

Report: Reauthorization Review Visitation
Academy: Voyageur Academy
Date: November 13, 2018

The visitation occurred at Voyageur Academy with four members on the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office (FSU-CSO) visitation team. The team had the opportunity to meet with and interview the school leadership team, two school board members and the School Improvement Team. The team was able to tour the facility and visit several classrooms to observe teaching and learning.

Because Voyageur Academy transitioned to a new Educational Service Provider (ESP) The Romine Group in July, it was determined that a partial Reauthorization Visitation in addition to the full visit performed in spring 2018 was appropriate. This report is an assessment of initial progress since The Romine Group has assumed management of the Academy.

We appreciate the positive interactions, open communication, and transparency that was apparent.

Visitation Findings

<u>School Improvement Process and Student Outcomes</u>	
Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been improvements in school wide MTSS protocols; allowing teachers to increase student services and supports. • Since transitioning to a new ESP, there is a feeling of open communication and increased support for administration and staff. • Less micromanaging and reductions in the additional responsibilities required of teachers. • More autonomy, yet a structured environment which supports teachers – they have more time to address student needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer and intensify differentiated instruction to move all students towards greater self-confidence and mastery of communication, technology and achievement on formative and standardized assessments. • Continue to ensure that administrators and staff have opportunities to meet to develop implementation strategies and assess quality of interventions. • With less reliance on external contracted Special Education services, better coordination and reporting, and service alignment with IEP needs should improve.

- The number of intervention and ELL staff has been significantly increased to meet student needs.
- Teachers feel they have more time for differentiated instruction.
- Dedicated Special Education instructors and paraprofessional support has been assigned. Their expertise seems to be making a difference.
- Teachers convene on Wednesdays for collaborative grade-level planning meetings.
- The Romine Group standards have been shared and staff buy-in is evident.
- Teachers like having a flexible lesson plan format to follow.
- Primary staff were surprised by the challenges of using technology to administer NWEA tests with Kindergarteners.
- Interventionists are no longer utilized for other purposes – their schedules are consistent and data focused.
- School wide PDs have provided training and structure for new teachers. Administrators continually monitor and provide feedback.
- Teachers are involved in monthly data analysis sessions.
- Collaboration with Special Education services has improved.
- District and building-wide initiatives serve to connect and unify staff across the school community.
- Administrative teams meet weekly/bi-weekly to discuss action items and monitor individual responsibilities.
- Decision-making has become intentional; the team utilizes multiple sources of data to prioritize focus.
- Schedule changes allow for 45 minutes of ELA and Math based interventions.
- All students K-8 receive intensive intervention and support, without missing core content being taught.
- Progress monitoring cycles review effectiveness of interventions being implemented.
- Staff has been active in monitoring assessment data to address gaps in curriculum.
- Staff report that the environment is rich with collaboration and support for individuals.
- Students are encouraged to take ownership of their education, and the culture promotes high expectations and student success.

- It would be helpful to provide preliminary and continuing opportunities for young students to practice and become comfortable with maneuvering the technology.
- Determine a clear vision and/or direction in relation to instruction, culture, and student outcomes. Ensure that it is regularly communicated.
- Provide teachers with clear, ongoing evaluations and continual feedback related to their instructional strengths and weakness based on multiple sources of data.
- Provide teachers with the support they need to continually enhance their instructional skills. (i.e. job-embedded professional development and/or opportunities to observe and discuss effective teaching.)
- Continue to publicly recognize outstanding growth and academic achievements to reinforce students' sense of accomplishment.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit Recovery is free and available for all students during their regular schedule. • Staff feel that there is a general sense of “energy and enthusiasm,” and a commitment to students. 	
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Facilities Review

Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All areas of the MS/HS were clean and conducive to student learning. • The older elementary primary building and annex were also clean and well maintained. • Despite narrow hallways and crowded, compact classrooms, students respected one another’s space and stayed within their assigned areas. • Technology resources were not as visible in the primary buildings. • The regular use of technology carts in upper elementary grades instill familiarity and student responsibility for managing learning activities. • There is an organized and monitored process for picking up and dropping children off before and after school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The installation of graduated forms of technology (simple to more complex) would be helpful for younger students to get a head start on mastering technology skills.

Academy Culture Review

Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are encouraged to take ownership of their education, and the culture promotes high expectations and student success. • Staff feel that there is a general sense of “energy and enthusiasm,” and a commitment to students. <p><u>Primary Grades:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-2 classrooms worked on ELA activities during a common timeframe. Differentiated instruction was evident as small groups practiced oral reading with the teacher while others worked independently on handwriting assignments or matching pictures with beginning sounds, spelling cues, etc. • Hallways and classrooms had colorful posters, learning aids and inspirational messages to promote excitement about education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer and intensify differentiated instruction to move all students towards greater self-confidence and mastery of communication, technology and achievement on formative and standardized assessments. • Provide teachers the opportunity to have roles in the decision-making process. • Encourage teachers and support staff to collaborate and interact regularly to address common issues (curriculum, assessments, student achievement, etc.). • Offer students and teachers the opportunity to provide input related to the daily school operations/functioning of school. • Appropriately acknowledge and/or celebrate school successes, as well individual student successes.

- Teachers were attentive and monitored activities throughout the classroom – beyond the small group given special assistance.

Upper Elementary: Located in the middle-high school building, the classrooms were also well organized and full of eye-catching posters, learning aids, manipulatives and other materials. Students worked together in small groups and participated well in large group discussions.

Teachers and Classroom Management: Most of the teachers observed were new hires under The Romine Group. They seemed to follow with fidelity the style and instructional strategies outlined in the summer orientation and follow-up PD. The classes were interactive, but not boisterous. Students were engaged in their assignments and did not act impatient by yelling out questions or comments to other classmates.

Student Behavior and Deportment: When upper elementary grades transitioned to classes across the street – to and from physical education activities in the gym- they were orderly and well behaved. The role of line “captain” seemed to alternate as a way of assigning leadership duties to certain students. I’ve observed this smooth movement within the hallways and from building to building, in rain or shine. In the past, you occasionally saw students engage in “horseplay” once they got outside – or acted like they had a lot of pent up energy to release, all at once.

MS/HS:

- There was appropriate and evident recognition of student accomplishment/achievement.
- Staff appropriately and confidently interacted with students.
- Student’s artwork was displayed throughout the building encouraging students to take pride in accomplishments and to continue growth.

Mission Accomplishment

Observations

Opportunities for Growth

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout Voyageur’s primary, elementary, middle and senior high areas of the buildings, a lot of effort has gone into visual appeals. Wall murals, banners, pennants and posters of role models are used to inspire students to pursue college and/or career opportunities. • Special services staffing has been enhanced with a team approach comprised of a social worker, counselor, and college preparation coordinator, dean of alumni success and high school dean of instruction. • It is evident that college preparation is the focus of this school. • Student aides on visitation had high aspirations for college attendance. • The weekly Cougar Newsletters for secondary families provide useful information about school activities, preparation for submitting college applications and participating in mock interviews, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue using varied approaches to motivate and expose students to positive role models and opportunities to explore four-year and two-year college possibilities and specialized career training programs. • Continue to monitor progress/success of students who have enrolled in college/universities. • Continue to align the Mission, Vision, and Core Values to school improvement goals and desired outcomes.
<u>Website</u>	
Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Comments

Academy Internal Review

<u>Academic Assessment Outcomes</u>	
Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early elementary test scores show that a number of students are not building a strong educational foundation for future success in school. • A number of cohort scores currently show that student’s achievement <i>decreases</i> the longer students attend the Academy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT scores are far behind the resident district and need to improve substantially. • Primary grade data teams must review data and make recommendations for interventions. • Continue to explore the development and use of individual education plans for all students.
<u>Governance and Leadership</u>	
Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board communicated that their main focus is to drive academic growth and achievement. 	<p>The Board should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Govern more and manage less.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board has seen an improvement in the overall relationship with their ESP; transparency, communication, responsiveness. • The Board is working to establish appropriate oversight over board finances; timely reports, clarification, transitioning from past management. • The Board is continually working to align their Mission, Vision, and Core Values with strategic plan goals and initiatives. • The Board is dedicated to ensuring that the right people and processes are in place. • The Board is confident with their ESP choice and their ability to address the specific needs of their student population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to seek guidance and clarification regarding the roles and expectations of the Board. • Encourage open, collaborative communication with the ESP.
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Resources and Support Systems

Observations	Opportunities for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Romine Group standards have been shared and staff buy-in is evident. • Since transitioning to a new ESP, there is a feeling of open communication and increased support for administration and staff. • The ESP has identified and implemented resources and initiatives to address school culture and academic needs. • The ESP has worked with staff to implement school-wide protocols to address student outcomes. • The ESP appears to have identified a strong school leadership team and communicates the need to retain high-quality staff. • The ESP provides strong support and resources for data analysis and the utilization of data to inform instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to identify and implement system wide protocols that address student achievement outcomes. • Continue to address the need to support Voyageur’s academic culture through team building and teacher retention efforts.

CSO Review of Overall Performance for Voyageur Academy

Contract Performance Report Review	
Observations (2017-18 data)	Opportunities for Growth (2017-18 data)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable enrollment. 44% of students have been at VA for 3 or more years. 8/14 MAP areas met the Growth Target. Average SAT score improved from 848 to 866. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAP Achievement (goal is 50th percentile) was at 33rd for Reading and 29th for Math. MSTEP Proficiency Percentages are declining- now below Composite District in ELA and equal in Math. MDE Index scores from 2016-17 are very low in growth on the MSTEP. MDE Index score for K-8 building was 37- too low. Compliance was only at 92%.
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School Support Team (SST) and Field Representative (FR) Updates

Observations (2018-19 data)	Opportunities for Growth (2018-19 data)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red SST Designated School. New ESP. No facility concerns from SST or FR. SST has had several discussions about academic performance . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified by MDE as a Targeted Support for Improvement school based on achievement gaps for special education MSTEP Proficiency Percentages remained below State Averages. MSTEP Student Growth Percentile (SGP) averages were 49% in ELA and 50% in Math- these need to exceed average to close achievement gaps. Fall 2018 MAP assessments indicate larger gaps between VA performance and national norms in both Reading and Math as the grade levels increase (i.e.- Math K-2 average gap is -7, Grades 6-8 average gap is -16) .

Overall Opportunities for Growth

- Stop the declining MSTEP scores. Growth must exceed average because achievement is low.
- Composite District is not high performing; VA should be well above those scores.
- New ESP and Board has an opportunity to create a positive, effective, and efficient relationship that results in improved academic performance, compliance, and atmosphere.

Current CSO Expectations in Consideration for Recommendation of Reauthorization. These are subject to change.

For Voyageur Academy:

- Meet or exceed FSU-CSO’s academic measures and goals.
- Continue to follow all charter contractual expectations.

- The CSO may have other academic and non-academic expectations as more information becomes available. All other contractual and policy standards must be met and maintained.
- Keep your MDE Accountability Index Score above the bottom 5% in the State.
- Eliminate your Targeted Support for Improvement designation by the MDE.

Signed  _____
CSO Director/Visitation Team Member