

Instructional Visit Summary
YES Philly

Provider: Youth Empowerment Services
Contract Term: FY 2018-2022

Site Visit Date: Thursday, March 8, 2018- 10:30 a.m.
Program Capacity: 100

Site Visit Review Team:

Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways to Graduation, Opportunity Network
Luis Rosario, Project U Turn Fellow, Opportunity Network
Tiana Wilson, Re-engagement Center Program Manager, Opportunity Network
Jacqueline Jones, Transition Liaison, Opportunity Network

Program Staff:

Taylor Frome, Executive Director
Kim Atias, Education Director
Shanta Richardson, Special Education Teacher

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. YES Philly 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. YES Philly 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 would like to improve its graduation outcomes, and they believe that this year's graduation rate will be higher than the previous. According to the program's leadership, a major driver of improved graduation outcomes will be the program's move toward becoming a Summit Learning school. YES Philly became a Summit Learning school at the start of the current academic year. YES Philly's leadership discussed and presented its Summit Learning model. The program's Education Director demonstrated the online tools that they use through Summit Learning. Review team members were able to see the curriculum from the perspectives of teachers and students. YES Philly began implementing Summit Learning this school year to ensure that students gain the academic skills and rigor necessary to have successful postsecondary experiences. In addition, the program was interested in challenging students with high level skills, and now those students can continue to grow through Summit Learning's Advanced Placement course offerings. At the end of this school year, the program's leadership expects to see positive impacts on student outcomes as a result of using Summit Learning. **Academic Outcomes versus Goals.** YES Philly administers the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) diagnostic assessment to all of its students to gauge their reading and mathematics levels. The MAP provides a comprehensive score report for each student that outlines the discrete skills that they have mastered and those that need more development. The MAP also provides grade level equivalent scores. YES Philly uses MAP data to group students into three categories according to their skill levels. Students with similar skill levels take classes together, which allow teachers to develop whole-class interventions to bolster students' skills. Summit Learning is aligned to common core standards, and it breaks down traditional learning units into cycles. Each cycle is then broken out into focus areas with specific learning objectives and cognitive skills that students gain from mastering the cycle. Summit Learning is competency based, which allows students to "not finish" a course instead of "failing". Students who have not mastered a course (i.e., finished a course) can pick up their learning where they left off. Students must master all focus areas within a subject in order to finish a course. **Classroom Observation Preparation.** When asked what we should see in classrooms, the program's leadership noted that we should see students within one class engaged in different activities. Classrooms should have their lesson agenda posted and instructional resources and student work should be displayed. Students should have their class folders, which help them to track their assignments and final products for the class. In addition, co-teaching should be observed with a general education teacher and the program's special education teacher. Students should be engaged with learning and staff should be passionate and knowledgeable about the subject matter.

Classroom Observations

Review team members observed an English class for six minutes that was already in progress, and 11 students were present in class during the observation. Classroom procedures, instructional resources, and recent student work were on display in the class. All students were on-task during the observation and engaged with the

lesson. The class agenda and learning objectives were posted on the whiteboard. The class was learning about persuasive writing. The mode of instruction observed was independent practice with the teacher circulating the room to monitor and assist each student. Students used worksheets, folders, and computers in the classroom. No assessment was observed, however, the next step for the assignment was for students to get feedback from the teacher about their persuasive essay outlines.

Review team members observed a media class for five minutes that was already in progress, and 15 students were present in class during the observation. Classroom procedures, instructional resources, and recent student work were on display in the class. Nearly all students were on-task and engaged with the lesson activity. The few students who became off-task were quickly redirected by the teacher. The class agenda and lesson objectives were posted on the whiteboard. Students were working on multimedia storyboards, and the review team observed the teacher delivering a lesson on storyboards. The method of instruction was question and answer, and modeling/demonstration. Students used computers, notebooks, and storyboard worksheets. The teacher used questioning and observations to assess students during the lesson. The assessment tool used was a performance-based class assignment.

Review team members observed a mathematics class for five minutes that was already in progress, and 13 students were present in class during the observation. Classroom procedures, instructional resources, and recent student work were on display in the class. All students were on-task and engaged with learning. The class agenda, lesson objectives, and warm-up activity were posted on the whiteboard. Students were learning to generate the slope of a line given two points. Students solved equations as a whole group using worksheets, and the teacher modeled solutions on the whiteboard. Co-teaching was observed as YES Philly's Special Education teacher supported various students and also communicated with the mathematics teacher about the pacing of the lesson, among other matters. The methods of instruction observed were question and answer, lead and assist, and modeling/demonstration. The assessment methods observed were questioning and polling. The teacher used the class activity as the main tool to assess student mastery.

Academic Success Questions with Teachers

All of YES Philly's teachers participated in the Academic Success Questions with Teachers. The teachers reported using results from MAP testing and Summit Learning assessments to determine how well students are mastering learning objectives and cognitive skills. Assessments available through Summit Learning help teachers to determine which students are not mastering objectives within a given focus area. Teachers talked about developing targeted interventions in order to help students improve discrete skills. For example, teachers noticed that many students at YES Philly were not reading passages closely for information. To improve this reading skill, all teachers instituted a sustained reading time for students. YES Philly's teachers talked about how they share academic data with parents and students. Parents receive report cards, interim reports, and intervention plans for students who are falling behind. Parents can also log into Summit Learning to monitor student progress. Students have access to the same information, and they communicate with their teachers via the Summit Learning platform on a daily basis. Teachers review completed assignments in Summit Learning and send their students messages about whether they have mastered the learning objective or whether they should re-attempt the assignment to achieve mastery. YES Philly teachers talked about how performance expectations are communicated to them by the program's administration. Teachers meet weekly as a group with the

program's principal to discuss expectations and to have common planning time. The program's principal reviews data with teachers and helps them to make appropriate instructional shifts based on the data. For example, one teacher talked about her class not mastering objectives at the same rate as students in other classes. This became apparent through a data review. That teacher then discussed the issue with the principal, and they worked together to change the pacing of the teacher's lessons so that her students would be on par with other classes. Teachers receive formal observations two to three times per year using observation protocols from Summit Learning. Teachers discussed the ways in which observations have informed professional development topics. Most recently, teachers received a professional development on small group instruction after the program's principal observed some teachers struggling with that particular instructional strategy.

Academic Success Questions with Students

Review team members met with a group of YES Philly students for Academic Success Questions with Students. All of the students felt that their school work is challenging and that they enjoy the challenge. They thought that their teachers set clear expectations for them, and that they can get help from teachers whenever they need it. Students expressed that they have very positive relationships with their teachers. YES Philly students also talked about the extracurricular activities that are available, including coding class, martial arts and self-defense classes, media club, among others. When asked what they would change about the program, students talked about wanting a basketball team or football team, and a cheerleading squad. When asked about the mission of YES Philly, students replied with the word, "Success". Students were clear about the mission of the program in educating students who have disengaged from school. They expressed a great deal of appreciation for the program and how it is helping them to prepare for college and careers. Additionally, several students talked about the School District's Re-engagement Center and how the center connected them with YES Philly.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that YES Philly continue on its current path with Summit Learning, which can provide a rigorous and engaging curriculum for students. The program's leadership should continue to advance the use of Summit Learning in a way that responds to the unique needs of YES Philly. For example, MAP test results should be overlaid with results from Summit Learning to gain a deeper understanding of student mastery, skill deficiencies, and the efficacy of interventions to support struggling students and those who need more challenging work.