



**Instructional Visit Summary**  
**One Bright Ray Community High School- Simpson Campus**

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

**Site Visit Date:** Monday, April 9, 2018- 9:00 a.m.  
**Program Capacity:** 270

**Site Visit Review Team:**

Dr. Wanda Y. Jenkins, Director, Special Projects, Opportunity and Innovation Networks  
Majeedah Scott, Director, Multiple Pathways, Opportunity Network  
Meredith Mehra, Deputy Chief, Office of Teaching and Learning  
Nefertiti White, Special Education Case Manager, Office of Specialized Services

**Program Staff:**

Marcus Delgado, Chief Executive Officer, One Bright Ray, Inc.  
Joycet Velasquez, Chief Academic Officer, One Bright Ray, Inc.  
Melissa Wallis, Principal, One Bright Ray Simpson  
Kara Fisher, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, One Bright Ray, Inc.  
Debra Marker, Dean of Academics, One Bright Ray Simpson

**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) Simpson 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 Simpson 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 Simpson identify gaps with numeracy and literacy through formative assessments. Students are assessed through the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE), which is administered twice per year. Assessment results indicate that many students come in at low numeracy and literacy levels. OBR Simpson is in its first year of implementing TABE Academy. OBR Simpson places students in TABE Academy if they test low. TABE Academy encompasses computer-based instruction (TABE software; adaptive) and direct instruction. Students struggle with reading information on texts, thus content teachers teach TABE Academy with special education support. OBR Simpson implements individual pathways to tailor the needs of each student. Program leadership is piloting a different TABE schedule this year, by breaking it up into chunks. OBR Simpson is interested in "What are students engaged by"; this will allow program staff to get students to read and pick texts that are engaging, rigorous, and create storyboards. Program leadership has implemented a highly effective writer book in the curriculum this year, as literacy is a key focus. Teachers have been integrating reading and writing in the classrooms. OBR Simpson articulated that their driving question is "How do we re-engage and motivate students to use this data to succeed and bolster their skill levels"? Program leadership conducts weekly staff meetings, which is helps teachers use data going forward in the classroom. OBR Simpson helps teachers teach research-based skills to prepare students for senior seminar. Additionally, program leadership is working with teachers on formative assessments, conceptual understanding, and critical thinking to inform their teaching practices. OBR Simpson's Chief Academic Officer (CAO) articulated the immense work that is taking place to help teachers use academic data and incorporate it into the classroom to close literacy and numeracy gaps. The Principal is working with academic staff to ensure students receive experiences through project-based learning and real world connections, which will allow them to apply equations in real life and to intangible current events. In regards to retention and attendance, OBR Simpson incentivizes students for perfect attendance. Data are triangulated and trends are reviewed in order to find ways to motivate students and understand the reasons for absences. Teachers have taken a special interest in data. One strategy to boost retention and attendance is for teachers to plan engaging content, to such that students do not want to miss the lesson. OBR Simpson's social worker conducts home visits two times a week to re-engage and retain students.

**Academic Outcomes versus Goals.** The program has used results from an end of year professional development that showed teachers wanted academic support time to start at the beginning of the day instead of the end of the day. Additionally, the seven-class roster was changed to a six-class roster and classes were extended an extra 10 minutes. The new schedule has helped significantly with attendance and with academic support strategies. If a student is late five times a phone call is made to the home; eight lateness causes a student to be dropped from first period. Students are, however, able to make up missed assignments for up to three days back. OBR Simpson uses parents and guardians as stakeholders. Program leadership implements a push in/pull out schedule for students based on their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Snapshots of IEPs at a glance are used to make modifications to assessments and assignments as necessary. Differentiation has been a focal point for professional development this year. OBR Simpson has five English Language Learner (ELL) students. The CAO joins meetings to provide translation as needed, when program staff develop an academic/support plan for students. OBR Simpson shares academic outcomes with families and students via progress reports every other week, which are sent home; additionally, parents have access to

PowerSchool applications. Teachers have a required 48-hour turnaround timeframe for assignments. Program staff articulated that PowerSchool is the most effective way to keep parents in the loop. During the transition between modules parents can retrieve report cards and grades. Moreover, assessment results have been used to inform professional development opportunities on differentiation and cognitive engagement strategies.

**Classroom Observation Preparation.** In preparation for classroom observations, OBR Simpson'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. The board configuration for each content being taught will include: a warm-up, vocabulary, objective, activities, and a closing. In addition, each class begins with a silent warm-up that allows students to smoothly transition into the class period by doing an independent assignment.

### **Classroom Observations**

Review team members visited a Senior Seminar class that was at the start of the class period. A total of 19 students were present in class during the five-minute observation. All students were on-task and demonstrated awareness of classroom procedures. Students entered the classroom, took out a laptop, and began working individually on their senior projects. Recent student work, classroom rules, and instructional resources were on display in the classroom. In addition, OBR's Behavioral Continuum and Grading Policy were posted on the walls. The teacher projected a worksheet entitled "Source Sheet", and each student had a hard copy of the worksheet to write in sources cited for their senior projects. The teacher circulated the room to ensure that students were on-task. The teacher also offered support to different students, and some students raised their hands to ask for help. The mode of instruction observed was independent practice with teacher support. The depth of engagement challenged students to synthesize and evaluate information for their senior projects.

Review team members visited a United States History class for approximately 15 minutes. Twenty students were present in class, and the class period was already in progress during the observation. The teacher projected notes from a PowerPoint presentation onto the whiteboard. Students were learning about the Vietnam War, and took notes from the PowerPoint during the observation. The teacher randomly called on students to read each slide, and then she questioned the entire class about the main ideas of each slide. The teacher underlined main ideas for each slide as students suggested them. Recent student work, classroom rules, and instructional resources were on display in the classroom. In addition, OBR's Behavioral Continuum and Grading Policy were posted on the walls. The method of instruction observed was modeling/demonstration with some discussion. The lesson objective that was posted did not relate to any common core standards or skills that students would gain or demonstrate. The lesson challenged students to demonstrate their understanding of the notes that were projected about the Vietnam War.

Review team members observed an English class for approximately seven minutes that was already in progress. Fourteen students were present in class during the observation. Recent student work, classroom rules, and instructional resources were on display in the classroom. In addition, OBR's Behavioral Continuum and Grading Policy were posted on the walls. Students were watching a video of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivering his, "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington. The objective of the lesson was for students to construct a claim statement. The lesson objective that did not directly align to any common core standards or skills that students would gain or demonstrate. The teacher encouraged students to ask questions during the video. The teacher also stopped the video on occasions to relate it to prior learning. The mode of instruction observed was lead and assist. The depth of engagement challenged students to analyze and apply prior knowledge to Dr. King's speech. The class then moved into a discussion about whether schools are more segregated now than in the 1960's. The assessment method observed was questioning, both during the video screening and the discussion.

Review team members observed an Algebra I class for approximately 10 minutes that was already in progress. Twenty-three students were present in class during the observation. Recent student work, classroom rules, and instructional resources were on display in the classroom. In addition, OBR's Behavioral Continuum and Grading Policy were posted on the walls. Students were working on how to find the slope of 2 points. All students were on task. The environment was conducive to learning and the teacher often gave students positive feedback by addressing them as "young scholars" and stating "I like to hear you are ready to work". Worksheets and calculators were used as materials for the lesson. The method of instruction used was question and answer. The depth of engagement was basic recall. During the observation, the teacher modeled and then led students on how to calculate the slope using 2 points on a line. However, the teacher gave too much prompting to students and asked some leading questions that telegraphed the answer. The teacher did change the problem to check for understanding, but, did the heavy thinking for students. The assessment method used was questioning. The assessment tool was class work.

Review team members observed an Art History class for approximately five minutes that was in process of wrapping-up. Seventeen students were present in class during the observation. The objective, class activity, and closure activity were posted. Recent student work, classroom procedures/rules, and instructional resources/manipulatives were posted on the walls. In addition, OBR's Behavioral Continuum and Grading Policy were posted on the walls. All students were on-task. The method of instruction observed was a media presentation. The teacher's knowledge of content was evident, rigor involved, and showcased consistency with storyboards. Students were working on their closure, which was to articulate what they had learned during the process of analyzing "Big Self Portrait". The environment was consistent and conducive and there were expectations for learning.

### **Academic Success Questions with Students**

OBR Simpson's leadership selected three students (2 seniors, 1 junior) to participate in the Academic Success Questions with Students. Students stated that all teachers make sure they do good in school. They feel all staff at OBR Simpson cares about them, which makes students want to give their best efforts. "They are not here just for a check because they really love us and make us to feel comfortable" stated one senior. Students stated that they enjoy the love circle which happens at the end of each class. In regards to academic expectations, students noted that they receive an outline in the beginning of and through each module. The outline informs students what they have to do and what checkpoints are due. Students stated that their old neighborhood high schools did not help as much, but noted at OBR Simpson they create an academic plan for students to be successful. Students know they have done a good job when they are rewarded. Students talked about receiving a reward for 85% in attendance and academics; rewards include trips, special honors, and pins. Students conveyed that pins are a point of pride and each pin has a story of success to it. Students feel that the TABE Academy is very helpful. If students are not performing well, they will receive a hallway conference to help get them back on track. Students expressed that they like the program and structure. One senior credited OBR Simpson with helping him get into the Air Force, which he will formally join this August. He stated "this school is like a second home; this school changed my life around". All students stated, during every module they have a guest from a college come to speak with them at career day. The next career day is scheduled on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Students stated that the main goal at OBR Simpson is for them to go to college or get a career. When asked, what is the best thing about the program, they collectively stated that the program helped them get back on track, guides them in a positive way, and the structure is so organized that they never feel confused. Students wish that the program had sports and more space. Students stated that behavior expectations are communicated to them but they feel like discipline is not strong enough and some students take it as a joke. They do however like that

teachers talk with students and help them solve behavior issues. Teachers will have a conference in the hallway with students and/or with the principal. If students continue to violate program standards, they will receive a pink slip, be suspended, or their parents will be called; if a student fights, they will be sent to another OBR campus to continue their education. Students stated that the special focus of the program is to get a high diploma and produce the final product after completion. Students feel that the food program is horrible and stated “we need some better lunches, but it is better than other schools”. In summary, students really enjoy the learning environment at OBR Simpson and stated that they would recommend the program to family and friends.

### **Academic Success Questions with Teachers**

Ms. DiGuillio (English teacher) and Mr. Zoblin (English teacher) participated in the Academic Success Questions with Teachers. Teachers discussed OBR Simpson’s latest academic initiative to incorporate cognitive engagement strategies into their daily lessons. Cognitive engagement strategies have been introduced to OBR Simpson teachers during the program’s weekly professional development sessions on Wednesdays. The teachers discussed a recent professional development session that focused on classroom transitions and the ways in which teachers can seamlessly move from one classroom activity to another and how those activities should be connected to the larger learning goal. Teachers noted that future professional development sessions will include creating high level warm up activities, and ensuring that seniors are building the skills they need to be successful after high school. Ms. DiGuillio and Mr. Zoblin discussed the support that they receive from program administrators. Teachers receive support with the creation of their four-week storyboards at every step. The program’s Dean of Academics reviews each part of their storyboards and provides one-on-one coaching and feedback. The teachers noted that they enjoy the freedom and flexibility they have to create storyboards and driving questions for final products. They also noted that they appreciate and rely upon the feedback and support they receive from administrators. Ms. DiGuillio and Mr. Zoblin discussed OBR Simpson’s current focus to push students toward more advanced reading and writing in class. Teachers are now required to incorporate written assignments into their daily lesson plans. In addition, teachers should incorporate numerous opportunities for students to read for comprehension, annotation, and analysis. Teachers talked about using Google Classroom to distribute writing assignments and to provide feedback directly to students. OBR Simpson invested in additional computers this school year to support TABE Academy classes. Mr. Zoblin teaches one section of TABE Academy, which is designed to support low level readers with skill building supports that are tailored to their individual skill deficiencies. TABE Academy is a new initiative this school year, and the teachers think that they should see larger skill gains as a result of providing this class to students who need it the most. Overall, teachers think that the program is doing well academically. Teachers agreed that as a whole organization they have improved significantly with challenging students to think more critically and at higher levels. They acknowledged that the program still has some improvements to make, but that they are on the right path to accomplish their goals of providing a rigorous, engaging curriculum that prepares students for college and careers.

### **Recommendations**

The review team recommends that OBR Simpson continue on its current path to provide rigorous and engaging instruction. Thus, it is further recommended as noted in the operational walkthrough, that teachers continue to take advantage of opportunities to take on more of a facilitator role to implement teaching strategies that place more of the “heavy thinking load” on students. Review team members recommend that OBR Simpson’s instructional leadership incorporates the “*why*” in all classes, so that students know why storyboards matter.

Lastly, OBR Simpson should also continue to analyze student academic data to ensure academic goals and instructional practices are adjusted appropriately to support student success.