



**Mid-Year Evaluation  
Ombudsman Northwest**

**Provider:**

Ombudsman Educational Services, Ltd.

**Site Visit Date:**

Monday, December 18, 2017- 1:00 p.m.

**Contract Term:**

FY 2018 - 2022

**Child Count Compliance:**

100%

**Program Capacity:**

90

**Percent of students attending at least 85% of school**

**days:** 96.5%

**Site Visit Review Team:**

Christina Grant, Assistant Superintendent,  
Opportunity Network  
Dr. Wanda Y. Jenkins, Director, Special Projects,  
Opportunity Network  
Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways to  
Graduation, Opportunity Network  
Elvis Mucaj, Strategy Analyst, Opportunity Network  
Luis Rosario, Project U-Turn Fellow, Opportunity  
Network  
Nefertiti White, Special Education Case Manager,  
Office of Specialized Services

**Program Staff:**

Julti Byrd, Regional Director, Ombudsman Educational  
Services

**Domains and Performance Levels:**

Programs were rated according to **seven domains**: 1) **Vision for Learning**, 2) **Family & Community Relationships**, 3) **School Safety**, 4) **Positive Environment**, 5) **High Quality Instruction**, 6) **Talent Development** and 7) **Data**. The domains are aligned to the School District's evidence-based High Performing School Practices and the 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 rated according to **three performance levels**: 1) **Failing**, 2) **Needs Improvement**, and 3) **Proficient**. **Failing** indicates that a program could not demonstrate or did not develop practices identified within a domain component. **Needs Improvement** indicates that a program has made some progress or effort towards practices identified within a domain component, but has not sufficiently developed the practice. **Proficient** indicates that a program has made adequate progress towards the implementation of practices identified within a domain component.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### Vision for Learning

**Rating:** PROFICIENT [5 of 5 components met]

**Strategy for literacy and numeracy skill-building** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest administers the STAR assessments in reading and mathematics three times per year at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. The STAR provides in depth reports on each student's strengths and weaknesses in reading and mathematics. Students who score lower than a sixth grade level on the STAR assessments are rostered for a Reading Plus skill-building course. The program monitors the improvement of student's skills on a daily basis using data dashboards from the Reading Plus software. Students who struggle to make skill gains receive one-on-one or small group interventions from the program's English and mathematics teachers. **Retention plan implementation** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest presented its retention plan, which includes actionable items for intake/orientation, student/parent conferences, written notifications, and truancy strategies. The program's director noted the importance of ensuring that all new students and their parents are aware of the program's expectations for attendance and academic achievement. Students receive rewards for attending the program regularly and for completing credits. These incentives help to keep students engaged with the program. **Orientation for new students** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest hosts orientation for parents and students who are new to the program. The program's director reviews the program's policies and procedures and provides a student handbook to all participants. Program staff talk to new students and their parents about postsecondary readiness, and all new students begin to develop their postsecondary plans during orientation. **Family engagement plan** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest presented a comprehensive plan to engage with families. The program has developed a year-long calendar of activities for parents that includes open house events, report card conferences, parent career day, and community service events. Program staff communicate with each student's parent on a weekly basis to provide positive updates on their child's progress. Parents also receive phone calls from the program whenever their children are absent or late. **Individual graduation plans** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest uses the Naviance college and career readiness platform to support the development of individual graduation plans for students. The program presented individual graduation plans for a group of students that include specific postsecondary goals, career choices, steps for college matriculation, and course maps that project when students will take the courses they need to graduate high school.

### Family and Community Relationships

**Rating:** PROFICIENT [5 of 5 components met]

**Parent surveys** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest presented its parent survey and an analysis of survey results. Parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the program. Ombudsman Northwest uses this information to reinforce the strategies that it currently has in place to engage with families and to support students' academic achievement. **Parent/community outreach** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest reaches out frequently and consistently to parents to provide updates on their children's progress. The program offers numerous opportunities for parents to engage with the program through its year-long calendar of events. Ombudsman Northwest also reaches out to businesses and organizations within the community to connect students with

part-time paid employment while they are enrolled in the program, and also to garner tangible resources and social supports for students and their families. **Communication logs** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest maintains communication logs using the Podio database. The program's communication logs are comprehensive and provide details about the outcomes of their efforts to reach out to parents. **Strategy to improve family engagement** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest's strategy to improve family engagement includes regular opportunities to talk with parents about their children, and frequent invitations for parents to visit the program and see first-hand what their children are doing. The program has established a parent advisory board that meets bi-monthly to advise the program's director from a parental perspective and to contribute their expertise and supports to the program. **Partnerships with employers and postsecondary institutions** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest establishes partnerships with employers and postsecondary institutions that align with students' career interests. Established partnerships include Pennsylvania National Guard, Community College of Philadelphia, Art Institute of Philadelphia, and Lincoln Technical Institute.

### **School Safety**

**Rating:** PROFICIENT [6 of 6 components met]

**Average daily attendance** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest was able to calculate average daily attendance on the day of the site visit. **Number of students present in each classroom** (Yes). Review team members' count of students who were present aligned with the program's stated attendance. **Use of Scholarchip with fidelity** (Yes). The program has experienced some technical difficulties with printing reports from Scholarchip. Nevertheless, the program continues to maintain attendance using Scholarchip, and students swipe in using their student identification cards. **Attendance policy and truancy plan implementation** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest's attendance policy is reviewed during orientation and is signed off by both students and parents. The policy outlines actions that the program takes when students are absent a certain number of days or arrive at the program more than fifteen minutes late. The program makes phone calls home, follows the School District's process for truancy, mails letters to parents, and facilitates parent-student conferences to determine the causes of a student's poor attendance and strategies to improve it. **Orderly daily routines and transitions** (Yes). Review team members observed students taking notes in their binders as they went through their courses in the program's blended learning platform, A+ Learning. Students signed up on teacher's clipboards to receive one-on-one assistance, and they went to the restroom as needed one student at a time, and in an orderly manner. **Program-wide positive behavior system** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest's system for positive behavior supports includes weekly acknowledgement of students with perfect attendance and those who finished any of their computer-based classes. Staff rewards students with gift cards and honorable mentions. Students are encouraged to follow the program's expectations for behavior and to achieve the individual goals they set for course completion. Students who are seen meeting these expectations receive gift cards in front of their peers.

### **Positive Environment**

**Rating:** PROFICIENT [4 of 4 components met]

**Engagement of students and families in building a positive environment** (Yes). As mentioned in this report, Ombudsman Northwest engages families in building a positive environment through positive, weekly phone calls about student progress. The program creates numerous opportunities for parents to visit the program through monthly events and membership on the parent advisory board. Students are engaged in a positive environment through the program's positive behavior supports system, which includes consistent acknowledgement and

reinforcement of students' accomplishments. **Respectful interactions between staff, students, and families** (Yes). Review team members observed respectful interactions between staff and students. **Staff have a good rapport with students** (Yes). Review team members observed a good rapport between students and staff. The communication style between students and staff was harmonious, even when students were redirected by staff for being off-task. **Team building activities for staff and students** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest discussed some of its efforts to build a team environment among staff and students. Staff and students have teamed up to compete against each other in fun activities such as scavenger hunts and mind-bending board games. Staff and students have worked together to raise money for charitable causes. On a daily basis, the program's staff comes together to debrief about the school day and to support each other with any challenges that they may have encountered.

### High Quality Instruction

**Rating:** PROFICIENT [7 of 7 components met]

**Students actively engaged in class** (Yes). Review team members observed students actively engaged on their computer-based courses in the main area, and students engaged in a small group pull-out in the classroom. **Early warning system for academic interventions** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest monitors students' progress in A+ Learning on a daily basis. Students know that they must earn at least "four apples" in every class each day in order to stay on track for course completion and to reach their expected graduation date. Students who are not progressing or show too much idle time have individual conferences with a staff member to determine the root causes of their lack of progress, and to develop solutions to address the issues. **Students enrolled in the courses they need to meet graduation requirements** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest presented credit profiles and rosters for a group of students. All students were rostered for the remaining courses they need to meet all graduation requirements. **Program has identified students eligible for Keystone Exams** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest presented its list of students eligible for Keystone Exams by subject area and test administration date. **Strategies used to prepare students for Keystone Exams** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest has one teacher who is dedicated to providing preparation for Keystone Exams. Students who are scheduled to take the exam(s) will join a special in-house preparation institute to ensure that concepts are fresh for students and that they are ready for the testing style of Keystone Exams. **Postsecondary bridging plan** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest's postsecondary bridging plan includes use of the Naviance college and career readiness platform for all students. Students learn to develop and reinforce college-ready skills using Naviance, and they meet individually with Ombudsman Northwest's counselor to make informed decisions about their next steps after high school. **Postsecondary exploration and preparation** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest provides students with ongoing opportunities to explore college and career options, and to take the steps necessary to achieve their long-term goals. The Naviance platform tracks students' progress toward postsecondary matriculation, including the completion of college applications and financial aid applications. The program utilizes its academic staff to provide intensive support to graduating seniors, and they work to ensure that all students are proficient in reading and mathematics. The program hosts admissions presentations from a variety of colleges and trade schools.

## Talent Development

**Rating:** PROFICIENT [7 of 7 components met]

**Common planning time for teachers** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest presented its daily schedule that shows common planning time for teachers at the end of each school day. **Differentiated staff supports** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest's director provides supervision and support for teachers and the program's counselor. The director works with each staff member to develop performance improvement plans that continuously push staff to achieve better outcomes. The director also completes a performance improvement plan for herself, which she shares with the staff. **Principals conduct regular observations and provide constructive feedback** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest articulated and presented well-documented efforts to conduct regular observations and provide feedback. Informal observations are conducted and discussed daily and documented in the Podio system. The program conducts formal observations once per school year using a Teacher Performance Evaluation Rubric. All performance plans are reviewed by staff. Documentation from formal observations are sent to the program's corporate office. **Staff turnover** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest reported low staff turnover, citing only one staff member who resigned after working for the program for three years. Currently, Ombudsman Northwest has a staff member who has been with the program for nine years, one for three years, and two new employees who are in their first year of employment. **Professional development calendar** (Yes). The program presented their professional development schedule for the 2017-2018 academic year, as well as past meeting agendas and sign-in sheets. All agendas had objectives and learning goals for various topics such as: Team Building/ Effective Classroom Management, Instructional Strategies, and Keystone Preparation. Ombudsman Northwest also has a professional development catalog that describes upcoming trainings in detail. **Staff selection process** (Yes). As part of the staff selection process, Ombudsman Northwest's corporate office posts jobs on typical employment websites, at local and national job fairs, and at various education conferences. The organization attempts to hire staff who have experience working in alternative education or with students who are at-risk of disengaging from school. Top candidates are invited to interview at the program. Ombudsman Northwest utilizes a list of core competencies and core interview questions that have two parts-soft skills and technical skills. Candidates must also submit a writing sample and demonstrate how they would engage with a student who needs extra help. **New staff induction** (Yes). All new staff at Ombudsman Northwest complete a thorough induction process. Staff receive sixty-four hours of orientation that focuses on Strategies for Success. In the Strategies for Success course, staff are advised on the objective, goals, improvement practices, and competencies required to be a successful educator for Ombudsman. The Education Specialist and Instructional Advisor for Ombudsman Northwest conduct new staff induction during the month of August.

## Data

**Rating:** PROFICIENT [4 of 4 components met]

**Strategy to track student academic progress and provide interventions** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest tracks students' academic progress on a daily basis using data reports from A+ Learning. Students who do not meet the daily expectation for progress (i.e., earn at least "four apples" in each course) have individual conversations with a staff member to discuss their challenges. Reviews of data reports and conversations with students provide staff with a better understanding of each student's unique situation, and staff develop interventions based on individual needs. **System to collect and analyze data** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest uses several systems to analyze student-level and program-level performance. At a student-level, Ombudsman Northwest

shares a customized STAR report of each student's core literacy and math knowledge so that teachers are able to pinpoint the skills that students need to build upon. The program also pulls individual STAR reports to track program achievement against program-wide goals and School District accountability standards. Student course performance is tracked through two learning software applications: Odysseyware and A+ Learning. These applications allow teachers to monitor students' mastery of course content. **Program improvement plans and related data reports** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest has a Strategic Plan for improving literacy and numeracy. Goals include reducing the number of students with less than fourth grade skill levels, increase program-wide growth in literacy and numeracy year over year, and increase skill levels by two levels or more for all students who test below their age-appropriate grade. **Formative and summative assessments** (Yes). Ombudsman Northwest uses comprehensive final exams at the end of each semester to gauge students' mastery of courses. Teachers use formative assessments to provide ongoing feedback to students. Teachers also use short quizzes and informal verbal assessments to fine tune instruction and increase student focus. Ombudsman Northwest has emphasized writing in all of its courses this year. Teachers are now required to administer writing assessments every two weeks, and students are required to maintain a binder of hand-written notes for each of their classes.