

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Opportunity Network

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One Bright Ray Community High School- Fairhill Campus
Instructional Site Visit Summary
May 31, 2017

Provider: One Bright Ray/IECI
Contract Term: FY 2013-FY 2017
Program capacity: 200

Site Visit Date: Tuesday, April 4, 2017- 10:45 a.m.
IEP Compliance: 100%
Average Daily Attendance: 53.2%

Walkthrough Review Team:

Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways
Elvis Mucaj, Strategy Analyst
Ebony McCormick, Assistant Program Coordinator
Kristin Combs, Director, School Organization
Pawel Bogdanowicz, Associate, Strategic Analytics

Program Staff:

Marcus Delgado, CEO, One Bright Ray, Inc.
Joycet Velasquez, Chief Academic Officer
Melissa Pergine, Principal
Kara Fisher, Director, Curriculum and Instruction
Emily Trunfio, Dean of Academics

Overview of Instructional Site Visits:

Instructional site visits consisted of four main parts: **Academic Success Questions with Leadership**; **Academic Success Questions with Teachers**; **Academic Success Questions with Students**; and **Classroom Observations**. **Academic Success Questions with Leadership** was driven by standardized questions that focused on: data and academic outcomes; academic outcomes versus goals; and preparation for classroom observations. **Academic Success Questions with Teachers** was driven by standardized questions that focused on: the use of academic assessments; academic outcomes versus goals; and the school's overall academic performance. **Academic Success Questions with Students** was driven by standardized questions that focused on: student backgrounds and previous educational experiences; academic expectations set by Teachers; tests, grading procedures, and supports from Teachers; overall level of satisfaction with the program and recommendations for improvement; the program's mission; the program's Special Education services; and food and health services. **Classroom Observations** was guided by a standardized Classroom Observation Form that assessed elements of: the classroom environment; instruction; and assessments.

Comments/ Considerations:

OBR Fairhill serves students in grades 11 and 12 only. Students transfer to OBR Fairhill after they accumulate the credits required to become 11th graders. Taken together, the capacity of OBR's Fairhill and Simpson campuses is 400 students. As a result of the programs' grade configurations, each site rarely has exactly 200 students enrolled. In addition to Simpson and Fairhill, OBR manages a third accelerated program, Elmwood campus, which opened this school year. One Bright Ray is currently undergoing accreditation through Middle States Association. OBR Simpson received ratings of **Proficient** in all components within each domain assessed during this mid-year evaluation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Academic Success Questions with Leadership

OBR Fairhill leadership discussed and presented reading and math growth data from the previous school year. In reading, 25% of students made no gains, 20% made less than one year of growth, 18% made one year growth, and 37% of students made two or more years of growth. In mathematics, 31% of students made no gains, 20% of students made less than one year of growth, 20% of students made one year growth, and 29% of students made two or more years of growth. Program leadership discussed their "TABE pilot program", which they expect will steadily increase skill gains moving forward. The TABE pilot program began this school year in one English

class. That Teacher is working with OBR leaders to use TABE data to teach specific skill deficits. OBR Fairhill added a dean of academics to the program's leadership team this year to more closely support teaching and learning and to align with their overall goal of focusing more on Teachers' needs. To that end, Teachers receive more regular observations and feedback this year.

OBR Fairhill leadership presented and discussed retention and graduation data from the previous school year. Of all eligible seniors, 81% graduated last year, and the program had a retention rate of 72%. This retention rate is higher than the network average and OBR Fairhill leadership attributed the high rate to many students returning to the program after brief hiatuses. OBR conducts home visits, and it is through this outreach that they re-engage many students.

OBR Fairhill uses final product check points as one of their interim assessments to track progress towards goal achievement. In addition, two written assessments are required for every class each module. Teachers are required to input at least three grades into PowerSchool on a weekly basis. The program Principal checks PowerSchool to ensure that grades are being entered as expected.

The Principal and other program administrators visit classes daily for informal observations. These frequent checks allow leaders to catch any issues or areas for improvement in a timely manner. Leadership provides Teachers with feedback based on informal and formal observations, and all Teachers have developed individual growth plans for this school year. Professional development topics are determined based on classroom observations and the needs of Teachers. Teachers are also anonymously surveyed to get their opinions on what topics should be covered during professional development. OBR administrators outline professional development topics in advance for the full school year, but will adjust topics and sequences based on real-time goals and areas for improvement.

OBR Fairhill administrators discussed what the review team should expect to see during classroom observations. High levels of student participation and engagement should be evident. A standard board configuration should be observed in all classrooms. Each class should have a storyboard and driving questions to guide the lesson. In addition, positive interactions between students and teachers should be evident during classroom observations.

Academic Success Questions with Teachers

Three Teachers participated in the Academic Success Questions with Teachers: Ms. Gryn (Art & Art History); Ms. Carter (Forensic Science and Biology); and Ms. Marshall (English 1 & 2). Teachers discussed the assessments that they use to monitor student learning. The assessments include oral assessments, written assessments, warm-ups and closing activities. They use independent work grades to assess skill levels before they move on to begin a new unit. In addition, they use final product check points every two weeks to assess students' progress towards their final products. Teachers talked about re-teaching skills when assessments results show that students have not mastered certain content. When only a few students show signs of struggling with the material, Teachers invite those students to receive one-on-one or small group instruction after school.

Teachers discussed OBR's organization-wide goal to improve TABE scores, which has resulted in the implementation of the TABE pilot program. They explained the pilot program as providing mini lessons to address skill deficiencies that are flagged in TABE results. Students are then pre- and post- tested to determine the effectiveness of the mini lessons intervention. Teachers informed the review team that in general, all Teachers are working to bring TABE data into their classrooms to inform instruction.

Teachers discussed the kinds of supports that they receive from program administration. The program's Principal and Deans are in their classrooms almost daily to provide informal observations and feedback. Ms. Trunfio, Dean of Academics, was credited with being a great thought partner for Teachers in developing instructional strategies

and classroom activities. Teachers also found Ms. Fisher, OBR Director for Curriculum and Instruction, as a very helpful source for curriculum and lesson plan support.

Teachers noted that parents and students have access to grades in PowerSchool, and that progress reports are published every two weeks for students. The program uses a color coded system (green, red, orange, yellow, etc.), to highlight students' progress and then administrators makes phone calls home to inform the parents of struggling students about their children's progress. Teachers acknowledged that students know their colors at any given time, and that their progress matters to them.

When asked if they receive support analyzing data and making instructional shifts, the Teachers responded positively. They stated that they feel incredibly supported and welcomed by the program administration, and that program leaders have an open door policy. The program Principal makes time for everyone and makes them feel as if all of their classes are equally important. The Teachers have found professional satisfaction at OBR Fairhill. They are proud to work in a place where students are so happy to have found school success after not being successful in their previous schools.

Academic Success Questions with Students

Three students were selected by program leadership to participate in the Academic Success Questions with Students. The students were asked to talk about the kinds of tests they take in school. The TABE, Keystones, and written assignments every 2 weeks were among the assessments that they discussed. Students talked about how they check PowerSchool often to see their grades on assignments, tests, and final course marks. OBR Fairhill supports them with postsecondary planning by providing college visits, the Senior Seminar course, and OBR Seminar. It is in the seminar classes that they complete resumes, cover letters, college applications and job applications. When asked if they felt that OBR Fairhill was preparing them for college, the students replied that the school was not adequately preparing them for college. They thought that some of their peers have very low skills and that Teachers "dumb down" lessons to meet the ability level of students with lower skills. Students informed review team members that the longest written works they have produced at OBR Fairhill were five-paragraph essays.

When asked what they considered to be the best thing about the school, students mentioned Teachers first. They considered OBR Teachers to be supportive, encouraging, and having positive attitudes, which was in contrast to most of their previous experiences in others schools. When asked what they would improve about the program, students talked about wanting music, sports, and a School Nurse.

Classroom Observations

Review team members observed a World History class for about ten minutes and 11 students were present in class during the observation period. The observation began at the start of the class period. Classroom walls displayed student final projects, classroom procedures, and instructional resources. The student work observed was from English and consisted of mostly pictures that were hand drawn using crayon or marker; little written work was displayed other than a few sentences. The World History class warm-up asked students to write one thing that they learned from yesterday's reading. The focus of the lesson was North Korea and the treatment of the North Korean people by their government. It was unclear how the lesson aligned with Pennsylvania Common Core Standards. After the warm-up, the classroom Teacher began handing back written assessments that had been graded. It took the Teacher more than five minutes to hand out the papers to the 11 students that were present in class. Review team members observed that the assessments seemed to be mixed in with other papers, which delayed the process. Most of the students in class were engaged with the classroom activity. One student was seemingly asleep with his head down, and there was no redirection by the Teacher. Review team members were not made aware of any special circumstances affecting that particular student. The depth of engagement observed in the class was basic recall and demonstration of understanding.

Review team members observed a Chemistry class for ten minutes and 13 students were present in class during the observation. Classroom walls displayed student final projects, classroom procedures, and instructional resources. Review team members observed very low level student work displayed on the walls that consisted of definitions for different types of chemical bonds with hand-drawn diagrams and pictures. All students in the class were on-task during the observation. The Teacher was delivering a lesson while students took guided notes from the board. The Teacher would stop the lesson at times to ask the class questions, which served as verbal checks for understanding. The focus of the lesson was for students to apply their knowledge to chemical equations. About six minutes into the observation, the class transitioned to writing definitions for chemistry terms in their note books, which served as a final product checkpoint. The depth of student engagement observed was basic recall and demonstration of understanding.

Review team members observed a Spanish class for ten minutes and 14 students were present in class during the observation. Classroom walls displayed student work, class procedures, and instructional resources. All students were on-task during the observation. The focus of the lesson was learning to annotate and discuss Peru's national treasure, Machu Pichu. The class was reading together as a group, with students taking turns reading aloud. Students were highlighting or underlining main ideas in the reading and were asked by the Teacher to share the sections that they chose to highlight. The Teacher called on different students to provide answers about which sections they highlighted. There was evidence to suggest that students were asked to explain why they chose certain areas of the reading to highlight. The depth of student engagement observed was basic recall and demonstration of understanding.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that OBR Fairhill increase the level of rigor and the depth of engagement throughout the program. OBR has all of the necessary structures in place (e.g., an administrator for curriculum support; feedback loops for teachers, etc.) to implement an academic campaign to increase rigor. Although students often enter the program with very low skills, it is important that learning even the most basic concepts goes deep and that students are pushed to connect, evaluate, and analyze content. The review team also recommends that OBR Fairhill develop a campaign to address the program's low attendance rate. Low attendance may be connected to the program's grading system and module calendar. Examining monthly attendance and within module attendance may reveal trends that can be directly combated with targeted interventions.