



**Instructional Visit Summary
Philadelphia OIC Workforce Academy**

Provider: Philadelphia OIC, Inc.
Contract Term: FY 2018 - 2022

Site Visit Date: Tuesday, March 27, 2018- 10:30 a.m.
Program Capacity: 125

Site Visit Review Team:

Christina Grant, Assistant Superintendent,
Opportunity and Innovation Networks
Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways to
Graduation, Opportunity Network
Marcus De Vose, Assistant Director, Transition
Services, Opportunity Network
Luis Rosario, Project U-Turn Fellow,
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Program Staff:

Dr. Kahlila Lee, Principal, Philadelphia OIC Workforce
Academy and Executive Director and Vice President of
Education, Philadelphia OIC
Mahdi Alston, Director of Operations, Philadelphia OIC
Workforce Academy
Priscilla Duncan, Administrative Assistant, Philadelphia
OIC Workforce Academy

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.

Comments/ Considerations:

Philadelphia OIC Workforce Academy is an Accelerated program in its first year of operation. Philadelphia OIC, Inc. was awarded a contract to operate an Accelerated program via the Request for Proposals 520 competitive bid process for Alternative Education Programs.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Academic Success Questions with Leadership

Academic Outcomes. Philadelphia OIC Workforce Academy (OICWA) presented and discussed the program's key academic data, including baseline literacy and numeracy scores, retention rate, projected graduation data, percentage of students attending at least 85% of school days, and Special Education data. OICWA 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 uses Pearson's AGS reading and mathematics level indicators to gauge students' skills growth. The principal discussed the program's initial use of the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) to monitor skills growth, but found the AGS to be more efficient. Program staff can use a tablet to scan score sheets, which then converts to a comprehensive skills report for each student. Teachers use these score reports to develop individual learning goals with their advisory groups. The AGS was administered early in the school year, and will be administered again in May to determine skill gains made over the full academic year. OICWA established a weekly Distributive Team Meeting (DTM) to discuss each student and to distribute responsibilities among staff to support each student. The program's principal noted that it is the responsibility of all adults in the program to contribute to the success of each student. During the weekly DTM, program staff assess the progress of each student using a three-tiered approach to group students according to their needs. Staff work to develop targeted interventions for students with the most personal challenges and the least amount of academic progress. Students who are falling behind receive various interventions, including one-on-one conversations with a dean, administrator, or teacher. Students who remain on-track towards making adequate academic progress are celebrated and recognized. OICWA has two deans of students. Each dean has a cohort of students that they are responsible for. It is the expectation of the program's principal that the two deans know each of their students well. Deans are in constant communication with their students using the Remind application. The application allows program staff and students to send and receive messages from each other in a safe and secure platform. Additionally, each teacher at OICWA serves as an academic advisor for a group of students, which allows students to receive comprehensive supports from a number of adults in the program. OICWA uses the Independent Reading Level Assessment Framework (IRLA) to support literacy growth among students. The IRLA provides developmentally appropriate texts that are accessible to students with different skill levels. Similarly, the program's principal stresses the importance of providing differentiation within classrooms in order to reach students where they are, increase overall engagement, and positively impact academic growth. **Academic Outcomes versus Goals.** All OICWA students complete a career-focused internship or externship, in addition to a core life skills course. The program offers courses of study and job development in four of Philadelphia's premier work industries, including, front desk operations, environmental services, culinary arts and banking. OICWA students will graduate with a high school diploma and certification in one of the job development areas. The program is also looking to expand its career certification offerings, and has successfully partnered with a master barber to offer barbering for interested students. The program has partnered with chefs from the popular television series, "Hell's Kitchen" to provide culinary arts instruction to students. OICWA students spend four days each week immersed in core academic subjects, and Fridays are set aside for internships and career development. The program follows the Pennsylvania Common Core Curriculum. Lesson plans are reviewed regularly by the program's principal to ensure alignment with core standards. The program is looking to make improvements for next year, which include the establishment of a codified learning model.

The principal is looking to further define the program's academic focus to support sustainability, continuous improvements, and replicability for possible expansion in the future. **Classroom Observation Preparation.** The principal of OICWA discussed her expectations for lesson plans and instruction. Lesson plans should be aligned to the core curriculum and should include strategies for differentiation. Instruction should utilize a gradual release of information that includes teacher modeling, guided practice, collaborative group work, and independent practice. Lesson plans should include warm-ups and exit tickets. The program's leadership noted the importance of reading across the curriculum to ensure that students have ample opportunities to improve their skills using a variety of texts.

Classroom Observations

Review team members observed a Mathematics class for five minutes that was already in progress, and five students were present in class. Classroom walls displayed recent student work and instructional resources. All students were on-task during the observation. The lesson objective and agenda were posted on the whiteboard. The class was learning to identify various types of segments and lines. The lesson plan included a warm-up activity, guided practice, and a wrap-up. The modes of instruction observed was direct instruction, lead and assist, as well as independent practice. The depth of the lesson challenged students to demonstrate their understanding of geometric concepts. The teacher used questioning to monitor student learning during the class period. Different students were called up to the whiteboard to demonstrate solutions that they independently solved using worksheets.

Review team members observed an English class for five minutes that was already in progress. Ten students were present in class during the observation. Classroom walls displayed recent student work, classroom procedures, and instructional resources. The lesson objective and agenda were posted. The classroom was organized into different work stations. Some students were reading text and taking notes, while others were conducting research. The teacher circulated around the class to help students at each workstation. Students were encouraged by the teacher to share what they learned with each other. The modes of instruction observed were direct, lead and assist, station teaching, and independent practice. The depth of the lesson challenged students to analyze and apply historical and biographical texts regarding the Holocaust.

Review team members observed a Chemistry class for five minutes that was already in progress. Three students were present in class during the observation. Recent student work, classroom rules, and instructional resources were displayed throughout the room. The lesson objective and agenda were posted on the whiteboard. The class was learning to calculate the number of atoms in a chemical compound. The class solved problems together as a group and the teacher modeled how to calculate atoms on the whiteboard. The class transitioned to students coming up to the whiteboard and sharing the steps they took to solve problems. The depth of the lesson challenged students to analyze and apply information.

Academic Success Questions with Students

OICWA leadership selected five students to participate in the Academic Success Questions with Students. All of the students, with the exception of one, are scheduled to graduate this year. The students overwhelmingly agreed that the program staff sets high expectations for them in terms of academic achievement, behavior, and

college and careers. Students acknowledged that their teachers constantly reinforce college-going, and the students have had numerous opportunities to explore options for postsecondary education through the program. Students expressed that the school culture and behavioral expectations are clearly communicated to them during new student orientation, and those expectations are continuously reinforced and communicated by teachers and other staff members. Students talked about getting extra help from their teachers anytime that they need it. Tutoring is available everyday, and sometimes students also tutor each other. Students noted that they have good relationships with their teachers, deans, and principal. They learned that the program places an emphasis on building positive relationships between students and between students and staff. Students mentioned that there had not been a single fight at the program since it first opened this school year. When asked what they wish the school has that it does not, students talked about wanting sports teams, like football, basketball, and cheerleading. Some students expressed that they wanted to take the SAT earlier in the year in order to apply to colleges sooner. Overall, students are proud of their program and appreciate the safe and secure climate of the program. Students considered the mission of the program to be about helping people to believe in themselves, and helping people to get to college.

Academic Success Questions with Teachers

All OICWA teachers and deans participated in the Academic Success Questions with Teachers. When asked about the kinds of assessments they use in class, teachers discussed the use of class projects, exit tickets, hands-on activities, labs, unit tests, and quizzes. Teachers also noted their use of AGS scores to develop lesson plans and individual learning goals with students. They each have a cohort of students for whom they serve as advisors. Teachers talked about assigning written work to students in all classes to bolster writing skills. Similarly, teachers talked about providing a variety of texts for students in order to build confidence with reading and improve reading comprehension. Teachers talked about the program's weekly Distributive Team Meetings, and also professional development sessions on Fridays. Staff members discussed the positive learning environment that they have been able to create in such a short time since opening the program in September. They agreed that establishing a good rapport with students and with their colleagues has helped to create and maintain the positive learning environment. In addition, the program's deans of students play a major role in de-escalating problems. Teachers noted how the deans visit their classrooms quite often and that they have established positive relationships with students. Overall, OICWA staff thought that the school was doing great. They recognized positive changes in student behaviors since the program first opened and now see students becoming more focused on academics and more hopeful about their futures. All of the staff noted that they plan to return to the program next school year, and that they are excited to contribute to the program's continuous growth.

Recommendations

OICWA should conduct a comprehensive assessment of its first year in operation and develop measurable goals to continuously improve academic outcomes for students. The program has established a safe, secure and respectful environment for all members of the learning community. The program should continue its current focus on improving academic rigor and ensuring that instruction is engaging and relevant. To that end, professional development sessions should focus on differentiation for a diverse student population and instructional strategies that challenge students to strategize, analyze, and extrapolate at a higher level.