THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Mid-Year Evaluation
YES Philly

Provider: Youth Empowerment Services

Site Visit Date: Tuesday, November 28, 2017, 10:00 am **and** Thursday, February 1, 2018

Contract Term: FY 2018-2022

Child Count Compliance: 100%

Program Capacity: 100

Percent of students attending at least 85% of school days: 99.4%

Site Visit Review Team:
Christina Grant, Assistant Superintendent, Opportunity Network
Patricia Lesesne, Executive Director, Opportunity Network
Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways to Graduation, Opportunity Network
Marlon Riddick, Transition Liaison, Opportunity Network
Luis Rosario, Project U Turn Fellow, Opportunity Network
Leta Johnson-Garner, Director of Evaluation, The School District of Philadelphia
Farrah Farnese, Senior Director, External Relations, Philadelphia Youth Network

Program Staff:
Taylor Frome, Executive Director
Kim Atias, Education Director
Melvin Davis, Dean of Students
Edison Freire, Board Member

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.

Comments/ Considerations:

Mid-year visits for YES Philly were conducted on November 28, 2017 and February 1, 2018, because during the first visit in November there was a fire drill at the halfway point of the visit. The following **four domains** were completely evaluated during the November visit: **Vision for Learning**, **Family & Community Relationships**, **Talent Development**, and **Data**. During the February visit, the following **three domains** were completely evaluated: **School Safety**, **Positive Environment**, and **High Quality Instruction**.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Vision for Learning

Rating: NEEDS IMPROVEMENT [3 of 5 components met]

Strategy for literacy and numeracy skill-building (No). Within the program, there did not appear to be a structured or cohesive plan which clearly articulates specific strategies for building students' literacy and numeracy skills. While program staff members were able to describe multiple isolated efforts to address the literacy and numeracy skill levels of students in the program, these efforts seemed fragmented, and they appeared to lack consistency in regards to implementation. Additionally, the purpose, scope, and effectiveness of each literacy and numeracy skill-building effort that the program staff described was unclear. Also, review team members found no evidence of a comprehensive schoolwide structure or framework that supports skill development, academic attainment, and enrichment for all students in the program. In response to questions about strategies for literacy and numeracy skill-building, program staff members primarily referred to Summit Learning, an online learning platform, which teachers are using throughout the program. This platform is new to the program and program staff are in the infancy stages of implementation. In support of this schoolwide online learning instructional initiative, each student has access to a chromebook throughout the school day. Each year, students in the program take Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) diagnostic assessments, which assess the reading and math levels of each student. In every content area, program teachers utilize the results of these tests to determine the most effective mode of instruction for each student in every content area. Program staff mentioned that MAP assessments are also administered on an ongoing basis. These ongoing MAP assessments are formative. Based on the results of these assessments, program students are assigned on an as-needed basis to additional skill-building courses. Additionally, the program has a schoolwide literacy and numeracy initiative called, "YESPhilly Reads, Writes, and Solves", which is implemented once per day at the same time of day in every content area. **Retention plan implementation** (Yes). YES Philly presented its retention plan, which begins during orientation when students learn about the program's academic and attendance expectations, and the negative impact that absences have on academic achievement. The program uses early warning systems that track attendance, behavior, and academic progress. This data helps program staff to determine which students are at-risk of school disengagement. Students at-risk of disengaging from school are given targeted interventions, including attendance contracts, extra academic assistance, and behavior conferences. **Orientation for new students** (Yes). Orientation for students in the program begins with the application process. When students apply to the program, they have the opportunity to shadow a peer, participate in an interview and attend workshops. During these workshops, students meet teachers within the program, review the student handbook with the Dean of Students, take the MAP diagnostic assessment, and learn more about the online learning platform, Summit Learning, which is used throughout each class. Parents participate in student orientation, as well. During orientation, parents are encouraged to provide information about their child, which can be used to determine what type of supports he or she may need in order to be successful in the program.

Family engagement plan (Yes). The program's family engagement plan includes inviting parents to participate in orientation prior to the students' first day in the program as described above. Additionally, each staff member serves as a mentor to students in the program, and a major part of each teacher mentor's role is to communicate with parents regularly. The program also hosts two Back-to-School nights and five graduation ceremonies throughout the year, which parents are invited to attend. Finally, as part of the program's efforts to engage families, YES Philly has an open-door policy which enables parents to visit the program at any time.

Individual graduation plans (No). Program staff did not provide strong evidence of a comprehensive individual graduation plan process for each student. The program discussed a personalized learning plan (PLP) process, which is initiated through the aforementioned staff-student mentoring program. Staff mentors coordinate with the program's postsecondary planning team to document each student's progress toward reaching postsecondary goals.The PLP tracking document is updated by a staff mentor or a member of the program's postsecondary team member. On a regular basis, student receive reports detailing the credits they have obtained, as well as the credit requirements that they still need to fulfill. Students then use these detailed reports to complete their own high school graduation plan and post secondary roadmaps. The PLP documents include each student's start date, date of expected graduation, educational track, assessment scores, number of credits earned and number of credits still needed, as well as an attendance review and personal student information. While the number of credits needed are listed in the PLP, the subject areas in which credits are needed are not documented. For the program review team, this raised questions about the program's ability to provide students with an understanding of which courses are required, as well as a timeline during which they should expect to meet those requirements. Overall, the PLP planning document indicates a variety of basic objectives and milestones for students at a surface level only. However, there was not enough evidence of a robust planning and tracking system that would ensure the success of each student. One example is that student self-reflection, self- progress monitoring, and information about instructional supports/interventions are not evident in the plans to support student growth and development. Therefore, review team members concluded that the evidence was not sufficient to satisfy this component.

Family and Community Relationships

Rating: PROFICIENT [5 of 5 components met]

Parents surveys (Yes). This year, the program adjusted its parent survey strategy. The previous strategy consisted of administering surveys during parent and family engagement activities, such as Back-to-School nights. This year, staff mentors within the program conduct the survey with parents via phone during check-ins with each student. These check-ins occur once per cycle, which is a total of five times throughout the year. With this change, the program is collecting more data more efficiently. This data, however, remain with individual mentors and are not entered into a centralized data collection system. While high level data is being pulled into a spreadsheet, the program did not provide comprehensive data at the individual level. In regards to responding to the survey results, there did not appear to be a specific practice that had been adjusted as a result of the feedback from the fall surveys. The program indicated that they plan to address suggestions from parent survey results in the winter/spring cycles. These plans include offering more education to parents and families about the schoolwide online Summit Learning platform, as well as creating specific workshops designed especially for parents. However, there was no mention of plans to make adjustments to classroom instruction, which would be informed by feedback from the surveys. **Parent and community outreach** (Yes). Program staff provided written evidence which included an outline of the program's specific efforts for parent and community outreach. These efforts included: parent/guardian orientation, staff mentor outreach to each parent, parent night, Back-to-School night, and postsecondary informational events. Additional tools and strategies used for parent and community outreach included: use of the REMIND text messaging platform to send timely information directly to students' and parents' cell phones, parent conferences, personal phone calls to parents, as well

Attendance Matters Letters alerting parents of attendance issues. Additionally, with the stronger focus on staff mentor connections through the Summit Learning platform, staff mentors are playing a key role in family engagement. Staff mentors call at least once per cycle (five times per year). Also, as of this year, students are no longer assigned a different staff member each year. Therefore all students and parents are connected to only one mentor throughout the student's experience in the program. **Communication logs** (Yes). Program staff provided communication logs to review team members, however, it was noted that not all communication is tracked or kept in the same place. Among materials provided as evidence for this component were examples of REMIND text messages, as well as staff notes from the case management system. Program staff shared that the REMIND system has the capacity to send both mass texts and individual updates to students, however, review team members were only provided with an example of a mass text message reminding parents of Back-to-School night. **Strategy to improve family engagement** (Yes.) The program staff highlighted several strategies they are employing to improve family engagement. An example of one strategy is mandatory parent involvement prior to enrollment. This approach has increased family participation and has allowed program staff to set expectations of the relationship between the family and the program from the beginning. Thus, parents and program staff are on the same page in support of the student early. Another strategy is the use of the REMIND texting platform by program employees. This platform allows for more frequent and timely contact between parents and the program. Additionally, assigning one staff mentor to each student from the time of enrollment through graduation has created stronger connections between parents and the program. Within the program, staff have begun to reach out to families with positive news as opposed to only reaching out with communication about negative situations or issues. This represents a shift, away from employing a deficit orientation when engaging parents. Program staff members indicated that parent engagement may also be increasing due to the recent decrease in age of the average student. Staff members shared that the average age has decreased from 19+ to 16-18 years old. YES Philly believes that families with students in the younger age groups typically have stronger connections with their child's program. **Partnership with employers and postsecondary institutions** (Yes). The program staff shared a list of organizations with whom they have forged partnerships. Though these partnerships exist, program staff have not developed norms for a systematic approach to employer and postsecondary partner outreach. Partnership agreements and expectations are developed on an individual, as-needed basis. There was no evidence of a clear strategy for identifying the current partners as related to the needs of students. Review team members recommended that the program create a matrix for and employ a more systematic approach to forming and tracking partnerships.

School Safety

Rating: PROFICIENT [6 of 6 components met]

Average Daily Attendance (Yes). As of February 1, 2018, Yes Philly currently has 106 students enrolled in the program, however the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) report showed 60 students present for the day. **Number of students present in each classroom** (Yes). Five classrooms were observed and the following number of students were calculated: Classroom #1: 16 students; Classroom #2: 14 students; Classroom #3: 12 students; Classroom #4: 11 students; and Classroom #5: 10 students. The total number of students in all classes observed, is 63, which is close to the ADA report of 60 students present for the day, but over by three (3) students, because those students came in late. On the day of the observation, YES Philly had 56.6% attendance (60 out 106 enrolled were present), however, the program shows that 99.4% of students are attending 85% or more of all school days. This shows a significant difference between what YES Philly has reported throughout the year and what was observed throughout the visit. **Attendance policy & truancy plan implementation** (Yes). YES Philly discussed their program's attendance and truancy plan and specific documented efforts with the review team. YES Philly's Counselor and Dean of Students meet weekly to discuss students' disciplinary and attendance challenges. Every student has a mentor, with a caseload of students, who they meet with on a weekly basis to

"check-in" and address any potential barriers such as poor attendance etc. Additionally, to encourage regular attendance, program staff and teachers implemented a Student Incentive Program. Incentives include weekly raffles, class and school trips, as well as pizza parties. **Orderly daily routines and transitions** (Yes). Students were observed transitioning between classes in an orderly and consistent flow. **Use of scholarchip with fidelity** (Yes). YES Philly uses scholarchip with fidelity. **Program-wide positive behavior system** (Yes.) The program provided evidence of implementation of a tiered Positive Behavior Support System (PBSS), which consisted of: (a) use of a grading rubric that correlates to behavior, consequences and attendance (b) using student incentives-- i.e. weekly raffles, class and school trips, pizza parties, and (c) a recognition wall of student achievement prominently displayed. YES Philly provided evidence of behavior plans to address barriers to student academic success. The program has an electronic case management database, which captures student academic barriers and tracks adult interventions, as well as a staff mentoring program for students. Program staff meets weekly to discuss each student's social and emotional progress, and each student's attendance pattern. Evidence of weekly professional development sessions for staff was provided, which sporadically included training on adolescent social and emotional development. In addition to the efforts describe above, the program appeared to be experiencing several challenges. For example, program staff provided evidence of the following concerns with their tiered Positive Behavior Support System (PBSS) : (a) in regards to the student behavior expectations pertaining to the "5 Elements of Success"--which is connected to the grading rubric and correlated to students' behavior--the consequences and attendance requirements were not explicit and (b) student behaviors which are required to receive incentives appeared to be subjective, thus the criteria was not explicit. Additionally, within the program there does not appear to be a system to periodically review behavior plans and address barriers to academic success. While the program provided evidence of implementation of an electronic case management database to capture student academic barriers and adult interventions, key staff members are not part of the weekly meetings where program staff discuss student's social and emotional progress and challenges. YES Philly needs improvement with this component.

Positive Environment

Rating: PROFICIENT [4 of 4 components met]

Engagement of students and families in building positive environment (Yes). YES Philly discussed their specific efforts to engage students and families in building a positive environment. Along with student activities detailed under the *Team building activities for staff and students component* in this domain, each student is paired with a mentor, who is an instructional staff member. Mentors make calls to parents for absences, academic challenges, and academic successes. These calls are also linked with verbal surveys to parents, based on how they feel the school is supporting their child. In addition, the school utilizes the REMIND platform to keep parent communication organized. **Respectful interactions between staff, students, and families** (Yes). Students and staff have good positive relationships evidenced by staff remembering students' names and a strong sense of cordiality between students and staff. All interactions observed by the review team were respectful. **Staff has a good rapport with students** (Yes). In the classrooms, students and teachers were observed to have good working relationships but there were also instances of them over speaking each other during the teacher's instructional time. In addition, norms regarding speaking time, cell phones, and classroom rituals in general seemed to be implicit or unclear at points. This resulted in disjointed communication between students and teachers. For the most part, the review team observed a good rapport with staff and students, however, teachers and staff could benefit from spending a few more minutes at the beginning of the class session to solidify the norms. **Team building activities for staff and students** (Yes). Staff have ample opportunities to convene for professional development and team building purposes. Administration shared the following examples:

- Professional learning communities (led by staff), in which staff are currently discussing Better Than Carrots and Sticks, a training on restorative practices.
- During each intersession (periods of time without students in the building) staff convene for two (2) days to focus on staff development
- Retreats (nature-based at the Chief Executive Officer's home)
- Staff potlucks

Administration shared that they feel lucky to have such a dedicated staff who exhibit good chemistry with one another. YES Philly is also very intentional about team building activities for students and does a great job of creating an atmosphere of celebration and getting students together. For example, the program sets up a monthly "spirit day" celebration with different topics/events such as "crazy socks, double dutch or dance parties."

High Quality Instruction

Rating: PROFICIENT [7 of 7 components met]

Students actively engaged in class (Yes). Review team members observed all students actively engaged in all classrooms. **Early warning system for academic interventions** (Yes). YES Philly instructional model includes extensive use of the Summit Learning Platform to create a personalized and rigorous learning environment. Diagnostic assessments on the Summit Learning Platform provide instant feedback to both students and teachers in order to determine specific learning objectives that students need to review or remediate. These objectives inform individual and small group instruction for content mastery and skills improvement. The program develops checkpoints in the Summit Learning Platform, which allows teachers to see which content standards are not being mastered by students. Extra academic supports are then provided before students move on to the next checkpoint or final product. In addition, the Summit Learning Platform features a color coded system of feedback, which allows teachers to identify students in real time who need additional supports in a particular content or cognitive skills area. YES Philly staff participates in monthly data dives, case reviews, and student mentoring, which provide additional warning indicators for students that are struggling with mastery. **Students enrolled in the courses they need to meet graduation requirements** (Yes). YES Philly presented credit profiles and rosters for a group of students. All students were rostered for the correct courses they need to meet all graduation requirements. **Program has identified students eligible for Keystone Exams** (Yes). YES Philly 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). YES Philly's preparation for Keystone Exams includes teaching test-taking strategies and ensuring that students master content in English, Biology, and Algebra. Content mastery is achieved through personalized learning via the Summit Learning Platform, as well as whole-group and small-group instruction. Subject areas in the Summit Learning Platform are aligned to common core standards. In addition, the assessments that students take in the Summit Learning Platform are similar to the kinds of questions they will see on the Keystone Exams. **Postsecondary bridging plan** (Yes). The rigorous nature of the Summit Learning Platform helps to prepare students for postsecondary education. Students are able to develop college-ready cognitive skills, study skills, and academic skills. YES Philly partners with West Chester University to provide their students the opportunity to work closely with a college student on an extended project. YES Philly students learn a great deal about college going from these relationships, which helps to demystify college matriculation and credential attainment. YES Philly students also participate in supported dual enrollment at Community College of Philadelphia, in which they attend college classes on the main campus for credit towards their high school diploma. YES Philly tracks their students' postsecondary placements, and provided the data they have collected to the review team. **Postsecondary exploration and**

preparation (Yes). YES Philly students are guided through a series of activities to explore and prepare for postsecondary options. This begins immediately during a student's enrollment interview. Students work on their postsecondary plans with teacher mentors every Wednesday. Seniors take the YES Philly Expedition Course, which walks them through all of the activities necessary for college matriculation and/or employment. In addition, YES Philly's school counselors and Special Education teacher make up the program's postsecondary team. The postsecondary team meets individually with students, and makes sure that students are submitting timely application materials, applying for financial aid, taking the SAT or ACT, and engaging in other requisite activities for college and employment.

Talent Development

Rating: NEEDS IMPROVEMENT [3 of 7 components met]

Common planning time for teachers (Yes.) Teachers meet once per week for common planning sessions. Additionally, there are several opportunities within the daily schedule for teachers to collaborate. Program staff provided a schedule for both formal and informal common planning time. **Differentiated staff supports** (No). Professional development offerings are selected based on classroom observations, as well as teacher requests. **Staff turnover** (Yes). The staff turnover that YES Philly had been experiencing seems to have decreased significantly. For example, there was only one staff change between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. When asked to identify major reasons for the staff turnover they had previously experienced, program staff cited that there was not a good fit between the staff who left and the program model. In regards to the reduction in turnover, program staff cited job satisfaction and increased pay. Additionally, YES Philly emphasized that pay increases resulted in staff members no longer feeling burnt out due to the need to secure second jobs. **Professional development calendar** (Yes). A professional development calendar was provided along with agendas and sign-in sheets for each session that had already taken place. **Staff selection process** (No). The program's selection process did not appear to be robust. According to program staff, potential teachers provide sample lesson plans and teachers rate mock lessons. **New staff induction** (No.) The program's new staff induction process also appeared to be non-existent. In response to this component, program staff shared that new teachers are assigned a mentor teacher. **Principal conducts regular observations and provide constructive feedback** (No). When asked, YES Philly mentioned that informal classroom visits on a weekly basis is conducted, using a teacher observation rubric that is provided through Summit Learning, a new online learning platform being utilized by the program, however, program staff could not articulate look-fors on the rubric. Additionally, staff members shared that when there are concerns during weekly visits, program leaders meet with the teacher immediately to discuss and address the issues. The process described did not appear to be systematic or robust.

Data

Rating: FAILING [0 of 4 components met]

Strategy to track student academic progress and provide interventions (No). The program's approach to tracking student academic progress and providing interventions relies significantly on Summit Learning, the online learning platform that is utilized throughout the program. While there is written evidence that Summit Learning has the capacity to track student progress within the system, it was unclear how instructors are utilizing this data in order to provide timely interventions for students who are struggling academically. YES Philly stated that students are gradually "released" from a traditional teaching model into the Summit Learning system. However, there was no clarity as to which metrics or assessments are used to guide the decision to release students into Summit Learning, nor was the full extent of teacher involvement clear once students began utilizing the system. According to program staff, the MAP assessment is utilized to assess student literacy and

numeracy skill levels. However, no evidence was provided to show how academic interventions are tracked after the MAP is taken. Since the MAP is only administered three times annually, it is the recommendation of reviewers that instructional staff provide evidence that students are being assessed for learning in between these assessments. Additionally, program staff did not mention how often staff meet to discuss student progress collectively nor how they identify the appropriate interventions to use with each student. Additionally, it is unclear how instruction is assessed when instructors pull students into small or large groups outside of the Summit Learning system. No evidence of student progress was presented. **System to collect and analyze data** (No). Data collections systems currently in use in the program include: The School District of Philadelphia's Student Information System (SIS), Easy IEP, Scholarchip, Excel (for attendance), a case management system, MAP Scores, and Keystone test scores. In spite of evidence of these systems, the program did not provide reports showing student growth in numeracy or literacy. The reports that were pulled from these various systems were missing or program staff were not fully capable of explaining them. For example, program staff members stated that they receive four reports daily in regards to how students, teachers, staff mentors, and parents use the Summit Learning system; however, actual copies of these reports were not available or failed to show how instructors use this information to improve classroom practices. In addition to suggesting that program staff address these concerns, review team members also recommended that a robust tracking system for students' postsecondary process be fully developed so that students and staff are fully aware of the progress each student is making toward graduation and postsecondary success. This system will allow the school to make informed decisions regarding the sort of postsecondary and career supports their students need for success. The program uses a three tier system to track student behavior. This system is robust in that it allows instructors, mentors, and counselors to speak to each other easily about student challenges. However, program staff were not able to display systemic student data reflecting student excellence. **Program improvement plans and related data reports** (No). Program staff members provided a very concise 2017-2018 program improvement plan, which includes performance objectives based on the performance matrix in the program's contract. However, a clear vision was not presented detailing how the school will measure its practices with literacy and numeracy skill-building, improving rigor of academic instruction, improving graduation rates, and increasing attendance and retention. Additionally, in regards to the use of Summit Learning, the goals for the rigor of blended learning are vague and do no adequately describe what metrics will be used to assess rigor in a blended learning environment. To review team members, it was unclear which data or reporting procedures are being used to gauge how the improvement plan's overarching goals are being reached. Program staff members mentioned that in January 2018 the entire program community will be reviewing and discussing the program goals. **Formative and summative assessments** (No). Program staff presented very minimal evidence of formative assessments. While the school tracks general statistics on formative feedback to students, there was very little evidence of the types of assessments used by instructors to guide their teaching practices. The Summit Learning platform seems to provide ample opportunities for both students and instructional staff to see their progress in completing material using this particular platform. However, it was unclear to review team members how teachers specifically target cognitive skills and/or content challenges using this information. There was evidence that the school uses the MAP assessment three times a year to determine students' numeracy and literacy levels and to provide academic interventions for students with challenges. Outside of the MAP and Summit Learning tools, evidence of classroom assessments were not provided by program staff to review team members.