

**School
Organizational
Solutions (SOS), LLC**

***Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School
Third Year Site Visit, Second Charter Term
12/17/2013***

Conducted by:

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Third Year Site Visit, Second Charter Term Report Completed by Members of School Organizational Solutions

Name: Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School

Date of Review: 12/17/2013

Year in the charter contract: Year Three, Second Charter Term

Site visit evaluation team members: Cheryl McLaughlin, Terrence Harewood, Margaret Labelle, and Sarah Ohmer

Core Question addressed in Third Year, Second Charter Term Review:

4. Is the school providing appropriate conditions for success?

Sub Questions addressed in Third Year, Second Charter Term Review:

- 4.1 Does the school have a high quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?**
- 4.2 Are the teaching pedagogies consistent with the school's mission?**
- 4.3 For secondary students, does the school provide guidance on and support and preparation for post secondary options?**
- 4.4 Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?**
- 4.5 Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?**
- 4.6 Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?**
- 4.7 Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?**
- 4.8 Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?**
- 4.9 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with special needs?**
- 4.10 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related access and services to students with limited English proficiency?**

Third Year Review, Second Charter Term: The following report provides key findings from the performance review of the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School, based upon the Third Year, Second Charter Term site team visit conducted by School Organizational Solutions (SOS) LLC. Team members, Terrence Harewood, Margie Labelle, Cheryl McLaughlin, and Sarah Ohmer completed observations of all classes, special education file reviews, interviews with stakeholder focus groups and document reviews, in order to address the Third Year, Second Charter Term, performance indicators of the Mayor's Charter School Performance Framework.

The process for this evaluation is iterative and the report, along with follow-up meetings, is designed to corroborate information provided to regulatory bodies and to provide useful feedback to school leaders, stakeholders, and the Indianapolis Mayor's Office.

The judgments in the report are based upon evidence collected during the process of the school visits. As stated in the Site Visit Protocols for Mayor-Sponsored Charter Schools: "Evidence comes from observations, interviews, and document reviews. The site visit evaluation team should build a base of evidence for each of its findings that would reasonably lead any set of individuals to come to a similar judgment of the school's programs and practices.

Introduction

On December 17, 2013, four site visitors conducted the 2013 review of Charles A. Tindley Accelerated High School. Tindley Accelerated, a college preparatory high school serving students from grades 9 through 12, is currently in the third year of its second term under the auspices of the Mayor's Office. This report represents an evaluation about performance in each of the standards and indicators that are the responsibility of SOS, LLC. to evaluate. These indicators: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10 are outlined in the Performance Framework.

The Site Team engaged in a number of evidence-collecting activities. The focus of this site visit was to gauge perceptions of key stakeholders at the school in relation to the areas of the performance framework that are part of the evaluation. The team conducted focus group discussions with students, staff, special education instructor(s), and parents, as well as interviews with the school administrators and board members.

Classroom observers also spent a full day observing 15 classrooms, 15 teachers, approximately 225 students, and the full student body at a "Family meeting", prior to the site visit. Site team members also spent a half-day reviewing a majority of the Special Education files prior to the Site Team Visit on December 17, 2013. In the following report, standards and indicators are listed with relevant evidence given related to the performance criteria. Following the discussion of each indicator, a summary of strengths and areas for attention are provided for the core question.

Key Interpretations

4.1 Does the school have a high quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?

Finding: Meets Standard

Summary and Specific Commendations

Site team members found strong evidence to support a judgment that the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School has a high quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade.

- Classroom observations revealed that the curriculum was built around and aligned with common core and state standards and designed to prepare students for college. Students were given a learning ladder in each class that stated the daily and long-term objectives (outcomes). Learning ladders also stated expectations in terms of classroom behavior. They were organized into Do Now, I Do, We Do, You Do (Homework), aligned with standards, and were consistent among all classes.
- Through classroom observations site team members observed high quality classroom lessons and content that reflected rigor for all students. During student interviews, students commented that the curriculum goes beyond the requirements for the grade level of students by one to two years.
- Site team members observed that the curriculum was culturally relevant to students.
- The curriculum team also reported (and provided documents) that show they develop sequence and unit curriculum maps aligned with common core, state standards, and rigorous curriculum. They also reported that last year they hired a curriculum writing team to modify and improve curriculum to meet new core standards. Teachers then use the archived maps (on Atlas) to develop their weekly lesson plans.
- The Curriculum team audits curriculum weekly to ensure that learning ladders are aligned with state standards. Learning ladders are turned in to the curriculum team two weeks in advance. The Curriculum team scores teachers using an audit rubric that assesses the standards (rubric includes ten key components, including essential questions, understandings, key knowledge, key skills, etc.)

Recommendations:

- The curriculum team might consider assigning teachers a number, instead of using names, when posting scores for the learning ladders, to avoid potential embarrassment for teachers with lower scores.

4.2 Are teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?

Finding: Meets Standard

Summary and Specific Commendations

According to the Charles A Tindley Accelerated School website, the mission of the school is:

The Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School, in cooperation with its parents and the broader community, will empower its students – regardless of their past academic performance – to become successful learners who graduate with the capacity for rigorous college opportunities. The Tindley School will provide a powerful learning experience that intellectually engages, inspires, and spurs academic achievement through a challenging and interactive college-preparatory curriculum.

- Classroom observations showed that curriculum is implemented in classrooms according to its design and is focused on core learning objectives. Teachers use the “Backward design” process to create daily learning ladders. Learning ladders post daily objectives aligned with the core learning standards and comprehensively include the Essential Questions to be answered, the assessments, outcomes, and the work to be done on each objective (I Do, We Do, You Do). They are consistent among all classes.
- Site team members observed rigorous and challenging lessons in all classes.
- Students expressed benefit from the SAT prep course (which showed a 50-200 point improvement for students) and college prep courses prepare students for college classes, which is in line with the Tindley mission. Returning Tindley alumni also comment on feeling prepared for college, in comparison with other college students who were not as prepared.
- Site team members observed (and student interviews reinforced) that classrooms led by Tindley-prepared teachers had lessons that were varied, interesting and used a spectrum of differentiated strategies to engage students in learning.
- The school leader reported that there are weekly classroom walk-throughs to informally observe and provide feedback to teachers. The curriculum team also conducts a monthly audit with feedback from the curriculum team.

Recommendations:

- Site team members observed that, in some upper level classrooms (primarily early college classes), there was a lack of student engagement due to teacher – centered, direct instruction, overly focused on utilizing lecture narratives. Students also expressed concern with lectures that were not engaging in their early college classes and reported that their college professors did not provide sufficient support for success in these classes.
- Tindley-prepared teachers (in other classes) were exemplary in utilizing varied and engaging learning strategies and in providing support for their students. The site team recommends that Tindley implement professional development and/or orientation for the college level instructors at Tindley to ensure that there is consistency in the quality of teaching pedagogies and support for students among all classes.

4.3 For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support/preparation for post-secondary options?

Finding: Exceeds Standard

Summary and Specific Commendations:

The school leader and all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and board members, report that Charles A. Tindley provides ample support, sufficient guidance, and multiple resources to ensure that students are supported and prepared for college.

- Yearly, sequenced, inductions beginning with the freshman year and continuing to the senior year, prepare students for attending college. The school leader reported that freshmen students are given three “mock” college transcripts to study and then serve on a “mock” admissions panel. They must decide which students to admit based on the quality of the transcripts. This sets a priority on the quality of work expected through high school, in order to be admitted to college. Students are also asked to think about and reflect on what kind of student they want to be in college.
- The junior year includes an SAT prep class as part of the curriculum. Summer boot camps for SAT preparation are also available to students.
- The school curriculum exceeds the Indiana Core forty. Rigorous college preparation curriculum includes calculus; Students take college-level classes and have the opportunity to earn college credit in English, History, Math, and Philosophy if they have a grade of B or higher through Anderson University.
- The school tracks the progress of each student and provides much support to have students enroll in college and complete college. Students are required to apply to at least ten different colleges. Students have one-on-one counseling to make a list of ten schools. Teachers, staff, board members, and other stakeholders, provide nurturing support throughout the process and even track students’ emails to ensure that no scholarship opportunities are overlooked. Many of the staff at Tindley, including the school leadership, serve as “in-local parentis” in guiding and supporting students through the college application process.
- In student interviews students were able to list college choices and explain why they chose those schools (learning styles, majors, etc.).
- Seniors complete a rigorous Capstone Project that prepares them for independent research (assessing resources, presentation, project development, applied skills, reflection, portfolio, presentation), and other skills valuable for higher education success.
- Students take the PSAT in 10th and 11th grade and take the SAT in June of 11th grade and October of Senior year. They also have the option of taking the ACT.
- Students reported doing a variety of extracurricular activities such as basketball, football, Spanish club, etc.

Recommendations: None

4.4 Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?

Finding: Meets Standard

Summary and Specific Commendations:

Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School uses learning standards and a variety of assessments masterfully, to inform and improve instruction. Data driven instruction is a real strength at Tindley and is organized into a highly efficient system under the control of the Curriculum Team.

Standardized tests administered at Tindley, include NWEA (twice a year) and Acuity (three times a year). Students are required to take the SAT at the end of their junior year. Teachers are required to generate their own unit assessments and the ECA is given in Algebra I, English 10, and Biology. Final exams model the college schedule. Interim assessments are designed and developed by the network curriculum team.

- The curriculum team and teachers described, and the site team saw documented evidence of, a highly organized data driven system utilized to identify gaps in learning and to modify curriculum in order to meet the learning needs of students. The data obtained from standardized testing is uploaded into a shared drive (Google Doc). Teachers have access to the data and participate in monthly data dives across subjects in which they examine data and identify gaps in learning. They then use this information to plan curriculum, for their 7th period classes and they also use it to determine which students should attend those classes.
- Teachers reported that, based on curriculum gaps from the data dive, they also modify instruction in their classrooms by teaching “mini” lessons (according to gaps) and re-teaching standards that have not been met.
- The Curriculum team meets regularly with faculty to review data and curriculum gaps. The curriculum team collects data on three levels: whole school reporting, subject area, and individual teachers.

Recommendations: None

4.5 Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?

Finding: Meets Standard

Summary and Specific Commendations:

Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School has developed an organized hiring process that involves recruiting, vetting, and orienting teachers. School leadership describes a process in which they build collateral relationships with local and national fellowship programs and universities to attract high quality talent for the school. School leaders also attend job fairs and encourage high

quality candidates to apply. There is a process in place to “vet” the candidates to ensure that they meet the rigorous demands of the school’s mission.

Recommendations are then made to the principal who interviews the candidates to determine who is a “fit” with the school. The principal focuses on hiring individuals whose philosophy and work ethic align with the school culture.

The school CEO described a process to retain teachers through ongoing “non monetary” forms of encouragement. He said there is a “Guestology committee” of staff in the building who look at non-compensation motivations to ensure that staff feels appreciated, such as network wide acknowledgment, notes, candy bars, and various trinkets.

Teacher focus groups confirmed that teachers feel valued at Tindley and teachers commented that they were “lucky to be teaching at Tindley”.

Teachers report and the school leader confirmed, that there are numerous walkthroughs during the school year by the school leadership and the curriculum team to ensure that lessons are implemented according to design and to ensure that teaching pedagogies are consistent with the school’s mission. The walk-throughs and the bi-weekly review of individual teachers’ learning ladders also impact PD. The curriculum team designs PD based on needs that are seen during walk-throughs and through the review of learning ladders, as well as the ongoing review of student data.

Teachers report that there are three formal evaluations during the school year.

Tindley conducts a three-week professional development institute for teachers during the summer, prior to school starting. The teaching institute includes:

- Leadership training
- Whole brain teaching
- Teach Like A Champion skill building
- Backward Design in Curriculum Planning
- Tindley Culture

Teachers reported that every Friday afternoon is reserved for Professional Development. They receive an outline the day before. Topics covered consist of school culture, data, engagement strategies, Bloom’s Taxonomy, learning strategies, and lesson planning, to name a few.

The Curriculum team also reported that they will sometimes group teachers for PD who are experiencing similar issues. They always focus on PD’s with deliverables and they also make themselves available if teachers request help. Teachers reported that they have the ability to suggest and request PD on particular topics.

Recommendations:

- Parents expressed concern about the high teacher turnover at Tindley and believe that some teachers leave Tindley because of overload and burnout. Parents would like to see additional staff hired to relieve the teachers during the late afternoon periods.

4.6 Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?

Finding: Meets Standard

All stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, board members, and staff, understand the Tindley mission to attend or go to college and they also understand the part of the mission that refers to being prepared to go to college. Stakeholders could paraphrase the important parts of the mission and many quoted, "College or die", as the main component of Tindley's mission.

Students reported having widespread knowledge about college requirements, college preparation and specific colleges.

Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School has now been in existence long enough that, not only the stakeholders, but the community at large, knows and understands the mission of the school.

Recommendations: None

4.7 Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?

Finding: Meets Standard

Summary and Specific Commendations:

Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School has a school wide behavior plan that is clearly articulated in the School Handbook. All students interviewed reported that they knew and understood the expectations and consequences if rules are broken. The handbook also spells out behaviors with immediate consequences such as violence, threat of violence, possession or transmission of a controlled substance or paraphernalia, stealing, etc. Documentation of behavior infractions and communication with parents related to student discipline is very well articulated through discipline log reports.

Classroom management and the Tindley culture is reinforced through daily "Family meetings" in which the entire student body gathers to discuss relevant academic, as well as Tindley culture, topics.

The Principal reported that parents are informed of the behavioral management plan in parent conference meetings. Students learn the information through the handbook and it is reinforced through the daily family meetings.

All teachers interviewed reported that they firmly believe in the mission and philosophy of the school and "felt lucky" to be teaching at Tindley. Many said they wished their own children had

had “this kind of opportunity”. They expressed the firm belief that they’re here to do the right work and that they love to teach and appreciate the fact that at Tindley, they do not have to “wear any other hats” - that they are here to teach. They also appreciate the accountability and expectations at Tindley. Many complimented the structure and the zero tolerance policies, especially in comparison to schools where they had been teaching prior to coming to Tindley.

Teachers also reported that the administration at Tindley is very supportive and caring. They felt like they could approach the school leader with any problem or issue.

Recommendations:

- Parents expressed concern that there are not conflict-resolution processes in place. They are worried that students do not learn how to solve these types of problems because the school is “zero tolerance”. Site team recommends that the school consider implementing conflict resolution strategies or discussions centering on conflict resolution, for students.
- While the teachers felt that the staff was “small enough” that they could (and did) align with experienced teachers”, they believed that new teachers could benefit from being assigned to a formal mentor.

4.8 Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?

Finding: Meets Standard

Summary and Specific Commendations:

Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School has a comprehensive communication system to keep parents and guardians well informed regarding academic issues and the status of students.

- Teachers are required to send home weekly progress reports on every student.
- Teachers are also required to make ten parent contacts per week. Data on parental contact is collected and teachers are required to log contact with parents.
- All behavior issues are logged and the data is kept in a Discipline Log Report.
- The school uses Power School Communicator to disseminate messages to parents who have an email on file.

Parents expressed appreciation for the informality of communication at Tindley and they describe the Tindley community as being close-knit and like a “Big Family”. They also described the school leader as having an “open door” policy and being very approachable.

Recommendations:

- Parents believe that communication is sometimes more reactive than proactive and think that it should be more timely.

- Parents recommended that Robocall should be kept updated and, in situations where there are separated families, both parties should be included in communication.

4.9 Do the school's special ed files demonstrate that it is in legal compliance and is moving towards best practice?

Finding: Meets Standard

Summary and Specific Commendations:

After a comprehensive review of the Special Education files at Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School, the following best practices were observed:

- The school participates in the state IEP electronic system.
- Special Education files are kept in a secure location and must be signed out by staff members.
- The files are orderly and records are complete.
- Tindley has increased accountability through a sign-off system for case conference attendance, insuring that all required participants have signed off on the conference.
- Special Education teachers at Tindley are very familiar with special education students and their needs.
- General Education teachers also like that they have an opportunity to work with the Special Education students and receive intensive instruction from the Special Education teachers.
- Teachers and parents appreciate that that Tindley has the same high expectation for Special Education students as well as General Education students.

Recommendations:

- Some parent notification signatures were missing from student files. School should ensure that all files have notification signatures.
- Not all students were attending transition conferences as required by Article 7.
- FBA/BIP information and data was minimal. School could (and should) expand on this information.

4.10 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?

Finding: Meets Standard

Summary and Specific Commendations:

- The Charles A. Tindley handbook has an extensive section that covers regulations and procedures for providing access and services to students with limited English proficiency.
- There were appropriate files for each ESL student.
- All files contained a home language survey, LAS links assessment, and ILP (Individual Language Plan).

Recommendations: None