



INSTRUCTIONAL WALKTHROUGH OVERVIEW

Instructional Walkthroughs for all Opportunity Network contract programs focused on the instructional vision and implementation of the vision at the classroom level required to deliver high quality instruction to students. Instructional Walkthroughs assessed program performance across three domains: 1) Overall Management; 2) Instructional Delivery; and 3) Conditions for Learning. Taken together, the three domains encompass key instructional expectations that are required to ensure effective instruction that facilitates meeting the program’s contract requirements with The School District of Philadelphia, as well as applicable federal, state and local laws.

Instructional Walkthroughs are one part of the School District’s three-part approach to the formal annual evaluation of all contracted Opportunity Network programs. In addition to Instructional Walkthroughs, Operational Walkthroughs and Alternative Education Progress Reports (AEPR) provide qualitative and quantitative data for program performance that inform decisions related to contract renewal, termination, and program expansion. *NOTE: Due to the COVID pandemic, availability of some academic data was affected. Academic data may be available in part, whole or not at all.* This report summarizes the program’s performance for each of the three domains reviewed during the Instructional Walkthrough. Each domain has been considered, in terms of key indicators for the domain area, and were rated by the walkthrough team on a four-point scale. In addition, this report provides ratings for select contract requirements indicating whether the program met those requirements or standards based on evidence reviewed during the Instructional Walkthrough.

**During the 2020-21 school year, due to Covid related health restrictions meant that instruction was being conducted remotely. All Instructional Walkthroughs were conducted virtually as well, including meetings with leadership, class video conference observations, interviews with staff and students, and review of documentation. Initial feedback from the walkthrough was also given at the end of the visit to the program.*

GENERAL INFORMATION

Walkthrough Date: March 4, 2021

Contract Term: FY 2018 - FY 2022

Program Type: Accelerated (Grades 9-12)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL

Students complete courses in this accelerated high school program with a focus on grade-level instruction that is supported by intentional efforts to establish a supportive school culture that meets the individual needs of the students.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

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WALKTHROUGH REVIEW TEAM

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Excel Academy North is an Opportunity Network contracted program that offers students the opportunity to participate in an accelerated high school program to increase the students' opportunities to gain high school credit and ultimately graduate from high school. The program is designed to provide students with opportunities to develop social and emotional skills necessary for successful participation in the next school setting as well as maintain and continue to develop academic skills necessary for grade promotion and credit attainment at the secondary level. To this end, the program incorporates a social and emotional learning component during the instructional day where students receive a status for behavior that is connected to advanced responsibilities and increased privileges.

Daily Structure –

- The instructional day consists of 5 periods, as well as an SEL block to begin the day
- Fridays are reserved for asynchronous instruction, and students access teacher supports through an office hours format, and when other staff perform wellness checks with identified students
- All instructional materials are shared and stored using the Google classroom platform

Teacher Feedback

- Focus on teacher development in creating virtual lessons that have interactive components that are engaging and rigorous
- Informal observations take place daily, with written feedback and coaching conversations, and provide data to inform PD topics
- Formal observations are given 2-4 times each year, with develop supports put in place for those performing below expectations
- Lesson plan feedback is given each week
- There is a peer feedback system in place as well, known as Rounds (focused on self-identified growth areas)

Intervention

- The program has a menu of supports that they utilize as part of their MTSS programming for students
- Frequent communication with families about student progress and celebrating success is a key intervention that is given to all students, but aligned to their individual goals

Professional Development

- Great deal of focus this year on remote teaching strategies and delivering interesting engaging lessons for students
- There are several PD structures in place- common planning time, half day/full day PDs in the school calendar, and Rounds (peer observation structure)
- Topics are chosen based on data (either from teacher observations, student achievement results, or teacher interest)
- Ongoing focus on increasing rigor and producing better academic outcomes for students

Parent Communication –

- Mainly utilizing phone calls and text or email messages to communicate with families
- Have also scheduled video conferencing events for orientations, virtual luncheons, parent/teacher conferences, parent information meetings, and virtual support groups throughout the school year

Use of Data – administration and instructional staff use the following to monitor student performance

- Students are taking the TABE assessment at least 2x each year, systems have been modified to allow for the remote collection of this data
- Student grades are also being closely monitored
- Student data conversations are taking place during Common Planning Time each week

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM AREAS OF STRENGTH

- With the shift to remote instruction, Excel North team has developed a variety of tech tools that help to support lesson delivery and student engagement
- There was a clear effort by teachers to make the content relevant for students and relatable to their lives and everyday experiences
- The scripted questions and activities in the teacher lesson plans reflected a high level of rigor and complex thinking
- There are very clear and well-developed systems in place school wide- two examples include the word of the day, and the whole staff effort in place to promote attendance and student engagement
- There are several student facing supports in place, aligned to both academic and non-academic challenges
- The school has maintained a warm and welcoming environment, even with the shift to remote instruction
- There was a consistent use of tech tools (google classroom etc.) that give a consistency to classes from subject to subject

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY OF ALL DOMAINS

The table below summarizes performance by category on elements that are conducive to effective instruction and are consistent with the academic performance measures in the contract during the 2020-2021 Instructional Walkthrough.

| DOMAINS | PROGRAM PERFORMANCE | TOTAL POSSIBLE | PERCENTAGE |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------|
| Domain I: Overall Management | 15 | 20 | |
| Domain II: Instructional Delivery | 19 | 28 | |
| Domain III: Conditions for Learning | 21 | 28 | |
| TOTAL | 55 | 76 | |

** Percentages were not calculated due to COVID and full-time virtual teaching and learning, this structural change does not support comparison of the report for the 2020-21SY to previous or future school years.*

DOMAIN 1: OVERALL MANAGEMENT

| Management for a Safe and Orderly Environment | N/A | Did Not Meet Expectations (1) | Nearing Expectations (2) | Expectations Met (3) | Exceeding Expectations (4) |
|---|-----|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. The program is welcoming and inviting. | | | | X | |
| 2. School-wide rules and procedures operating effectively. | | | | | X |
| 3. Classroom rules and procedures are operating effectively. | | | | X | |
| 4. Acknowledgement of students who are/are not following rules and procedures is evident in classroom/school-wide. | | | | X | |
| 5. Teachers display awareness of conditions. Teachers have designed lessons that are meant to be relevant and engaging, however, the ability of teachers to effectively monitor student engagement and comprehension varied greatly from classroom to classroom. In some classrooms, teachers were not clearly aware of who was or was not engaging and if they were able to comprehend the material. In other class, while teachers could see that a small number of students were very engaged, it was unclear if or at what level the other students were engaged in the lesson. | | | X | | |

Summary:

The program has made many adjustments and changed several of its systems to better accommodate remote learning. They have worked to create strong systems to make students feel welcome in teacher classrooms, to build community, and to reach out whenever someone is not present. There are clear relationships being built between staff and students both in class and through school wide structures. Intentional planning and supports are in place to make sure that students are able to navigate the academic materials, for example all of their class materials are located in the google classroom and accessible even after class. There was also clear evidence that the program has supports in place to help students navigate other challenges they may be facing (support staff, office hours, counseling, MTSS programming, etc.)

Opportunities for Growth:

1. Provide teachers with development and support in utilizing tools and techniques that will make student engagement and participation more transparent. There were a variety of tools and approaches taken in the lessons observed to engage with students, consider supporting teachers to design and select tools and tasks that they can observe and easily gather data on participation. One example might be to have students craft their responses into a single shared google doc- this way the teacher can see who and who is not writing a response, and provide coaching in the moment to encourage and/or improve participation.

DOMAIN II: INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

| Components of Effective Instruction | N/A | Did Not Meet Expectations (1) | Nearing Expectations (2) | Expectations Met (3) | Exceeding Expectations (4) |
|---|-----|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Teachers model the thinking and learning process. | | | | X | |
| 2. Teachers make the curriculum relevant for their students. | | | | | X |
| 3. Lessons are rigorous. Teacher lesson plans were well prepared, and included higher level thinking questions and rigorous discussion prompts. However, these prompts and checks for understanding were not utilized during the class period, instead the teachers often substituted those questions/prompts for lower level less rigorous questions. | | | X | | |
| 4. Students are working harder than their teachers. In the lessons observed, there were several opportunities where students could have taken on more of the thinking load, however, teachers would step in and provide the correct response or take the intellectual task away from students. There were some examples of scaffolding where resources were provided and students were then able to answer the question, however, these were not consistent. It appeared as if teachers reclaiming the thinking load from students was often happening when an immediate student response was not forthcoming (teachers would often jump in as opposed to providing more wait time and prompting). | | | X | | |
| 5. Evidence of data is visible. | | | | X | |
| 6. Teachers question all students with the same frequency. Student questioning was inconsistent in who was expected to answer the questions. Rarely was more than one response taken to a teacher's question, and few follow up questions were asked. In some classes a small group of students were able to answer the vast majority of questions, and other students were not required to answer any questions. | | | X | | |
| 7. Teachers ask all students questions at different levels of cognitive complexity. | | | | X | |

Summary:

The program has well developed systems for teachers to plan and deliver engaging lessons and there are strong systems for feedback in place to support teacher development. There was a noticeable effort made by the staff to make lessons both relevant for students but also engaging. This relevancy came from tailoring lesson topics and exercises so that they would relate to student interests (this effort was consistent across classrooms).

DOMAIN II: INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY, *continued*

Opportunities for Growth:

1. Provide teachers with development and coaching in providing scaffolds for students to access content, as opposed to modifying the rigor or content of their questioning. Responding to student struggle is a best teaching practice, but it needs to be done by offering support or a scaffold, as opposed reducing the rigor of a question for students. Consider presenting teaching with a core set of low prep scaffolding strategies that can be used during a lesson, and then supporting their implementation with real time coaching.
2. Support teachers with providing students with adequate wait time and tools to help them respond to rigorous tasks. This may look like sharing concrete strategies for wait time, or potential first or second responses to use when students don't quickly respond to difficult checks for understanding or tasks. Consider, how can you support teachers in leaving the thinking load with students and not (however well intentioned) jumping in to share the answer.
3. Support teachers with more whole group questioning techniques to use as checks for understanding. Consider sharing whole group questioning techniques that have all students attempting to respond to a question, either with or without technology tools. This will support teachers in gathering more insights into how all students are or are not understanding the material.

DOMAIN III: CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

| Establishing Conditions Necessary for Learning | N/A | Did Not Meet Expectations (1) | Nearing Expectations (2) | Expectations Met (3) | Exceeding Expectations (4) |
|---|-----|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Teachers are aware of non-engagement. | | | | X | |
| 2. Teachers use a variety of engagement strategies. | | | | | X |
| 3. Students appear to be engaged in the lesson. | | | | X | |
| 4. Students are interacting appropriately with other students. There was minimal student to student interactions observed today, despite several strong opportunities for students to further discuss a topic or provide one another feedback. While there were many engagement strategies observed during the visit, student to student conversations/feedback were not present. | | | X | | |
| 5. Teachers show interest in their students. | | | | X | |
| 6. Students are appropriately responsive to teacher interactions. | | | | X | |
| 7. There is evidence of the school-wide focus in the classrooms. | | | | X | |

Summary:

The program has spent a significant amount of time this year developing their teachers in the skills needed for strong remote instruction, and this was evident in the variety of strategies and tools being utilized across classrooms. In addition, there were clear systems in place to help encourage participation and attendance in class. Students were clear about these expectations and were clearly accustomed to the routines that have been put into place.

Opportunities for Growth:

1. Support teachers in utilizing tasks and activities that will encourage more student to student collaboration. Consider sharing a small group of key strategies or approaches that teachers can use (and modify as necessary) to encourage more collaboration and interaction between students. Student to student interactions and collaboration can greatly increase student engagement and accelerate their comprehension of complex concepts.