the opportunity to perform better in the smaller setting, to achieve their goals, to complete the terms of the program, and to focus on not returning to Academy C. Respondents indicated the academic processes that impeded the mission of Academy C included 1) staffing and 2) policies and procedures. Respondents reported that due to the limited amount of staff, Academy C was not able to provide one-on-one interaction to students on a daily basis. This also hindered the amount of remediation students received for their coursework. Just as interviewees felt that a revision of the policies and procedures were needed, respondents also stated that procedures for the intake and exit meeting processes should be updated. The revision of these processes will allow a quicker turnaround time for admittance into the program and returning to the home school timelier than the current process. Currently it takes approximately three to four weeks for a student to attend Academy with no direct input from the high schools upon exiting students.

Results regarding the behavioral processes that hindered the attainment of the program's mission concluded that student motivation and disruptive or gang activity was problematic. 64% of the respondents reported that the lack of student motivation was a

contributing factor that impeded Academy C's mission. It was noted that the lack of the students' motivation had a direct impact on the completion of coursework, academic achievement, and positive outcomes. At least half of the respondents felt that the behavior expectations were not enforced consistently. Historical data showed that the suspension program at Academy C is carried out mainly for level three, four or five offenses. These offenses range from aggressive behaviors to gang activity to possession of drugs or seriously bodily injury. Because the program does not impose a consistent suspension program, many behaviors such as disruption, disrespect, insubordination, inappropriate language, or possession of tobacco products are tolerated. Data showed that these behaviors are not always shared with the home school unless the behaviors compromise the safety and welfare of others.

Based on the data, the social processes that hindered Academy C's mission are consistent with the social practices leaders indicated that had a direct relationship with the mission. According to respondents, the social process that impacted the program's mission were SEL and mental health services. After discussing SEL with respondents, 100% of the respondents supported that it provided a foundation for safe and positive learning, and enhanced students' ability to succeed in the program, careers, and life. Therefore, results determined that SEL was needed so that the students and the program can thrive. Respondents also reported that a lack of mental health services was also a key factor of the success of Academy C's mission. Analysis of the data revealed that many of the students who were accepted into the program had known and unknown mental health issues which played a significant role in their behavior as well as the program's culture.

Product Evaluation Discussion

Several participants noted that the opportunities Academy C gave to students to recover failed courses through an online educational software played an essential part in students graduating from high school with a diploma. One of the unique components about attending Academy C was that students had the opportunity to engage in mastery-based learning. Several interview participants recognized that mastery-based learning allowed students to demonstrate their level of understanding of course content in order to receive credit for the class. During this study, the online educational software Academy C used was OdysseyWare. Participants agreed that OdysseyWare had a number of positive outcomes, such as easy to navigate, selective courses, and on-demand grading. However, it lacked fidelity that was necessary to determine to what extent students were learning the course content rather than simply guessing right answers. Seven out of eight participants agreed that training for students and the staff with the online software was essential. It was noted that Academy C transitioned over to a new online educational software called Edgenuity in Fall 2020. This program was upgraded from OdysseyWare. With Edgenuity, students were able to enroll in career and technical courses, in which they were not able to do so with OdysseyWare. In addition, students had the opportunity to earn 28 credits instead of 22 credits. With 28 credits, students were able to attend a four-year college after graduating. Unlike earning 22 credits, where students could only enroll in a two-year college after high school. Five of the eight participants interviewed believed that mastery-based learning increased the graduation rate and test scores, and decreased behavior issues and prevented students from dropping out. 100% of the

participants agreed that the small classroom size was a significant factor in students' success in mastery-based learning at Academy C.

The presence of human, instructional and informational resources at Academy C allowed more opportunities to implement structures that helped attain its stated mission. Some of the resources that were currently available to the alternative program have assisted in its success thus far. Although Academy C lost a position in the 2018-19 school year, the addition of an Instructional Coach and Special Education Teacher continued to be instrumental in the professional development for teachers and staff to better serve students. Six participants noted that an increase in human resources will allow for additional highly qualified teachers who can provide more one-to-one or small group instruction with students. Additional staff will also be an important role in providing remediation for students who are already behind academically when they are referred to Academy C. Leaders also indicated that an assistant principal was needed to help absorb the daily operation of the program. The assistant principal will be able to attend some of the intake and exit meetings, implement behavior expectations, and ensure policies and procedures are consistently implemented. There were also instructional resources substantiated the mission of Academy C, according to interviewees. Historical data revealed that more up-to-date laptops, new TI-83 calculators and reading and math remediation resources were needed. The upgrade of the online educational software had a much more positive impact on the academic success of students in earning credits needed to graduate with a diploma. During the interviews, it was noted that Academy C changed its software from OdysseyWare to Edgenuity. Edgenuity provided students with the opportunity to take career and technical courses, when they were not able to do so with

OdysseyWare. Edgenuity gave students opportunities to graduate with 28 credits instead of 22 credits with OdysseyWare. With the 28 credit diploma students are able to attend a four-year university after graduating unlike the 22 credit diploma with OdysseyWare. Through earning graduation credits using OdysseyWare, students attended a two-year college for at least one year before being accepted into a four-year university. The informational resources that helped substantiate the mission of Academy C were designed to support the program. These resources consisted of staff training and development and vocational training for students. Many of the leaders expressed that teachers benefited from being trained on how to effectively teach online courses with fidelity. Staff training and development in teaching online courses served to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching as well as student learning. Vocational training will prepare students for the real world which is an important process in their postsecondary endeavors. During the interview, interviewees suggested that Academy C create a partnership with local businesses so students can learn a technical trade before graduating. This will motivate students to obtain their diploma because they will be able to engage in on-the-job training that will prepare them for a career.

According to the results of the interviews and surveys, PBIS is a behavior product that substantiated the mission of Academy C. PBIS is also an integral part of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). MTSS is a systemic, continuous improvement framework in which data-based problem solving and decision-making occurs to support students academically and behaviorally. According to findings, PBIS creates a positive school culture, makes a safer learning environment, and helps develop trusting student-teacher relationships. In addition, at least five interviewees agreed that PBIS helped to

decrease students engaging in criminal activity because it provided them with evidence-based strategies focusing on behavioral expectations, positive awards, and clear consequences.

The 3-Tier System Academy C has in place gauges the type of interventions imposed on students to help them exhibit more appropriate behaviors in the school setting. Based on findings, the majority of the students were assigned to Tier 1, in which the students require less behavior interventions. According to historical data, Tier I services were the foundation for students' behavior and academics. For most students, Tier I gave them what they needed to be successful and to prevent future problems. When students were not successful in Tier I, they were reassigned to Tier II. This tier focused on improving specific behaviors and skill deficits students have. Providing support to these groups of students allowed more opportunities for practice and feedback while maintaining more structure and support. Three interviewees contended that students benefited from completing an assessment in this tier to identify which skill(s) to address. In addition, Tier II helped students develop the skills they needed to profit from Academy C. The most intensive support Academy C offered was in Tier III. These supports were more intensive and required an individualized approach of developing and carrying out interventions. At this level, students were placed on homebound if their behaviors were to the extent that they may harm themselves or others. The Behavior Support Teacher worked with these students to develop a plan related to behavior and academics to help them transition back into Tier I or II.

Interviews and surveys suggested that SEL was a social product that substantiated the mission of Academy C. All interviewees reported that students and staff benefited

from SEL. Therefore, it is vital for staff to be trained in self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills. Because of SEL, findings showed that students were better equipped to handle Academy C's structure and different personalities of other students in the program. By incorporating SEL in the IMPACT social skills period, participants agreed that students can be successful in the program and earn the required credits to graduate. Based on historical data, the IMPACT social skills period should focus on the following SEL components: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness. These skills will help students behave more appropriately in all settings.

Another social product that substantiated the mission of Academy C is a trusting student-teacher relationship. At least half of the participants expressed the importance of establishing a warm and nurturing environment where students were able to connect with a trusting teacher. The teacher served as a "go to" person for the students to help them work through academic and behavior challenges as they arise. When students and teachers are able to create a trusting relationship, the mission of Academy C can be accomplished.

The second question focused on what academic, behavioral, and social products failed to substantiate the mission of Academy C. This was important to the study because the mission of the program is to "to empower students to achieve excellence in all areas of life and to give them a second chance to succeed" (District PNC, 2019d). Therefore, the academic products that hindered the mission are the referral process, software usage and training, and student failures.

Participants identified the referral process as an area that should be reviewed and revised. Many participants indicated that the process of referring Academy C to the first day of attendance was too long. After a referral is made by the high school for students to attend the program, the length of time it takes to schedule an intake meeting was nearly three weeks. This was a dilemma because during the wait time, students were falling behind academically even more. In addition, once the intake meeting occurred students still had a five-day wait for transportation to begin. This process took a total of three to four weeks from the time students were referred until their first day at Academy C. The drawback to this process was that if a student was not admitted into the program, they were in jeopardy of not earning credits for that semester because of the extended period of time they were out of the traditional school setting or the alternative program. This caused students to get further and further behind academically. Behaviors also worsened without the intensive interventions and supports. Another barrier participants reported was the wait time for bus transportation for students who were admitted into the program. After the intake process, students waited an additional five days for bus transportation to begin, causing more wait time before they began at Academy C.

Another academic product that failed to substantiate the mission of Academy C was the online software usage and training. The misuse and lack of training on the online educational software hindered students from understanding how to navigate OdysseyWare and Edgenuity, and it created a challenge to completing courses. Additional obstacle was teachers' lack of appropriate online teaching training to assist the students with navigating the software. Participants revealed that oftentimes teachers were

learning how to maneuver the software at the same time the students are, which prevented the student from mastering the course content for credit.

A third academic product that inhibited the mission of Academy C was student failures. Between 2016 and 2019 the average number of students who graduated from the alternative program was 30 per year. Based on historical data, the number of students referred to Academy C in the 2016-17 school year was 426; in 2017-18 school year was 228, and 2018-19 school year was 190. The students who did not graduate fell into one of the following categories: 1) returned to their home school, 2) dropped out of school, or 3) confronted with criminal charges and sentenced to a youth development center. In an interview with the site principal, he indicated that approximately 62% of the students were able to return to their base school after completing their term at Academy C. He further explained that 25% of students dropped out of the program, nine percent graduated from the program, and only four percent went to a youth development center or prison. Although many of the students were able to return to their base school, students were often behind academically, exhibited more behaviors in the classroom, and were referred back to the alternative program. This revolving door made it difficult for Academy C to fulfill the mission of “empowering students to achieve excellence in all areas of life and to give them a second chance to succeed” (District PNC, 2019d).

Legal issues for students was a behavior product that hindered the mission of Academy C because students were often detained until their court date or until they were transferred to a juvenile facility. Students who were long-term suspended or who faced legal issues made up the majority of the alternative program. These students struggled with structure and complying to rules and regulations. Findings showed that these

students were significantly behind their grade level due to lack of participation in the classroom. Participants also agreed that when students were locked up, their absences played a significant role in earning credits to graduate, and had a direct relationship on the Academy C's mission for second chances.

Another behavior product that resulted in a failure to obtain the mission of Academy C was the current discipline procedure. 100% of the leaders interviewed agreed that not all students who are referred to Academy C were accepted. They argued that students were admitted based on the severity of the behavior rather than the school's recommendation for alternative placement. Although there were severe behaviors that warranted a change in educational placement, there were still other behaviors that were not conducive to the traditional high school setting. Interviewees concern was the students who exhibited violent behaviors were not admitted into the program based on the current discipline procedures. When this happens, the traditional high school is left to suspend the students for up to ten days and no change in educational placements. At this time, Academy C is the only alternative program for high school students in District PNC designed to admit students with discipline issues. One of the suggestions that was made in the interviews was for Academy C to have a clear and concise discipline policy for students being admitted, attending and exiting the alternative program. At the time of this study, no document existed and each discipline was on a case-by-case procedure.

100% of all the leaders interviewed and respondents surveyed believed that the IMPACT social skills period was the greatest intervention strategy at Academy C to decrease student behaviors and social stressors. Based on responses from interviewees, respondents of the survey, and historical data, the IMPACT period was not consistently

being used as outlined in the program's handbook. Findings revealed that the program does not schedule the IMPACT period on a daily basis as stated; therefore, the behavior and social support student needs are limited. When incorporated within the IMPACT period, SEL can help students gain self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making skills, relationship skills, and social awareness, based on information provided by interviewees and research (CASEL, 2020). When these factors are prevalent, there will be a decline in students' behaviors, mental health issues, and drug use. In addition, there will be a long-term improvement in students' basic life skills, attitudes, prosocial behaviors, and academic performance. However, that is no data was available to support the success of the IMPACT period; however, interviewees and participants believed that it is a great opportunity for the program's mission to be accomplished and students to have success within the program and after they graduate.

The lack of family and community support was a social product that hindered the mission of Academy C. This support was crucial to the academic and behavioral success of each student in the program. Research showed that when families and communities are involved in students' education, the students attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and perform at higher levels (NEA, 2008). Although parents were encouraged to be a part of their student's education, they were only required to attend the intake and exit meetings. One interviewee believed that a mentoring program was a good factor in connecting students with the community. Currently, Academy C does not have a mentoring program for their students. Many of the leaders believed that a mentoring program can lead to an increase in students' academic and behavioral successes. In addition, the mentoring program can close the gap in the relationships between the

student and teachers, provide more opportunities for tutoring, credit tracking, postsecondary planning, and behavior intervention planning. The absence of a mentoring program failed to create and sustain family and communication connections that are needed to fulfill Academy C's mission.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

This study was a program evaluation of an alternative educational program in a school district in North Carolina for high school students at-risk for dropping out. The literature review identified two alternative programs on which to base a comparative evaluation. In the literature review, Hefner-Packer ((1991) and Chalker (1997) described the Separate Alternative School. This alternative model is separate from the traditional school, and has diverse academic and social skills programs. These schools mainly provide services to students with chronic behaviors and students who are involved in the juvenile justice system. Raywid (1994) further identified a Type II program, Last Chance, which was designed to be an option for students with disruptive behaviors. However, three different criteria synthesized from the literature were used to conduct the program evaluation using the CIPP method. The overall report for the alternative program indicated that it provided minimal educational services to the students in the areas of academics, behavioral, and social skills. Based on the interviews, surveys, and historical data examined, it appears that mastery-based learning, resources (human, instructional, and informal), PBIS, 3-Tier System, SEL, and student-teacher relationships are areas that substantiated the mission of Academy C, while the referral process, software usage and training, student failures, legal issues, discipline procedures, IMPACT Social Skills Training period, and family and community support are areas that failed to substantiate

the mission of Academy C. Each of the participants pointed out that the success of the mission was a critical factor in the sustainability of the alternative educational program.

Discussion of Implications

This study may have significant implications for Academy C as district leaders consider sustaining Academy C to provide students with alternative educational options. Whether implementing a new program or continuing an existing program, knowing the perceived effectiveness and on-track rates for students may help leaders make more informed decisions. Additionally, knowing the various types of programs available and the specific components that staff feel were impactful for student success can better inform leaders when creating programs to fit their district's needs.

This study may also have budgetary implications for Academy C. As District PNC wrestles with the ongoing battle between necessary budget cuts and necessary instructional programming, this information can inform decisions. Whereas the district may consider the costs associated with various programs to be a limitation, the program's successes both perceptually and statistically, may outweigh the actual cost.

This study may also have implications for the teachers at Academy C as they reflect on best practices and what best serves the needs of at-risk students. The perceptual data identified in this study can better inform academic practices in the classroom and behavioral and social practices as they interact with students. As teachers work to motivate students, this study may provide some clear examples of what has worked with varying student populations in nontraditional high school settings. This study may also impact the perceptions of teachers who consider alternative educational programs as a challenge to traditional high schools. As nontraditional programs emerge, teachers may

be leery of computer-based instruction learning. This study may better inform teachers of the positive impact alternative educational programs may have on student outcomes.

Discussion of Recommendations for Future Research

To expand upon this study in the future, it would be beneficial to survey students and parents. This would provide data about their perceptions and suggestions about the overall success of the alternative educational program in District PNC. When all stakeholders are involved a sense of ownership can create positive results. Future research could include quantitative and qualitative investigation of future research should focus on the following:

1. Edgenuity should be examined to determine whether the qualitative of the program is more effective than OdysseyWare to help students master the subject content and earn credits for graduation.
2. Alternative program is in critical need of an assistant principal, highly qualified teachers, and support staff. An assistant principal will be able to assist with the referral, intake, and exit processes as well as support the principal in the overall operation of the program. The additional highly qualified teachers can provide students with remediation and to ensure students are utilizing the online educational software with fidelity. Additional support staff will be able to provide one-to-one direct instruction and assistance to students.
3. Vocational training and opportunities is suggested for the students as they transition out of high school. Vocational opportunities can be an avenue to motivate students to do well and graduate.

4. SEL and mental health services should be available to students to learn coping skills that will help them display more appropriate behaviors at the alternative program, home school, and society. These social practices may also significantly decrease or eliminate students' legal issues and discipline problems.

Whether students are in a traditional high school or an alternative educational setting, school districts are responsible for providing a learning environment where all students can attain success. In today's society, there are many students who exhibit disruptive behaviors, failing multiple courses, or considering dropping out of school. However, this study sought to examine academic, behavioral, and social practices that can be effective within alternative educational programs to help students who are unable to succeed in traditional high school.

Conclusion

When I began this study nearly three years ago, my concerns were the number of students in attendance, the percentage of students who graduated, dropped out or reassigned, and available resources. Conducting this study made me realize the need for an alternative educational program in the district. There is evidence to support the research literature in this study that the alternative program is somewhat good for the disruptive student mainly because the classroom setting is smaller in reference to the student-teacher ratio. This study investigated the perception of administrators, teachers, social workers, and counselors at Academy C and at the high schools. The results revealed that while there are some practices that are positively impacting the program's mission, there still remain some practices that need to be updated or revised in order for the program to continue to grow.

It would be interesting to do a follow up study and research how many students who returned to their home school at the end of their term and graduated with a high school diploma. It would also be interesting to determine if their behaviors improved when they returned to their home school.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions (*Leaders 7 and 9*)

Appendix A

Interview Questions (*District-Level Leaders*)

1. What are the needs of Academy C to attain the mission?
2. What are the needs of the students at Academy C to attain the mission?
3. What educational practices or strategies support mission attainment of Academy C?
4. List educational practices that need to be implemented in order to attain the mission of Academy C
5. What specific student services promote and/or impede mission attainment?
6. What has been the cost of the informational resources of Academy C, such as the organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?
7. How efficient and cost-effective Academy C uses its informal resources (electronic, audio-visual, physical form, hardware, software)?
8. How many people have been employed at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?
9. What academic, behavior, and social-skills practices facilitate and/or impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
10. What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures facilitate and/or impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
11. What academic, behavioral or social-skills product results substantiate or fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

For District-Level Leader 8 and 9 Only

1. How many people have been employed at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?
2. What has been the cost of employees at Academy C in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?
3. What has been the cost of OdysseyWare in 20-16-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19?

Appendix B

Interview Questions (*School-Level Leaders*)

Appendix C

Interview Questions (School Level Leaders)

1. What specific student services promote/ impede mission attainment?
2. What student services are needed for mission attainment?
3. What are the needs of Academy C?
4. What are the needs of the students at Academy C?
5. What has been the cost of the informational resources of Academy C, such as the organization's structure, systems, processes, procedures, and policies?
6. How efficient and cost-effective Academy C uses its informal resources (electronic, audio-visual, physical form, hardware, software)?
7. Are strategies being implemented by the school district to address the needs and to attain the mission of Academy C?
8. What academic, behavior, and social-skills practices facilitate and/or impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
9. What academic, behavioral or social-skills expenditures facilitate and/or impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
10. What academic, behavioral or social-skills product results substantiate or fail to substantiate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?

Appendix C

Survey Questions (*Certified and Classified Staff*)

Appendix C

Survey Questions
(Certified and Classified Staff)

Please respond to the statements below using a scale of 1 – 4 with 1 being Not Very Well to 5 being Extremely Well. (1) NW = Not Very Well, (2) W = Well, (0) NS = Not Sure, (3)W = Very Well, (4) EW= Extremely Well. Simply check the box representing the appropriate letter.

Survey Questions:	NW=1	W=2	NS=0	VW=3	EW=4
1. How well are goals and strategies being executed at Academy C?					
2. How well are you utilizing appropriate strategies to achieve the mission of Academy C?					
3. How do you rate the quality of services to students at Academy C?					
4. How do you rate the impact Tiers I, II, and III have on assisting students with required courses at Academy C?					
5. How do you rate the processes Tiers I, II, and III facilitate or impede the mission of Academy C?					
6. How well are processes in Academy C organized and executed according to guidelines?					
7. How well are the programs and inputs (to address the needs of the school and needs of the students) being implemented as planned?					
8. How well is Academy C using OdysseyWare according to guidelines?					
9. How would you rate the quality of OdysseyWare?					
10 Overall, how well is Academy C operating?					

Short Answers

- 11 What academic, behavioral or social-skills processes facilitate the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
- 12 What academic, behavioral or social-skills processes impede the attainment of the mission of Academy C?
- 13 What three strategies are necessary to ensure that teachers remain focused on the program's mission?