

# THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

## Opportunity Network

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PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19130

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### El Centro de Estudiantes/ Big Picture Philadelphia Mid-Year Evaluation January 4, 2017

**Provider:** Big Picture Philadelphia  
**Contract Term:** FY 2013-FY 2017  
**Program capacity:** 200

**Site Visit Date:** Friday, December 2, 2016- 9:00 a.m.  
**Child Count Compliance:** 89%  
**Average Daily Attendance & Number of Students Present:**  
54% (107 students present out of 199 enrolled)

#### Site Visit Review Team:

Christina Grant, Assistant Superintendent  
Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways  
Marcus De Vose, Assistant Director, Transition  
Crystal Cubbage, Executive Director, Innovation  
Network  
Giselle Rosado, Family Engagement Coordinator,  
Office of Family and Community Engagement  
Luciana Terrell, Administrator, DHS Education  
Support Center  
Brandon Vaughn, Program Manager, Philadelphia  
Youth Network

#### Program Staff:

David Bromley, Executive Director, Big Picture Philadelphia  
JuDonn DeShields, Principal  
Matthew Prochnow, School Design Coordinator  
Angela Smith, Director of Postsecondary Supports  
Sheri Newmark, Director of Student Services  
Stephanie Contreras, Director of counseling  
Melina Kuchinow, Assistant Principal of Instruction  
Frankie Bonilla, Assistant Principal of Climate, Culture,  
Conduct

#### Domains and Performance Levels:

Programs were rated according to seven domains: Vision for Learning, Family & Community Relationships, School Safety, Positive Environment, High Quality Instruction, Talent Development, and Data. The domains are aligned to the School District's evidence-based "High Performing School Practices" and "Essential Features of Alternative Education Programs", as well as the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Leadership Framework. Each domain includes three to seven components that are individually rated according to three broad performance levels: **Failing**, **Needs Improvement**, and **Proficient**. In general, a **Failing** rating indicates that a program could not demonstrate or did not develop practices identified within a domain component. A **Needs Improvement** rating indicates that overall a program has made some progress or effort toward practices identified within a domain component, but has not sufficiently developed the practice. A rating of **Proficient** indicates that, in general, a program has made adequate progress toward the implementation of practices identified within a domain component.

#### Comments/ Considerations:

El Centro de Estudiantes will receive unannounced visits from Opportunity Network leadership as a result of its overall performance on the mid-year site visit. Unannounced visits will allow for closer monitoring of the program for accountability purposes. Visit findings will impact future contracting decisions.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### Vision for Learning

El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Proficient** in one of the five components within this domain- orientation for new students. The program was rated **Needs Improvement** in four of the five components within this domain: strategy for literacy and numeracy skill-building, retention plan implementation, family engagement plan, and individual graduation plans.

El Centro utilizes Support Plans as a major retention strategy and as an intervention planning tool for struggling students. Support Plans include an overview of students' challenge areas, students' strengths and weaknesses, and plans to improve students' performance in challenge areas. El Centro staff described Support Plans as documents that are created with students, administrators, Advisors, and Counselors. A student's family is then contacted to review the plan; all parties sign the document to indicate their commitment to and agreement with the plan. El Centro presented several Support Plans for students that were drafted this school year. Plans presented did not include signatures from family members or guardians. One Support Plan that was presented lacked signatures from all parties involved in the plan. Review team members are concerned about the buy-in that students and family members have with Support Plans, as signatures from those key individuals were missing on the plans that were presented. In addition, El Centro was unable to provide evidence of monitoring interventions that were developed via Support Plans. That is to say, there was no evidence available to suggest that program staff follow up on Support Plans.

El Centro presented its Family and Community Engagement Plan, which included numerous events for parents to get involved in the program, as well as a description of each event, and a projection of when the events would occur throughout the school year. Events listed for family engagement included Back to School Night, Parent/Advisor Conferences, Parent Volunteer Opportunities, and student exhibitions of final projects. However, the program did not provide any evidence to suggest that these events were occurring with parents (i.e., no sign in sheets were available to demonstrate family participation).

El Centro presented individual graduation plans, which consisted of individualized learning plans and credit timelines for several students. Credit timelines included a list of credits required for graduation, a list of credits that the student has left to earn, a space to map out when the remaining credits are to be taken, and a projected number of trimesters remaining. However, none of the credit timelines included a projected mapping of credits to be earned in future trimesters. Individual learning plans included areas of improvement that focused on soft skills attainment. None of the individual learning plans included clear academic goals for students.

El Centro de Estudiantes uses TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) to determine students' reading and mathematics levels. TABE is administered in the beginning of the school year and when students enroll in the program anytime after September. The test is also administered at the end of the school year. The two administrations provide baseline and growth data. El Centro did not provide TABE growth data for the 2014-2015 Alternative Education Progress Report (AEPR). This called into question the program's monitoring of skill growth and its use of related strategies to improve skill levels. The program was asked to send TABE data from last school year after the site visit. The data was received nearly three weeks after the program's site visit and did not include growth calculations; the report included baseline and end of year scores only. Review team members calculated growth for all students and found that on average students increased less than one-half grade level in reading (.3 years growth), applied mathematics (.48 years growth), and mathematics computation (.4 years growth). The program discussed the strategies that it uses to increase students' reading and math skill levels, which include: daily reflective journals with attached writing rubrics, small Advisory class sizes, guided reading questions, using different modes of learning to demonstrate understanding of text, and infusion of standards-based skills into project-based learning. These strategies may be sound, but review team members are concerned that they are not implemented with fidelity, as indicated by the program's average increase in skills growth.

### **Family and Community Relationships**

El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Proficient** in two of five components within this domain: communication logs and partnerships with employers and postsecondary institutions. El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Needs Improvement** in three of five components within this domain: parent surveys, parent/community outreach, and strategy to improve family engagement.

El Centro presented aggregated results of its parent survey. The actual parent survey was not presented during the site visit. The program discussed impacts of the parent survey on its practices. Impacts discussed include: correspondence sent home in both English and Spanish as a result of responses from Spanish-speaking families that the program was not meeting their home language needs; progress reports sent home three times per year as a result of parent's responding that they were not getting enough updates on grades; and establishment of a safe corridor with the 26<sup>th</sup> police district as a result of parents stating that their children were not safe going to and from school. El Centro presented communication logs to demonstrate outreach to parents/family supporters and community internship sites. Logs were complete and well organized. However, communication logs that were presented showed infrequent outreach to parents. Most of the entries showed outreach to community internship sites.

El Centro has a robust Learning Through Internships (LTI) program for students, which requires numerous partnerships with employers. Internships are a major component of real world learning and career exposure for El Centro students. Evidence of community outreach for LTI was available in communications logs that were presented, as well as documentation of students' phone logs from their efforts to find the right internship. El Centro partners with more than two dozen organizations to offer internships to their students. Students change internships each trimester, which allows them to get exposure to a variety of careers and organizations.

### **School Safety**

El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Proficient** in three of six components within this domain: average daily attendance, number of students present in classrooms, and use of Scholarship with fidelity. El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Needs Improvement** in three of six components within this domain: attendance policy and truancy plan, orderly daily routines and transitions, and program-wide positive behavior system

Although El Centro was rated **Proficient** in average daily attendance based on the walkthrough rubric's broad standard ("Calculates ADA and the number of students observed in each classroom aligns with the ADA"), the review team is concerned about the low attendance and recommends that the program engage in aggressive improvement strategies. Average daily attendance (ADA) was 54%; 107 students present out of 199 enrolled, which aligned with a count of students present in classrooms and a report from the Scholarship attendance system. El Centro's attendance rate has steadily decreased throughout the current contract term. In 2012-2013, the program's average daily attendance was 83.5%; in 2014-2015 the program's average daily attendance was 70%; in 2015-2016 the program's average daily attendance was 60.6%.

El Centro presented its written attendance policy, which includes student expectations for attendance, and a tiered system of interventions based on the number of absences a student has accrued. The program presented a Support Plan for an actual student with attendance challenges, which is one strategy the program uses to support improved student attendance. The program also presented attendance contracts and parent notices regarding excessive absences. As mentioned in the Vision for Learning domain, truancy plans captured via Support Plans were not complete in that they lacked signatures. In addition, El Centro did not provide any proof of follow up on Support Plans. That is to say, no evidence was available to show outcomes for interventions made to improve poor attendance.

El Centro staff discussed students who leave without permission from the school building (LWOP). The program also provided incident reports indicating that LWOP is an issue for the program. There was no discussion of how the program is combating this issue through increased adult supervision of hallways and exits. This issue negatively impacts the program's orderly daily routines and transitions. Review team members recommend that the program improve adult supervision throughout the school to avoid LWOP, intruders possibly entering the building without permission when students leave, and the liabilities that can result from these occurrences- all of which pose a threat to school safety.

El Centro has a positive environment with many caring adults on staff. However, its program-wide positive behavior system lacks a comprehensive assemblage of incentives and rewards. The program presented behavioral expectations and consequences that were well documented, but there was no articulation of how the school encourages students to achieve or maintain high levels of performance.

### **Positive Environment**

El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Proficient** in three of four components within this domain: respectful interactions between staff, students, and families, staff have a good rapport with students, and team building activities for staff and students. El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Needs Improvement** in one of four components within this domain- engagement of students and families in building a positive environment.

The program presented evidence for and provided overviews of various programs and events hosted by the school to engage students and staff in building a positive environment. These include: staff and student appreciation events, pancake breakfasts, lunch passes, restorative practices, pumpkin decorating contests, and weekly town hall meetings. El Centro partners with community-based organizations to support student-related challenges. Organizations include: ELECT, Center for Grieving Children, and GALAY for LGBTQ awareness and supports. The program presented a web-based, staff shared database of student needs and related case management notes. The program believes that helping students to remove barriers supports a positive school environment. As noted in the Family and Community Relationships domain, El Centro did not provide evidence to demonstrate that the program frequently or consistently engages families in building a positive school environment.

### **High Quality Instruction**

El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Proficient** in two of the seven components within this domain: students enrolled in the courses they need to meet graduation requirements and program has identified students eligible for Keystone Exams. El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Need Improvement** in five of the seven components within this domain: students actively engaged in class, early warning system for academic interventions, strategies to prepare students for Keystone exams, postsecondary bridging plan, and postsecondary exploration and preparation.

El Centro presented rosters and credit profiles for a group of students. Review team members found that students were rostered for the classes that they need to graduate, and none were taking classes that they did not need. The program presented its list of students eligible for Keystone exams by test subject area. Review team members visited six classrooms during the site visit and found that students were engaged in every classroom with the exception of Social Studies and Science.

El Centro publishes progress reports for students every three weeks throughout the school year. Students and their parents have access to grades via Engrade instructional management system. Other than progress reports, the program did not discuss or present any strategies to frequently track academic progress and the effectiveness of academic interventions.

El Centro staff discussed strategies that the program uses to prepare students for Keystone Exams. The program's main strategy is to infuse anchor content from the Keystone exams into El Centro's curriculum. Staff presented assessment anchor guides from the Commonwealth, but there was no evidence available to demonstrate how eligible content is integrated with instruction at El Centro. In fact, other than student rosters, no evidence was presented during the site visit to demonstrate that core courses are being offered with fidelity at El Centro. Classroom observations showed students learning Science, History/Social Studies, Mathematics, and English, but the lack of clear standards and objectives in classrooms made it difficult to understand which specific courses were being taught (e.g., Algebra 2 instead of Mathematics in general).

El Centro staff have worked steadily over the last three years to improve upon the program's offerings for postsecondary bridging, exploration and preparation. The program now has a fully developed, comprehensive plan for postsecondary bridging, exploration and preparation, which was presented during the site visit. However, the program did not present evidence of implementation; there was no presentation of actual student folders or student products related to the many facets of the plan. The review team recommends that El Centro begin implementing its postsecondary plans for students in a way that captures each student's engagement with the process (e.g., individual student folders with exploration activities, college applications, and evidence of participation in events). The review team also recommends that the program set aside time for each student to be rostered into a class specifically aimed at postsecondary preparedness and access. This type of class has proven to be a successful strategy to ensure that all students gain the needed exposure to postsecondary options well before they graduate high school.

### **Talent Development**

El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Proficient** in three of seven components within this domain: staff turnover, staff selection process, and new staff induction. El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Needs Improvement** in four of seven components within this domain: common planning time for teachers, differentiated staff supports, professional development calendar, and principals conduct regular observations and provide constructive feedback.

El Centro has a new and re-organized leadership team this year, which includes a new position of School Design Coordinator and Assistant Principals for Instruction, and Climate, Culture, Conduct. In addition, the program has established a team leader for each floor. The program did not elaborate on the rationale behind its new structure, but all leaders involved in the site visit were passionate about the school and their individual roles; leaders also seemed very supportive of each other, as evidenced by staff supporting one another with answers during the site visit. El Centro has shifted new staff induction this year to include mentoring of new staff by veteran staff. Program staff stated that they are in the process of developing standards and objectives for new Advisors as an early performance evaluation tool.

There was no evidence available during the site visit to demonstrate the program's use of common planning time for Teachers. A weekly calendar was presented, which included Advisor prep and professional development only; there was no explicit time set aside for common planning. El Centro presented typed notes from floor meetings and Gateway meetings, committee meetings, and an all staff meeting, however, no calendar of professional development sessions was presented. In addition, notes from meetings did not include sign in sheets. There was no evidence available to demonstrate use of professional development time for core content areas or instructional strategies.

According to El Centro leaders, the program's team leaders conduct observations of Advisors on their respective floors. The program did not discuss formal observations conducted by the Principal or other academic leader. The program presented classroom observation notes. The observations did not include the name of the observer, the class that was observed, or the name of the Advisor that was observed. Observations tended to focus on student-staff and student-student relationships instead of instruction, content, or lesson plans. Similarly, there was no discussion or evidence available to suggest that staff receive differentiated supports related to pedagogy.

### **Data**

El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Needs Improvement** in three of the four components within this domain: strategy to track student academic progress and provide interventions, system to collect and analyze data, and formative and summative assessments. El Centro de Estudiantes was rated **Failing** in one of the four components within this domain- program improvement plans & related data reports.

El Centro uses Engrade instructional management system to capture grades from assignments and assessments, and cumulative course grades. The program also uses Google Docs to capture case management notes related to internships, parent outreach, and student-staff conferences. All staff has access to these systems, which supports collaboration and a team approach to case management. In addition, students and parents have access to grades via Engrade. Other than progress reports, the program did not discuss or present any strategies to track academic progress and the effectiveness of academic interventions on a frequent basis. As mentioned in the Vision for Learning domain, El Centro was unable to provide evidence of monitoring interventions developed via Support Plans. That is to say, there was no evidence available to suggest that program staff follow up on Support Plans or adjust interventions as a result of monitoring.

Exhibitions serve as the end of course/end of trimester assessment for all students. Each course includes a final product that is connected to the content that students have learned. Courses also include various formative and summative assessments to determine learning needs and to check for understanding. While it is evident that El Centro administers both formative and summative assessments, there was no evidence to show how the program uses assessment results to inform instruction. For example, TABE is used to gauge students' skill growth in reading and mathematics, but the program did not discuss or present any alignment between TABE scores, classroom instruction or academic interventions.

El Centro presented its *Inaugural Organization Commitment Document*, which included an overview of the school, some data points on performance from previous years, five program-wide commitments, and key values of the organization. Although the document included attendance, graduation, and internship data from past years, it did not include performance goals, strategies to achieve goals, or quantifiable areas of improvement (i.e., program improvement plans & related data reports).