

Executive Summary

Voyageur Academy MODIFIED Reauthorization Review February, 24-25 2015

On February 24 and February 25, 2015, a team from the Ferris State University Charter School Office conducted a Mid-Year Performance Review at Voyageur Academy. The team consisted of Lee Robinson, Chairperson, Dr. Phyllis Robinson, John Hackett, and Joanie Beadle. The team would like to extend a sincere thank you to both Consortium High School and Voyageur Academy for their hospitality. The team especially thanks Principals Krystal Bell, Jeffrey Maxwell, and the American Promise team for all their efforts to put together the necessary documents for the review.

The team reviewed, discussed, and/or analyzed the following documents or procedures: the APS Educational Program, the Voyageur and Consortium curriculum, teacher retention, staffing records, attendance records, progress toward academic goals, School Improvement Plan, Plan of Correction between FSU and the Voyageur Board of Directors, school wide behavior plan, master schedule, and enrollment process. We also reviewed the Board of Directors Strategic Plan, Budget, Audit, and the Board of Directors governance performance record. In addition, the team interviewed the following groups: Staff (both HS and Elementary), parents, students (both Middle School and High School), and Board of Directors (1 member only) and Administration. The FSU visitation team also met and interviewed the School Improvement team from both Consortium High School and Voyageur Academy. In addition, the FSU visitation team observed 9 classrooms and attended data team meetings at Voyageur Academy and Consortium High School.

During our 2 days visit, the following positives were noted:

- 1) Based on our observations and interviews, there is a much improved culture and climate at both academies. The new management company, staff, and administration have implemented district-wide student behavior expectations that are vastly improved from 2013-14 (as per many of the interviewed groups including students). The students demonstrated an understanding of and alignment with the student code of conduct, including the uniform policy.
- 2) We found significant evidence that the new management company, American Promise Schools (APS), has an academic models. The academic model has been implemented, and it appears that APS continuously monitors the progress of the model implementation.
- 3) APS demonstrated a clear understanding of what remains to be accomplished in order to insure the college readiness of all students.

- 4) It appears that the academic expectations for students have improved dramatically. Students reported that during the 2013-14 school year, there was not much student learning. As the students said during interviews "...we are learning a lot more this year..."
- 5) Based on the feedback from students, staff, administration, and parents, the academy mission which focuses on preparing students to be college ready, is clearly the academic focus this year. It appeared that the staff, students, parents and administration are all in agreement about the mission of the school.
- 6) The management company, American Promise Schools (APS) has implemented an instructional process which is used by the teaching staff.
- 7) The teaching staff, only 5 of which are returning teachers, appeared to be very dedicated, collaborative, and enthusiastic.
- 8) It appears that the teaching staff has embraced the use of data. Both data teams visited were positively embracing the challenge of being a data driven academy.
- 9) The staff is very committed, demonstrates collaboration, and intentionally forges positive relationships with students.
- 10) We noted that there were minimal interruptions during instructional time.
- 11) All interviewed groups, including the students and parents, believe that both academies are very safe.
- 12) The new Advisory Program has been well received by students, staff, and parents. It appears that this initiative is helping students academically and building an increased sense of "family" in the school.
- 13) Each school leader demonstrated the traits of true instructional leaders.

Although we had a very positive 2 days at both Voyageur Academy and Consortium High School, the following are areas of concerns noted by the FSU visitation team:

- 1) There appears to be a lack of consistency in the implementation of the district instructional plan.
- 2) The teacher mentoring program needs to be aligned with the state requirements.
- 3) Based on our classroom observations, there seemed to be a lack of variety of instructional strategies.
- 4) The FSU visitation team understands that the current School Improvement Plan was not created by the current staff and administration. All future School Improvement Plans must meet state requirements, including team composition. In addition, any future School Improvement Plan must be aligned with the district Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan and must include Board of Directors representation.

- 5) There appears to be a great deal of subjectivity with grading policies. The academy is encouraged to consider creating a uniform grading policy and evaluating a standards based grading system.
- 6) There was inequity between Consortium and Voyageur's time allocation for professional development.
- 7) Both the students and parents expressed great interest in additional extra-curricular activities (i.e. dance, art, talent show, etc.)
- 8) The Board compliance with FSU requirements is at 98%. The FSU Charter School Office expects 100% compliance with all reporting requirements.

In closing, and on behalf of the entire FSU visitation team, I wish to again thank the board and entire APS management and administrative team for assembling the requested materials and providing accommodations and amenities for the FSU visitation team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lee C. Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "R" at the end.

Lee C. Robinson, Chairperson
Voyageur Academy Mid-Year Visitation Review