



**Instructional Visit Summary
Camelot Academy**

Provider: The Camelot Schools of Pennsylvania, L.L.C.
Contract Term: FY 2018 - 2022

Site Visit Date: Thursday, April 12, 2018 - 9:00 a.m.
Program Capacity: 300

Site Visit Review Team:

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Overview of Instructional Site Visits:

Instructional site visits consist 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** includes standardized questions that focus on: data and academic outcomes; academic outcomes versus goals; and preparation for classroom observations. **Academic Success Questions with Teachers** includes standardized questions that focus on: the use of academic assessments; academic outcomes versus goals; and the school's overall academic performance. **Academic Success Questions with Students** includes standardized questions that focus 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

Academic Outcomes. Camelot Academy presented and discussed the program's key academic data, including literacy and numeracy growth, graduation rate, percentage of students attending at least 80% of school days, and Special Education data. Camelot Academy aggregated and analyzed its own data as a demonstration of the program's ability to make data-informed decisions for positive student outcomes. Camelot Academy is pleased with the overall growth in academic outcomes, but also recognizes there is still room for improvement in areas such as student attendance. Camelot Academy leadership discussed and presented the program's reading and mathematics growth data from the 2016-2017 school year. In reading, 23% of students grew two or more grade levels. This percentage was an increase from the previous year. In mathematics, 30% of students grew two or more grade levels. The program administers the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to gauge student growth in reading and mathematics. The program changed their academic assessment to TABE this school year. The principal found that TABE provided an opportunity for students to demonstrate their strengths. The percentage of students attending at least 80% of school days was 51% for this school year. Program leadership presented the graduation rate for last year as 93%. Leadership stated that attendance has been an area where the program has increased efforts. Program staff makes daily phone calls home and makes home visits to re-engage students. The program continues to implement a rewards system for students with good attendance in hopes of improving attendance. Program leadership believes that improvement in attendance rates will also lead to higher academic outcomes. Camelot Academy prioritizes behavioral goals with all of their students – the goal is to first cultivate a proper learning environment that will ultimately allow for improved academic outcomes. Program leadership maintains rapport with students at an individual level by checking-in with each and every one to ensure that all students' needs are being met. 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. The Director of Diverse Learning discussed how special education students and English Language Learners (ELL) are performing in the program. Camelot Academy reported that special education students are performing well and have high academic achievement and grade point averages. The program has a comprehensive process in place for special education students and ELL students. The program meets with each student's family prior to enrolling to get a better understanding of the student's needs, the family's concerns, and to make parents feel comfortable that special education services will be transferred. Program leadership have also created a Google Doc profile for every student in the program. The student profile includes Individualized Education Plan (IEP) information and Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) for special education students and ELL students, which are shared amongst all teachers and updated regularly. Staff meetings are held weekly to discuss students. Additionally, Camelot Academy utilizes Study Island, a research-based online platform that has Reading and Math components with a standards-based assessment that builds curriculum around students' needs. Camelot Academy articulated the various ways they support middle grade students in the District's school selection process and high school students with postsecondary planning and access. For 8th graders, the program helps students apply to at least 3 schools/programs within neighborhood schools through The School District of Philadelphia's (SDP's) School Selection Process. For high school students, Camelot Academy has a bulletin board tracker for potential graduates, which shows what colleges they have applied to and how many job applications they have completed. Trips are coordinated for visits to college campuses as well as for colleges to visit Camelot Academy's program to speak with students. The program utilizes the SDP's SAT initiative where students can take the SAT on-site for free, and ensures that

all seniors complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and three (3) college applications or three (3) job applications. Camelot Academy also looks for opportunities at trade schools for studies in hospitality, medical science, culinary arts, and construction, as they realize not all students want to go to college. The program has forged relationships with Community College of Philadelphia, Thaddeus Stevens College, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Lincoln University, and Pathways to Justice internship program to name a few. Program leadership stated a big push for next year is to help students with postsecondary options and skills, as the goal is to expose students to a wide variety of postsecondary opportunities. Efforts will include working more with Year Up, a partnership with Peirce College. Students take classes at Peirce College and are trained for entry-level corporate jobs. **Academic Outcomes versus Goals.** Camelot Academy prioritizes behavioral goals first as it is the reason that students are placed into the program. The primary goal is to provide a safe climate, counseling to students, and a context for students to achieve academically. Program leadership mentioned one focus to satisfy overall goals is to hone in on transferable and critical thinking skills, which applies to both social and academic settings. While reviewing goals, staff has shifted to making the necessary bridges and reinforcing the foundations for students to achieve academically. Leadership noted providing life skills and making connections to real life contexts help to improve motivation. In addition, the program provides the missing pieces to help bridge school and real world experiences, such as ensuring students establish bank accounts, have job references and necessary documentation when finding jobs. Staff are also trained in understanding trauma. Teachers acknowledge that a student's behavior in the moment may not be because of the moment. Staff helps students and teachers to work through situations and address students' underlying needs. Leadership provides opportunities for staff to develop curriculum, checks for understanding, review outcomes, and provide coaching, informal observations, and peer teacher support. Program leadership articulated the various ways in which academic outcomes are shared with staff, families, and students such as daily flash meetings with administration; teacher common planning time every week; monthly professional developments; student data walls in each classroom and ratings board (behavior, attendance, and academics); and students formal periodic reviews for progress monitoring. 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. The framework's six instructional strategies are used in all of Camelot Academy 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. The program uses an understanding by design model, which backward plans curriculum and helps teacher assess students' understanding of class objectives. Camelot Academy uses summative assessments - TABE, midterms and finals, state assessments as well as formative assessments such as quizzes, scaffolding, and group collaboration to track progress towards goal achievement. Program leadership focuses on growth and progress. Program leaders review all teachers' objectives, offer feedback on assessments, and provide coaching on instructional differentiation on a weekly basis. Leadership also provides professional development sessions to help teachers understand who students were before they came to the program and to provide strategies for how each teacher can scaffold lesson plans to help students. Program leadership encourages teachers to share best practices with each other and encourage them to participate in classroom rounds to learn from their peers. **Classroom Observation Preparation.** Camelot Academy leadership described what we should expect to see in classrooms. The middle school is currently undergoing standardized testing. Leadership shared that some walls will be covered for testing compliance and the review team will visit the high school classes. Shared norms should be evident throughout the school. Leadership mentioned that the program has several first year teachers this academic year. Leadership is providing coaching, feedback, and professional development to support teachers in developing their instructional practices. Although teachers are new, the review team is expected to see a high degree of school connectedness. Off-task behaviors should be minimized as students are engaged in learning. Because the majority of students come with low skill levels, instructional strategies such as including literacy

circles, writing to learn, and group work should be evident in classes. Lesson plans should be designed using backward mapping, and all lesson plans should be posted outside classrooms.

Classroom Observations

Review team members observed a High School Math (Algebra) class for seven minutes which was already in progress; 11 students were present in class during the observation. The teacher was setting up students for the Do Now and most students were on task. The lesson agenda and objective were posted. Students were using calculators to determine the coordinates on a slope, solving for x and y. Students were asked to use prior knowledge to solve for two equations on the board. The lesson began with guided practice for the first equation. Students actively participated. Students worked on the second in pairs and independently. Several students were engaged in classroom talk, which involved articulating their thinking and working through the math equations. The environment had an instructional focus and all students were engaged with the task set forth by the learning objective. The environment was conducive to meeting the program's curricular and achievement goals. It was evident that academic and behavioral expectations were internalized by all of the students. During the lesson, the teacher provided checks for understanding prior to having students work independently. The teacher's content knowledge was evident. The teacher provided support to the few students who were off task and worked with them one on one.

Review team members observed a High School English (English II) class for seven minutes, which was already in progress; 13 students were present in class during the observation. Classroom walls displayed classroom procedures/rules and instructional resources and recent student work; the lesson agenda and lesson objectives were also posted. All students were on task and used notes and worksheets during the lesson. The modes of instruction observed during the class visit were direct instruction and independent practice. The teacher was organized, however, the pacing of the lesson moved quickly from one activity to another. Students progressed through their assignment quietly and diligently; they were finishing taking notes on the different character types in literary work. There was evidence of gradual release as students were asked to independently identify character types from vignettes. A review team member spoke to a student who was able to convey what happened in the story and identify how the main character fit the type of a protagonist. There was evidence of rigor. The teacher responded to students' questions by challenging them to think critically. An exit ticket was used as the formal assessment tool. Students were asked to analyze their favorite movie and illustrate at least two different character types. The review team observed various students demonstrate their ability to understand and apply the lesson.

Review team members observed a High School Science (Biology) class for 10 minutes, which was already in progress; 14 students were present in class during the observation. Classroom walls displayed recent student work, classroom procedures/rules, and instructional resources/manipulatives; the lesson agenda and lesson objectives were also posted. The review team observed the beginning of the lesson. Students demonstrated awareness of class procedures and immediately reviewed the board to work on the Do Now. Students were asked to define two science vocabulary words. All students were on task and used textbooks during the lesson. The teacher reviewed the Do Now with the class and provided student voice by calling on students to respond. When a student did not answer a question correctly, the teacher responded with the correct answer. Each student was attentive and the depth of engagement was significant (> 50%). Modes of instruction were direct instruction and lead and assist. Students then took turns reading a paragraph from the textbook. The environment was conducive to learning, but the class needed a little time to make sure that everyone understood the material. The checks for understanding were inclusive of all students, however, they were brief. The teacher used question and answer, however, did not allow students to discuss or analyze their thinking.

Additionally, students were not provided adequate time to freely summarize what they learned in order to see if they understood the material.

Academic Success Questions with Teachers

Two high school teachers participated in the Academic Success Questions with Teachers. Teachers discussed the assessments that they use to monitor student learning. They reported engaging in a great deal of one-on-one dialogue with students to gauge individual progress and check for understanding. The teachers stated they utilize unit tests, classroom quizzes, in class assignments, writing samples, exit tickets, body language, and level of student engagement to monitor student learning. In addition, teachers use the PLP to help inform instruction where differentiation is needed. Strategies used to provide targeted support are student pairing, scaffolding, small group, and one-on-one instruction. Teachers provide qualitative feedback (both positive and negative) via phone or during report card conferences. 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. The teachers feel their leaders give a great amount of support, which has not been the case in their previous schools. Teachers are aware of the academic goal to aim for two-years growth for students who are behind their grade level in their academic assessment. Additionally, social emotional development is emphasized, with the goal of having students transition from Camelot Academy. Teachers feel that they have an adequate understanding of program performance expectations. The teachers were very excited about the trajectory of the program and the support available for students and teachers. One teacher noted that building a rapport with students is important and has a tremendous impact on their learning. Teachers feel that students are given a second chance; staff are supportive and there is high morale. Teachers mentioned that the structure in place at the program creates a solid learning environment for students and new staff.

Academic Success Questions with Students

Review team members met with four 10th graders, and one 12th grader who were selected by Camelot Academy East leadership to participate in the Academic Success Questions with Students. The senior will graduate this June and comes from a special admissions high school in the city; three of the sophomores are from neighborhood schools and are set to transition to regular school this September. The other sophomore comes from a special admissions high school as well and will transition back to a regular education school and hopes to get into another school other than his neighborhood school. When asked do you feel your teachers expect a lot from you academically, the students responded some teachers tell them what they want done and other teachers give them challenging work. Students conveyed that teachers expect a lot from the students that came from special admission schools. All the students stated that staff set high expectations for students to follow norms for behavior and academic standards. Students were able to recite the norms. Students like that the program has supplies for them, helps them with organizing their schoolwork, and teaches them how to be a good student. The students stated that teachers push them to do better by giving them high capacity work. Math teachers give students more work to do at the next level. Students are able to check on the portal to see

where they are. Students understand that they take the TABE three times a year to track progress. The students stated that college is important to them. The English teacher helps with college essays and capstone classes or senior project. Teachers also emphasize to students that more will be expected from them. Students in 10th grade recommended that they take trips to colleges to see what they want to learn and get their minds wrapped around the concept of college. Students would like to shadow college students at college and learn what college life is really like. Students feel supported and know that program staff have high expectations of them. Students feel comfortable talking to staff about issues at home and noted that the smaller environment helps them. Students stated what makes Camelot Academy different from other schools is that it is more structured and in other schools they do what they want. They stated that they need structure to focus in class and not having cell phones to look up classwork answers helps. Students conveyed that Camelot Academy gets them ready for work and the real world. Students from special admissions school noted that they feel the schoolwork is not challenging enough. They recognized that many of their peers are at lower levels. These set of students suggest that students who are doing well should have advanced classes. When asked about transition, students felt that it may hard because of the differences in the school work. Another student was concerned about the differences in the environment and supports of their new school. They hope that the norms instilled from Camelot Academy will be carried over. Students feel teachers want them to work hard and lead others. When asked what after activities they would like to see as part of the program, students stated, after-school programs, sports, and jobs that will pay them. Overall, students truly enjoy going to Camelot Academy because of the caring environment, program expectations, and support they have received while enrolled in the program.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that Camelot Academy continue on its current path of development. The program should continue to implement its systems and supports that are in place for student supports, teacher development, and parent communication. The review team recommends that Camelot Academy take advantage of opportunities to push and incorporate academic rigor in their teaching practices and provide deeper engagement for high performing students. Camelot Academy should continue to work with and provide support to new teachers. Lastly, the review team recommends that Camelot Academy continue to prepare students for transition from the program through enriching social emotional development and additional educational pathways, to continue students' success and supports.