THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Instructional Visit Summary
One Bright Ray Community High School- Elmwood Campus

Provider: International Education and Community Initiatives d/b/a One Bright Ray, Inc.
Contract Term: FY 2018 - 2022

Site Visit Date: Tuesday, April 10, 2018- 9:00 a.m.
Program Capacity: 135

Site Visit Review Team:
Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways, Opportunity Network
LaTanya Miller, Executive Director, Academic Enrichment
Roxolana Barneby, Director, Education Policy & Strategy, Philadelphia Youth Network
Lori Shorr, Professor, Temple University

Program Staff:
Marcus Delgado, Chief Executive Officer, One Bright Ray, Inc.
Marta Lasiy, Principal, One Bright Ray Community High School- Elmwood Campus
Rachael Turanski, Dean of Academics, One Bright Ray Community High School- Elmwood Campus

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. **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. One Bright Ray (OBR) Elmwood 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. OBR Elmwood aggregated and analyzed its own data as a demonstration of the program's ability to make data-informed decisions for positive student outcomes. The program's leadership explained some of the key drivers of their academic outcomes. OBR Elmwood rosters students with low level reading and mathematics skills into TABE Academy courses. TABE Academy features computer-based instruction and direct instruction. The computer-based instruction is adaptive to students' individual needs in order to develop mastery of discrete skills. The direct instruction portion of TABE Academy complements computer-based instruction and provides students with differentiated instruction to support skill growth. This year, OBR Elmwood has focused professional development efforts on increasing rigor, incorporating cognitive engagement strategies, and differentiating instruction. Teachers have received ongoing training and instructional resources to vary classroom activities for diverse learners and to create storyboards and final product driving questions that challenge students to think at higher levels. In addition, OBR Elmwood this year requires that students read at least one novel every month as part of their learning in class. This initiative was developed to provide students with more opportunities to read entire books in order to increase their ability to analyze text, make annotations, and to improve reading skills overall. All classes at OBR Elmwood incorporate reading and writing components into final products, including Art class. OBR Elmwood produces a weekly "scouting report" that examines the progress of each individual student. The scouting report provides a snapshot of each student's attendance rate and academic progress. Students are grouped into three tiers based on the data. Those students with the lowest attendance and least academic progress receive targeted interventions in an effort to get them back on track. Students in the middle tier are encouraged to improve; and those at the highest tier are celebrated for their accomplishments. **Academic Outcomes versus Goals.** OBR Elmwood is in its first year TABE Academy implementation. The program has already analyzed early academic outcomes for students who are rostered into the class. Leadership noted that they see early signs of TABE Academy students making larger skill gains than their peers who are not rostered for the course. Leadership will conduct a comprehensive data analysis at the end of this school year to determine how TABE Academy impacts student learning and skill growth. Academic outcomes are shared with students, staff, and parents on a regular basis. Students and parents have access to the program's PowerSchool student information system, which houses grades and attendance records. Teachers are required to update grades in PowerSchool every week, and OBR Elmwood publishes progress reports every two weeks. This frequent release of student progress allows teachers, parents, and students to receive timely information related to student achievement. As a result, teachers and parents can intervene when students are falling off track, and students are able to adjust their efforts accordingly. The program's principal, mentor, or counselor will talk with students who are struggling with grades and/or attendance. In addition, the principal calls parents to inform them and to solicit their support in getting the student back on track. The goal of these conversations is to develop an action plan for improvement, for which the student becomes accountable. **Classroom Observation Preparation.** In preparation for classroom observations, OBR Elmwood's leadership discussed what we should expect to see in classrooms. Each class should have a driving question and final product description posted, as well as four-week storyboards. Each class should have a common board configuration to include a warm-up, objective, activities, and a closure. Class periods begin with silent warm-ups that allow students to smoothly transition into the class by doing an independent assignment. In addition, teachers should utilize cognitive engagement strategies and activities that differentiate instruction.

Classroom Observations

Review team member observed a World History class for approximately 10 minutes. Seventeen students were present and the class period was wrapping up during the observation. Classroom walls displayed recent student work, classroom procedures/rules, instructional resources, and the OBR Behavioral Continuum and Grading Policy. Storyboards, driving questions, the objective, warm-up, lesson activities, and the closure were also posted. The class was completing a final product checkpoint that required them to complete a graphic organizer that they would later use to develop a multimedia presentation on monotheistic religions. The final product rubric and requirements were posted for students' reference. All students were on-task during the observation. At the end of the class period, students handed in their graphic organizers to the teacher and put away their class folders in an efficient and orderly manner. The depth of engagement challenged students to analyze, apply, and synthesize information related to monotheism.

Review team members observed an English class for approximately seven minutes. Seventeen students were present and the class period was just starting during the observation. Classroom walls displayed recent student work, classroom procedures/rules, instructional resources, and the OBR Behavioral Continuum and Grading Policy. Storyboards, driving questions, the objective, warm-up, lesson activities, and the closure were also posted. Students entered the classroom in an orderly fashion and took out a laptop to begin working. The warm-up activity was through Google Classroom and the login information was posted on the board. Students were required to write at least 2-3 sentences related to Shakespearean sonnets. The final product for the class required students to incorporate art and Shakespearean sonnets into a writing assignment from the perspective of a museum event planner. The depth of engagement challenged students to apply, create, and evaluate Shakespearean sonnets in relation to artwork.

Review team members observed a Spanish class for approximately 10 minutes. Eleven students were present and the class was already in progress during the observation. Classroom walls displayed recent student work, classroom procedures/rules, instructional resources, and the OBR Behavioral Continuum and Grading Policy. Storyboards, driving questions, the objective, warm-up, lesson activities, and the closure were also posted. The class was reviewing answers to the warm up activity that required students to conjugate verbs in Spanish using direct object pronouns. The teacher called on different students to conjugate verbs, and helped students to recall prior learning when they were having difficulty with a conjugation. The depth of engagement challenged students to demonstrate understanding.

Review team member observed an African American History class for approximately six minutes. Seventeen students were present and the class period was already in session during the observation. Classroom walls displayed recent student work, classroom procedures/rules, instructional resources, and the OBR Behavioral Continuum and Grading Policy. Storyboards, driving questions, the objective, warm-up, lesson activities, and the closure were also posted. Students were watching a documentary on the MOVE bombing in Philadelphia. The classroom activity would later require students to read an article on the historic event and to develop three claims for and against labeling MOVE as a terrorist organization. The teacher stopped the documentary to ask questions and to scaffold information for students. About half the class was off-task during the observation, and the teacher redirected students often. The lesson's depth of engagement challenged students to analyze multiple sources and make evidence-based judgements.

Academic Success Questions with Students

Review team members interviewed a group of students who were selected by OBR Elmwood leadership to participate in the Academic Success Questions with Students. Students described their experiences at OBR Elmwood. Students liked the small size of the program and they talked about the program as being a family. They appreciated the program's clear and consistent rules and procedures. For example, students think that it is a good idea for their cell phones to be collected during the school day so that they can focus more on learning. They also liked having adults in the building (i.e., staff) who know them personally and who stop a lot of "drama" from occurring between students. Students can go to any staff person and ask for help, whether it is something personal or academic, and they feel comfortable doing so. Students noted that their classes are challenging, but that they enjoy the challenge and appreciate getting a good education for college. The students were very clear about their postsecondary plans. Graduating seniors had plans to attend specific colleges and trade schools in order to pursue their career interests, which ranged from auto mechanics to practicing law.

Academic Success Questions with Teachers

Ms. Rambo (English teacher) participated in the Academic Success Questions with Teachers. Ms. Rambo has been teaching for 16 years and this is her first year at OBR Elmwood. Ms. Rambo discussed the program's focus on utilizing cognitive engagement strategies and differentiated instruction. OBR held professional development sessions for teachers on those topics. In addition, teachers can access more than 200 strategies on their One Drive that were compiled by OBR administrators. Ms. Rambo talked about receiving a great deal of support from the program's Dean of Academics. Teachers are now required to incorporate cognitive engagement strategies and differentiated instruction into their storyboards. The Dean of Academics provides one-on-one support, feedback, and suggestions as teachers plan their storyboards. Ms. Rambo discussed her use of images to help students engage at a higher level with lessons, and to support those with diverse learning needs. The images she selects directly relate to the specific reading or writing assignments and lessons that are covered on a given day. Ms. Rambo noted that the program's Dean of Academics is really helpful with supporting teachers as they select instructional strategies that work best with their content areas. Ms. Rambo noted that it sometimes takes students a few minutes to get adjusted to using a new learning strategy, but they quickly adjust and get into the lesson. She also noted that students are more engaged when they become exposed to different learning strategies. Review team members asked Ms. Rambo why students often struggle with attendance, from her perspective. In her opinion, students miss school for a number of personal reasons, including long work hours without much sleep, caring for small children or siblings without familial support, and feelings of discouragement related to their circumstances overall. Ms. Rambo expressed the encouragement and support that she and her colleagues give to students. Teachers acknowledge students who have been absent when they return and show the students how happy they are to have them back. Ms. Rambo noted that even the program's support staff, Ms. Wilson and Mr. Scott, set the tone for students when they enter the building in the morning by giving them words of encouragement and cheering them on for coming to school. Overall, Ms. Rambo thought that OBR Elmwood is doing well academically and that the program is making great strides to continuously improve academic rigor and student engagement.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that OBR Elmwood continue to increase academic rigor and the use of cognitive engagement strategies in every class. The review team also recommends that OBR Elmwood continue its current focus on improving reading and writing skills by ensuring that students have ample opportunities to engage with various texts, which includes reading whole novels and non-fiction books. To that end, the program

should develop lesson plans and final products that require students to complete longer writing assignments in preparation for college. Finally, OBR Elmwood should continue to use student outcome data to strategically improve attendance rates, skill growth, and postsecondary access.