

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Opportunity Network

440 N. BROAD STREET, 2nd Floor
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19130

Christina Grant
Assistant Superintendent

Telephone (215) 400-5827
Fax (215) 400-4179

Camelot Academy Instructional Site Visit Summary May 31, 2017

Provider: The Camelot Schools of Pennsylvania, L.L.C
Contract Term: FY 2013-2017
Program capacity: 300

Site Visit Date: Thursday, March 23, 2017- 11:00 a.m.
IEP Compliance: 100%
Average Daily Attendance: 71.7%

Review Team:

Christina Grant, Assistant Superintendent
Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways
Marcus De Vose, Assistant Director, Transition
Darryl Johnson, Transition Liaison
Marlon Riddick, Transition Liaison
Nefertiti White, Special Education Director
Kimberly Grahn, Principal, Crossroads Accelerated Academy
Laura McHugh, Spring Point Partners

Program Staff:

Milton Alexander, Vice President, Region I, Camelot Schools
Scott Cruttenden, Regional Director, Camelot Schools
Kevin Marx, Executive Director
Alyssa Boyle, Principal
Greg McCleary, Program Manager
Melita Johnson, Special Education Director

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.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Academic Success Questions with Leadership

Camelot Academy leadership discussed and presented the program's reading and mathematics growth data from the 2015-2016 school year. In reading, 13% of students grew two or more grade levels. In mathematics, 47% of students grew two or more grade levels. The program administers the TABE and the SMI/SRI to gauge student growth in reading and mathematics. Average daily attendance was 74% for the prior school year, and student retention was also 74% last school year. The program holds resource team meetings each morning before school and common planning meetings every Wednesday with all staff. During Wednesday meetings, administrators provide student and program performance data trends, and the staff develop strategies for improvement or maintenance. The program also convenes meetings at the end of every day to debrief about the day's event as a whole staff.

Camelot Academy uses a Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) to ensure that they are keeping their contractual obligations and are meeting School District accountability standards. The CIP includes performance targets, baseline data, and strategies to support achieving targeted performance. The program uses Google Docs to capture information related to individual students. Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) are stored in Google Docs, along with notes regarding interventions or parent/guardian outreach. All staff access the system to see what efforts have been made on behalf of a student and what individual learning plans are in place for a student. The Google Docs system and regular all staff meetings facilitate communication and collaboration among staff, which Camelot Academy leadership deemed to be extremely important for holistically supporting their students. The program produces midyear and end-of-year data reports, which they use to develop Action Plans for improvement.

Camelot Academy uses a nationally recognized common instructional framework from Jobs for the Future (JFF), and is a national demonstration school for JFF. The framework's six instructional strategies are used in all of Camelot Academy's classrooms. The strategies support engaging instruction, rich questioning, and literacy/numeracy skill building. The program administers the TABE to all students three times per year to get baseline and growth data. Teachers use test results to develop lesson plans and learning support strategies for students.

Program leadership discussed the information that they share with parents and guardians. The program issues and sends home eight report cards each year. The program hosts report card conferences for parents and guardians. Teachers are required to update grade books on a daily basis, so that parents and students are aware of academic progress in real time. Parents are invited to participate in periodic reviews. Teachers are required to make phone calls home weekly to parents to provide them with both positive updates and any areas of concern. Program leadership noted that they have an open door policy for parents.

Camelot Academy leadership described what we should expect to see in classrooms. Shared norms should be evident throughout the school. Classes should be focused on rigor and using higher order thinking despite the low skill levels that students often bring with them to the program. Instructional strategies should be evident in classes, including literacy circles, writing to learn, and group work. Off task behaviors should be minimized because students are engaged in learning. Lesson plans should be designed using backward mapping, and all lesson plans should be posted outside classrooms. Lesson plans should include objectives and standards that are directly aligned to the School District's curriculum.

Classroom Observations

Review team members observed a middle school Social Studies class for approximately ten minutes and 17 students were present in class during the observation. Classroom walls displayed student work, classroom procedures, and instructional resources. Lesson plans, objectives, and the class agenda were posted. All students were on task during the observation. The class was engaged in direct instruction, and the Teacher used questioning to get all students involved with the lesson. A great deal of student participation was evident and students appeared to be excited about answering questions. The depth of engagement observed challenged students to analyze and apply concepts.

Review team members observed a high school English class for approximately ten minutes and 8 students were present in class during the observation. Classroom walls displayed student work, classroom procedures, and instructional resources. Lesson plans, objectives, and the class agenda were posted. All students were on task during the observation. Students were engaged in an independent writing exercise to summarize what they saw in a video. Students were required to incorporate certain vocabulary words into their writing. The Teacher circulated the room and engaged every student in a check for understanding. The depth of engagement observed challenged students to analyze and apply concepts.

Review team members observed a middle school Science class for approximately ten minutes. Classroom walls displayed student work, classroom procedures, and instructional resources. Lesson plans, objectives, and the class agenda were posted. All students were on task during the observation. Review team members entered the classroom at the start of the class period. Students came into class, got their materials for the warm-up and immediately got to work with no loss of instructional time. The class then efficiently transitioned to reviewing the warm-up activity. The Teacher asked questions and students raised their hands to provide answers. The depth of engagement observed challenged students to analyze and apply concepts.

Academic Success Questions with Teachers

Three Teachers participated in the Academic Success Questions with Teachers: Ms. Jacob (high school Math), Ms. Harrison (Special Education), and Mr. Fortune (middle school English). Teachers discussed the assessments that they use to monitor student learning. They administer quizzes, end of unit tests, Do Now's, and exit tickets. They reported engaging in a great deal of one-on-one dialogue with students to gauge individual progress and check for understanding. Teachers adjust their lesson plans based on assessment results in an effort to accommodate student learning needs. Teachers talked about using different instructional strategies to re-teach concepts that students do not master, and they modify tests for Special Education students as needed.

Teachers discussed the academic data that is shared with parents and guardians. The program issues progress reports, and phone calls are made to parents to keep them aware of behavior and academic updates. Teachers talked about sharing both positive and negative updates with parents. The program hosts parent-teacher conferences, report card conferences, and provides homebound instruction for students on temporary medical leave.

Teachers discussed the supports that they receive with analyzing academic data and making appropriate instructional shifts. Common planning time and Wednesday professional development affords the opportunity for them to engage in collaboration, improve their teaching skills, and learn about best practices for reaching students. Teachers also talked about team meetings, end of the day meetings and informal and formal observations conducted by the Principal and Special Education Director. During the program's various staff meetings, expectations are reinforced for Teachers and they have the opportunity gain clarity about expectations, and general feedback related to how they are performing as a group.

Teachers were asked to share any recommendations they have for the School District in relation to Camelot Academy. They mentioned that the structure in place at the program creates a solid learning environment for students, and that similar structures should be in place across in traditional schools. Teachers recommended that they have more time to share their stressors with each other in order to gain moral support and encouragement, however, they acknowledged that the staff have great connections among each other. Teachers recommended that Camelot Academy create stronger relationships with businesses and community organizations in an effort to support students with more opportunities for real-world learning. They thought that these stronger relationships could also positively impact Camelot Academy's public image, and that the addition of a public relationship person on staff could help to facilitate those relationships.

Academic Success Questions with Students

Camelot Academy leadership selected four students to participate in the Academic Success Questions with Students. Students' grade levels ranged from 8th grader to 12th grade. Students reported feeling that their Teachers expect a lot from them academically and that they set high expectations for them every day. Students stated that they know they are learning as a result of weekly grade checks and Teachers constantly asking if they are understanding the work. They said that their Teachers treat them like family and that they care for them a lot. Teachers go out of their way to help them and they felt that they are treated better at Camelot Academy than they were treated at their sending schools. One student noted that it is this care and support that

has helped him to complete all of his class assignments at Camelot Academy, in contrast to his performance at the sending school where about half of class assignments were missing.

Students talked about the tests that they take throughout the year, including the SMI/SRI, midterms, finals, the PSAT, SAT, benchmarks, Keystones and regular quizzes and tests in class. Students stated that their test results and course grades are shared with their parents and guardians on a regular basis.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that Camelot Academy continue on its current performance path. The program should continue to implement its current instructional program and maintain systems that are in place for student supports, parent outreach, and staff collaboration. In light of recent negative press, the review team also recommends that Camelot Academy invest in a public relations specialist who can focus on improving the program's relationship with community organizations, politicians, and other stakeholders for public education in Philadelphia.