



**Instructional Visit Summary  
Ombudsman Northwest**

**Provider:** Ombudsman Educational Services, Ltd.  
**Contract Term:** FY 2018 - 2022

**Site Visit Date:** Thursday, April 5, 2018 - 12:00 p.m.  
**Program Capacity:** 90

**Site Visit Review Team:**

Dr. Wanda Y. Jenkins, Director, Special Projects,  
Opportunity and Innovation Networks  
Luis Rosario, Project U-Turn Fellow, Opportunity  
Network  
Nefertiti White, Special Education Case Manager,  
Office of Specialized Services  
Erica Feldman, Project Specialist, Philadelphia Youth  
Network

**Program Staff:**

Julita Byrd, Regional Director, Ombudsman  
Educational Services

**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.** Ombudsman Northwest presented and discussed the program's key academic data, including literacy and numeracy growth, retention rate, graduation rate, percentage of students attending at least 85% of school days, and Special Education data. Ombudsman Northwest aggregated and analyzed its own data as a demonstration of the program's ability to make data-informed decisions for positive student outcomes. Students take the STAR assessment during enrollment, mid-year, and when they exit the program. Ombudsman Northwest uses results from the STAR assessment and an instructional planning report to identify strengths and weaknesses and areas of improvement, provide an in-depth analysis of student achievement, and determine placement of students in classes. Both the assessment data and instructional planning report help to point where students are with numeracy and literacy levels and allow teachers to individually meet the needs of students. The Reading Plus program, for students who score lower than sixth grade on the STAR, advances comprehension and vocabulary and aids in writing assignments. Students are responsible for their academic plan and syllabi and are expected to utilize the Clipboard System to log and request support; the teacher then reviews and meets with students individually. Students must complete a minimum of three assignments a day with A+ Learning, Odyssey, and Gradpoint (various online software), which are aligned with SDP curriculum and standards. Students who fall behind in their minimum of three (3) apples daily, are provided further encouragement by teachers. Ombudsman Northwest ensures that every student receives one-on-one support, whether they are classified as special education or not. Emphasis has been placed on self-monitoring and independence. Program administration reported that special education students are performing well. Accommodations used include: 1:1, pull-outs, and modification (pacing). Additionally, Individualized Education Plans (IEP) accommodations are used for testing. Students with an IEP are held to Grade 70 on the learning platforms. Ombudsman Northwest does not have any English Language Learner (ELL) students. Ombudsman Northwest has great pride regarding its retention rate, thus attributes retention to an exceptionally good parental advisory team and use of many reward programs for attendance, such as gift cards and parties. Program staff makes phone calls home and use the PODIO system for students who are absent. For students who are parents, Ombudsman Northwest partners with a local child care facility to help support childcare needs. The Regional Director noted generally attendance averages at 86%, but attendance for March was lower due to inclement weather and school-opening delays. The majority of students graduate from Ombudsman Northwest in three years. Fifteen (15) students are expected to graduate this year. Ombudsman Northwest supports students with postsecondary planning and access through employment of a full-time counselor for the first time this year. The counselor helps students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), college applications, job applications, and shares scholarship information. Students also receive essay writing support from the counselor. The counselor helps with career day and postsecondary school visits. Moreover, partnerships with outside companies have been created to align with career and college goals outlined in the performance matrix of the contract. Two students will have an internship with Councilwoman Cherelle Parker's office. Additionally, some students have enrolled in the National Guard. **Academic Outcomes versus Goals.** Leadership and teachers often reward students who attain high attendance. Ombudsman Northwest is aiming for 2-year grade level growth in literacy and numeracy. Up to the present, the program has reached 1.5 years of growth and is expecting to reach the 2-year benchmark. The STAR report is the main assessment utilized three times a year in order to ensure the program is aligning to the goals in the contract. Parents receive a call if students are behind in assignments. Students who fall behind are eventually put on academic probation for a month, in which they have a chance to complete the required classes. Each course has the following assessments: progress reports (formative assessments) and end of course reports. Teachers have access to all

reports and have daily and weekly conversations about how to assist student progress. Each teacher is in charge of advising 30 students. The new counselor focuses exclusively on advising senior students with postsecondary goals, which frees administration to focus on higher level priorities. **Classroom Observation Preparation.** When asked what we should expect to see in classrooms, program leadership stated we should see sign-in sheets, learning objectives, I Do, You Do, We Do, and exit tickets. We should see students and teachers engaged in teaching and learning. Additionally, we should see a credit wall with the number of credits earned this year, Reading Plus certificates, and other forms of projects and student work posted on walls.

### **Classroom Observations**

Review team members observed an Algebra I class for 10 minutes that was already in progress, and seven students were present in class during the observation. The agenda, lesson objectives, and I Do, You Do, We Do were posted. Students were working on simplifying expressions involving polynomials. All students were engaged and on-task with the lesson and were asking questions; some students were able to speak the language of the lesson, which indicated instruction was real and meaningful for them. Students participated by coming to the Smartboard to answer questions, made correct multiple choice responses, and explained their thinking. Expectations for student learning were aligned with the program model, as the teacher referenced attainment of apples to motivate students. The mode of instruction was direct and small group. The depth of engagement was through basic recall. The differentiation of instruction was modality, as evidenced of the way the program is structured for students to work independently. Students are able to pace themselves, choose lessons until support is given, and ask for additional support. The teacher's content knowledge was evident. Though rigor in the lesson was limited, students are able to demonstrate rigor during independent times on programs at the computer. The lesson did match the agenda and learning objectives. There was evidence of differentiation for students as needed; students in the classroom had already been conferenced with and determined to be in need of the small group instruction lesson. The assessment method was questioning and the assessment tool was class work. Checks for understanding were inclusive of all, however, pacing was rushed. The review team did not observe the teacher respond to the checks for understanding and some students were still working when the teacher gave the answer. Data-driven instruction throughout the setting was not consistently observed, but small groups in the classroom were determined based on students' request and indication of needs from computer-based lessons.

Review team members observed a United States Government class for 20 minutes that was already in progress, and six students were present in class during the observation. The agenda, lesson objectives, and I Do, You Do, We Do were posted. Students were discussing the Preamble of the United States Constitution. One-fourth (1/4) of the students were off-task and not engaged in the lesson. The teacher consistently attempted to encourage students to participate. When a student stated "this is a lot of work", the teacher encouraged the student to chunk the work in smaller pieces. The teacher had a very clear direction of where she wanted to take the class instructionally and her approach showcased passion and organization. The pacing of the lesson was very fast because of an abbreviated class schedule. The teacher seemed very pressured by time to get through the lesson, as such this led to a missed opportunity for students and the teacher to engage in a valuable conversation regarding the meaning and implementation of justice in the United States. Students were clearly engaging and challenging the ideals of justice but the teacher seemed pressured to move forward and eventually tabled the topic for another day. As a result, one student completely disengaged. The materials used were worksheets. Methods of instruction were lecture, question and answer, and discussion. The teacher had strong content knowledge. There was evidence of rigor in the sense that the teacher pushed students to demonstrate understanding the Preamble. However, there were missed opportunities to push students to conduct an analysis, which they clearly wanted to do.

### **Academic Success Questions with Teachers**

Ms. Cox-Holloway (1<sup>st</sup> year Special Education teacher) and Ms. Jackson (1<sup>st</sup> year Math teacher) participated in the Academic Success Questions with Teachers. Both teachers are retired from The School District of Philadelphia (SDP). Teachers use the STAR assessment to monitor reading and math levels. The instructional planning report is also used to drill down on individual student growth. Students are placed in the Reading Plus program if needed. Benchmark and end of course assessments through Odyssey, A+Learning, and STAR help capture personalized assessments. Teachers use academic data to modify, as necessary, their lesson plans and alter the way they check for understanding. Data is used to conduct an individualized analysis in a group setting to gauge weaknesses and make weaknesses a strength. Students who are progressing academically are offered additional enrichments. Teachers will make phone calls home and use standard report card conferences to share academic data with parents/guardians. However, they noted, Ombudsman Northwest has an open-door policy and parents can call at anytime. Teachers communicate with the Regional Director daily and have formal meetings monthly to analyze student academic data and make appropriate instructional shifts. Trends show that students have more difficulty in literacy, which affect other content areas. The special education teacher attends Special Education Liaison (SEL) meetings at SDP's Education Center and contacts the District's Office of Specialized Services if they have immediate questions around special education and instructional accommodations. Additionally, Ombudsman Northwest's corporate office is very accessible for educational and operational concerns. In alignment to what was articulated to the review team by the Regional Director, teachers conveyed that program-wide academic goals are for students to earn at least a minimum of three (3) apples a day. Program administration constantly communicates performance expectations for teachers and always provides support to ensure teachers are adequately equipped to guide students. Overall, teachers expressed that the program is doing well academically. Both teachers like the structure (computer-based and individualized), and noted that the computer-based program is really great for special education students because it allows for self-pacing.

### **Academic Success Questions with Students**

Two students, who were selected by Ombudsman Northwest, participated in the Academic Success Questions with Students. Both expressed having negative experiences in their previous neighborhood high school due to the following factors: (1) general disorganization of the school, (2) lack of support from teachers, and (3) lack of support from counselors/administration. Students agreed they are challenged by the academics offered at Ombudsman Northwest and echoed program leadership's expectations of completion of three (3) apples per day. Students feel supported in their progress to achieving this benchmark. They mentioned once the minimum of three (3) apples are completed, staff continue to encourage students to complete more. Additionally, students feel supported by the Clipboard system mentioned by leadership and noted receiving direct support individually for at least 30 minutes. Students feel the standards of Ombudsman Northwest are high; both agreed that they get more work completed in four hours than they were able to achieve in their previous neighborhood high school. In regards to discipline policies, students agreed that "rules are everywhere!"; this was stated with a positive sense. Students stated that once you receive three write ups (for breaking program conduct), the next step is suspension from the program. However, all students receive ample communication and warnings from teachers before a write up. The two students in the interview agreed that there is a strong sense of students getting along with each other and with teachers. Teachers are seen as the first line of conflict resolution; program administration are included in more serious situations. Students agreed that rules are strict but they understand that they are important to the program's success. When asked what do you wish the program had, both students articulated that they wish the program had vending machines for additional snacks. In summary,

both students are very happy with their experience at Ombudsman Northwest and credit their success with the structures put in place by program leadership and teachers.

### **Recommendations**

The review team recommends that Ombudsman Northwest continue to implement academic rigor. The program should be mindful of lesson pacing and allow for adequate time to conduct checks for understanding. Moreover, the use of checks for understanding should be intentional and yield outcomes that indicate improvement and incorporate more student voice. Finally, Ombudsman Northwest should continue on its current path of providing a safe and respectful learning environment for students, families, and staff.