

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

YES Philly Mid-Year Evaluation
December 22, 2016

Provider: YES Philly
Contract Term: FY 2013-FY 2017
Program capacity: 100

Site Visit Date: Tuesday, December 6, 2016- 9:00 a.m.
Child Count Compliance: 89%
Average Daily Attendance & Number of Students Present:
61% (62 students present out of 101 students enrolled)

Walkthrough Review Team:

Christina Grant, Assistant Superintendent
Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways
Katherine Schlesinger, Deputy, Leadership &
Evaluation
Crystal Cabbage, Executive Director, Innovation
Network
Nefertiti White, Special Education Case Manager
Megan Reamer, Program Manager, Charter Schools
Office
Ashley Sobrinski, Program Specialist, Charter
Schools Office

Program Staff:

Taylor Frome, Executive Director
Kim Atias, Education Director
Melvin Davis, Dean of Students
Joy Mosley, School Counselor

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:

YES Philly 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

YES Philly was rated **Proficient** in two of the five components within this domain: orientation for new students and family engagement plan. YES Philly was rated **Needs Improvement** in three of the five components within this domain: strategy for literacy and numeracy skill building, retention plan implementation, and individual graduation plans.

YES Philly's orientation for new students consists of one-on-one interviews with prospective students and group activities for students who are starting the program at the same time. Interviews allow YES Philly staff to get to know new students more intimately. Group activities serve as the foundation for building peer supports among students. Parents and guardians attend a mandatory parent orientation where they are introduced to key staff and learn about the program's policies and procedures. In addition to new student orientation, YES Philly offers a series of family engagement initiatives for all parents. Initiatives include Back-to-School Nights, Parent's Night, Special Events (e.g., academic achievement dinners), Parent Conferences, regular outreach to parents via telephone, and an open door policy for parents to visit the school at anytime. At the request of the review team, YES Philly presented evidence of parent participation in Back-to-School night after the site visit. YES Philly presented communication logs from PowerSchool as evidence of their outreach to parents via telephone.

YES Philly began using the Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) this year as its assessment for determining students' literacy and numeracy growth. Prior to this year, the program used TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education). The MAP was administered at the start of the school year, and students who joined the program after September were given the assessment during orientation. YES Philly staff discussed their goal to administer the MAP every six months in order to monitor progress toward increasing students' skill levels. Review team members were unable to get an understanding from program staff as to how the six-month testing cycles would align to annual reporting and the program's 12-month school year. MAP score reports offer detailed information on each student's areas of skill deficiency. YES Philly staff discussed using the score reports to drive classroom instruction; however, Teachers had not been trained on how to use the score reports at the time of the site visit.

YES Philly presented and discussed its retention plan for students. Their core strategies include reengaging students with learning, providing supports and connections to outside resources, and use of an early warning system for struggling students. Some of these activities were evident in the communication logs that the program presented; however, program staff admitted that they have not fully developed follow up supports for students. Individual graduation plans that were presented during the site visit were difficult for review team members to read and understand. YES Philly staff pointed to the color copies as not being very legible, and they were permitted to send snapshots after the site visit of the individual graduation plan that a student would see in PowerSchool. Program staff sent the snapshots after the site visit, which were easier to read and understand. The individual graduation plans that YES Philly uses include information for the current school year and previous credits earned; the plans do not include a projected mapping of courses that a student will need to pass in order to graduate high school.

Family and Community Relationships

YES Philly was rated **Proficient** in four of the five components within this domain: parent/community outreach, communication logs, strategy to improve family engagement, and partnerships with employers and postsecondary institutions. YES Philly was rated **Needs Improvement** in one component within this domain- parent surveys.

YES Philly's efforts to improve family engagement include a series of parent events held at the school, such as the Academic Achievement Luncheon. The program conducts New Parent Orientation, which runs concurrently with New Student Orientation. The program also reaches out to parents regularly to provide them with both positive and negative updates on their students' progress. YES Philly invites adults from the community to serve as role model and guest speakers. For example, WHYY and PhillyCAM are media agencies who have been instrumental in providing workshops and broadcast opportunities for students, which is line with YES Philly's overall media arts focus. YES Philly presented and discussed its partners for student employment and postsecondary education. The program has formed relationships with nearly two dozen organizations that offer YES Philly students a diverse array of supports, services, employment opportunities, and educational options after high school. Organizations include but are not limited to PowerCorps, YEAR-UP, Community College of Philadelphia, District 1199C, and The Attic Youth Center.

YES Philly administered a parent survey during Back-to-School Night and received about five surveys back from parents; ten parents attended Back-to-School Night. Evidence of parents completing the survey was not available during the site visit. Evidence that YES Philly staff use the results of parent surveys to inform their practice was also not available during the site visit. The program did not compile survey results and presented parent surveys during the site visit that were incomplete.

School Safety

YES Philly was rated **Proficient** in three of six components within this domain: average daily attendance (ADA), orderly daily routines, and use of Scholarship with fidelity. YES Philly was rated **Needs Improvement** in three of six components within this domain: number of students present in each classroom, attendance policy & truancy plan implementation, and program-wide positive behavior system.

Review team members observed orderly daily routines and transitions during the site visit. The program presented its Scholarship attendance report for the day of the site visit; (62 students present out of 101 students enrolled) were present on the day of the site visit (61% attendance). The total number of students observed by review team members who were present in classrooms (n=49) did not align with the program's Scholarship report. The review team is concerned about the program's low attendance and recommends that it conduct an aggressive analysis as to why students are attending so infrequently.

YES Philly presented its attendance policy and truancy plan, which included tiered interventions depending on a student's number of absences and other circumstances. Interventions range from parent outreach to home visits and attendance contracts. However, YES Philly staff were unable to provide any evidence to show that their attendance policy is being implemented. The program was permitted to send attendance contracts after the site visit to suffice as evidence. The attendance contract provided was a blank form, which does not provide evidence of implementation. In addition, the program did not present an articulated system for rewards and incentives aimed at encouraging students to achieve or maintain high academic performance.

Positive Environment

YES Philly was rated **Proficient** in all of the four components within this domain: respectful interactions between staff, students and families, staff have a good rapport with students, engagement of students and families in building a positive environment, and team building activities for staff and students.

YES Philly's engagement of students and families in building a positive environment begins with New Parent Orientation and New Student Orientation. At that time, students and their parents are given clear and positive expectations, and they participate in group activities to foster a sense of team and community. YES Philly shares good news with parents about their students' progress. YES Philly offers a number of after-school enrichment programs for students, including a Media Club, Cooking Club, and Drivers Education course.

YES Philly discussed and presented evidence of its team building efforts for staff and students. The program engages in various activities to build a sense of community and belonging within the program. YES Philly sets aside time each Friday for student team building activities. Students team up in "Squads", organized by credit accumulation, and engage in group activities. YES Philly staff engage in team building activities at the end of every 10-week cycle.

High Quality Instruction

YES Philly was rated **Proficient** in four of the seven components within this domain: students actively engaged in class, students enrolled in the classes they need to graduate, identifying students eligible for Keystone exams, and

strategies to prepare students for Keystone exams. YES Philly was rated **Needs Improvement** in three of the seven components within this domain: early warning system for academic interventions, postsecondary bridging plan, and postsecondary exploration and preparation.

The review team observed engaging instruction in all classrooms. The review team analyzed rosters and credit profiles and found that students were enrolled in the courses they need to graduate. YES Philly presented its list of students eligible for Keystone exams, and also discussed the strategies it uses to prepare students for the exams. The preparation strategy discussed was comprehensive, and included general test-taking tips, terms frequently used on Keystone exams, classroom tests that resemble the Keystones' form and structure, and remediation workshops for students who qualify for retests.

YES Philly discussed its early warning system for academic interventions. The program identified the MAP Assessment, Skills Navigator, timely grade reviews, and other strategies (e.g., weekly conversations with Teachers) as the steps it takes to provide immediate academic interventions for struggling students. MAP Assessment score reports offer a wealth of information related to individual student skill levels, however, the program admits that Teachers have not been fully trained to use test results and the test is given every six months, which is an ineffective early warning tool. Skills Navigator is a research-based intervention program for students with significant skill deficiencies; however, it is not an early warning tool. The review team recommends that YES Philly document which levels of student performance warrant academic intervention via weekly grade reviews, and track those students weekly in a database along with the interventions that are provided.

YES Philly discussed and presented its plan for postsecondary exploration and preparation. Each student is assigned a Teacher Advisor, with whom they explore postsecondary pathways. Students are required to complete a series of postsecondary readiness activities each cycle, including job applications, college applications, admissions essays, and FAFSA completion. All students participate in Wednesday activities that are designed to provide exposure to postsecondary options. These include workshops, field trips to colleges, and career speakers. YES Philly presented postsecondary plans for a set of students, and those plans were dated in December. The program was permitted to send additional postsecondary plans after the site visit. Two plans, dated in September, were sent for students who graduated the program in November. Postsecondary plans aligned with the program's process, but students' names were only listed on the first page of the plans, making it unclear if the remaining pages belonged to that particular student. YES Philly provided the review team with a graduate status spreadsheet after the site visit. Most graduates from August 2016 and November 2016 are neither employed nor enrolled in postsecondary education. The review team recommends that YES Philly incorporate a transition process for ensuring that most students are employed or enrolled in postsecondary education after graduation.

Talent Development

YES Philly was rated **Proficient** in three of the seven components within this domain: staff selection process, staff turnover, and new staff induction. YES Philly was rated **Need Improvement** in four of the 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

YES Philly's school schedule includes common planning for Teachers every afternoon from 3:00-4:30. The program also sets aside time for common planning during cycle intercessions and every other Wednesday after faculty meetings. Teachers receive differentiated supports through weekly observations and coaching sessions conducted by the program's Education Director. The program, however, does not conduct formal observations of Teachers. Although informal observations are conducted, formal observations are integral to providing staff with performance ratings and areas of improvement that are linked to program goals and overall job performance. The program did not present any evidence that informal observations have been conducted. The program also did not present evidence of common planning time or differentiated staff supports, which would further explain how the program monitors, develops and supports Teachers. YES Philly presented its monthly professional development

calendar with topics ranging from FERPA training to accommodations and modifications for students with special needs. The review team recommends that professional development topics, differentiated staff supports, and common planning time align with YES Philly's strategic goals. The review team also recommends that professional development topics are created with a sharper focus on discrete activities related to high quality instruction. YES Philly recently switched to the MAP assessment to monitor student skill growth and inform classroom instruction. This change warrants a series of professional development topics aimed at training Teachers to fully use MAP assessment score reports; however, no such series was listed on the program's professional development calendar.

The program discussed and presented a three-year analysis of staff turnover since 2014. YES Philly has experienced a great deal of staff turnover that included Teachers and senior leadership positions. Most employees in teaching positions have transitioned out of the school in the last three years, and new Teachers have been hired. YES Philly attributes most of the staff turnover to individuals taking higher paying positions in other organizations or funding cut backs within the organization.

Data

YES Philly was rated **Proficient** in one of the four components within this domain: formative and summative assessments. The program was rated **Needs Improvement** in three of the four components within this domain: system to collect and analyze data, strategy to track student academic progress and provide interventions, and program improvement plans and related data reports.

YES Philly collects and analyzes data using various sources, including PowerSchool, PowerTeacher, Scholarchip, and reports from the School District. Data is used to monitor attendance, retention, graduation, grades and academic progress, credit accumulation, and student behavior and case management. YES Philly presented three-year comparative reports for attendance and retention, as well as reports from the MAP Assessment. The review team recommends that YES Philly make a stronger connection between students' MAP results and academic interventions; there was no evidence to demonstrate that interventions are informed by MAP results. Although data systems are in place, the program has not moved towards fully utilizing score reports from the MAP assessment. The review team recommends that YES Philly effectively use its data systems to inform instruction and monitor interventions and student progress in a timely manner.

The program uses the PowerSchool instructional management system. Students and parents have access to grades via their respective portals. Teachers are required to regularly update their gradebooks in the system on a weekly basis. The Education Director checks PowerSchool weekly to ensure that grades and class attendance are up to date. Regular grade reporting is integral to tracking student progress; however, YES Philly's strategy for tracking and providing interventions does not define tiers of student performance. The review team recommends that YES Philly develop performance tiers to help determine which levels of student performance warrant certain interventions.

YES Philly presented its school improvement plan that included three main program-wide areas for improvement: student attendance, school culture, and quality of instruction. The improvement plan offered strategies for improving performance in the aforementioned areas. For example, strategies for improving student attendance include individual case management, more programmatic options for students with poor attendance, and monthly data reviews and comparative analyses. The improvement plan did not provide any performance targets or benchmarks. The review team recommends that YES Philly set performance targets and benchmarks that will help the program to monitor its progress toward reaching set targets or goals.