

OFFICE OF MARY C. BARLOW
Kern County Superintendent of Schools
Advocates for Children...

REALMS Charter School Observation Summary

REALMS Charter School was visited six times in six weeks Cathie Morris, along with five different staff members from Instructional Services. There was a total of 39 observations completed during that time period. A Classroom Observation Checklist was developed around research-based best practices for classroom instruction that reflected a scale of implementation that ranged from a score of 2 (fully implemented/observed) to 0 (not observed) with an N/A to allow for times when certain items would not be expected to be evident during the observer's time in the classroom.

The observation data was tabulated and is reported in the attached Power Point. The following are general comments regarding the data:

1. REALMS does not have or implement a student behavior management system and there was little evidence of basic classroom management strategies being used by teachers. Teachers spend an inordinate amount of time redirecting students to stay on task which affects the quality and quantity of instructional time. The Project Lead the Way (PLTW) classrooms generally do not have the classroom teacher attend the class, and the PLTW time is generally chaotic, with students never grasping the actual lesson objective. The KCSOS Science Coordinator noted that the class was so chaotic that almost no progress was being made by students. At least one teacher sits behind her desk all day and directs students from her seat.
2. The REALMS Charter Petition (pg. 14) details the use of Direct Instruction as a critical component of the instructional program and describes in detail how that process should look in practice. However, there was very little direct instruction observed, and what was observed was ineffective. For example, one teacher was reading to the class from the textbook, and one, reviewing problems from the homework assignment. Almost all teachers rely heavily on supplemental worksheets from the Internet, making photo copies of the worksheets and some creating "packets" for the students to do independently. Many classrooms were involved in non-standards-based activities such as drawing/coloring/pasting/painting during academic instructional times. The KCSOS Science Coordinator noted that teachers were doing seasonal science activities that were not standards aligned. REALMS utilizes the EPIC and i-Ready Software for ELA and Math intervention, but observations revealed that often teachers use the chrome books for "busy work". Teachers rely heavily on the myriad of paraprofessionals who work at REALMS for classroom management support.

3. ELD was observed to occur in one classroom, but the lesson was not leveled, and according to the KCSOS staff member with ELD expertise, was a reading lesson and not ELD. Only three classrooms had ELD listed on the schedule, and some of those three may not even provide it, as observers were in classrooms at times when it was scheduled, but the class was working on another content area. Most classrooms had some form of daily schedule, although many did not include times; only the order of instruction that was frequently not followed.
4. Some teachers did not adhere to bell-to-bell instruction and there was a lack of urgency to teach among the staff. For example, one teacher's class was waiting for 10 minutes for her to return after recess, and one class returned from recess and took a 15-minute snack break.
5. There was no evidence of teacher planning for the instructional day, and no lesson plans were observed in any classroom. It was clear that some teachers were just "winging it" through the day with one activity or worksheet after another.
6. The Rosetta Stone Program was observed in progress at various grade levels. It was noted early on in the observations that the classroom teachers were leaving their students with the paraprofessional for the ½ hour class. The para could not control the class behavior for the K's and 1's, and took 15 minutes to get the older grades set up on the chrome books to access the program. Miriam was advised that teachers needed to stay with their class for ADA and classroom management reasons, and now teachers are staying with their students. However, the students aren't progressing through the program with 2 half-hour sessions per week. The REALMS petition notes that students will be learning to speak, read, and write in Spanish at REALMS, but there was no evidence that students ever progress to the writing component of Rosetta Stone, and the Para stated that all students start over in the program every year.
7. The Para that teaches the music program has good classroom management skills and the classroom teachers remain with her. She has daily objectives, and the students seem to be learning music theory with some of the older students playing various instruments.
8. The REALMS/KCSOS MOU includes items of note related to the classroom observations made by KCSOS staff:
 - *The Charter School will develop a systematic and strategic plan for implementing its many and varied new instructional and intervention initiatives. Professional development must be provided with a continuum of options such as workshop, coaching support, in-classroom modeling and observation of others with expertise in that specific initiative. This may require the Charter School to contract for services of those with expertise in specific areas or hire additional staff such as a literacy coach.*

- *The revised teacher observation form will be used to monitor instruction on a daily basis and provide feedback and coaching support to teachers, as needed.*
- *The Charter School will define its instructional day and align its published bell/daily schedule with its master schedule for instruction and the Parent Student Handbook.*
- *The Charter School will define when Designated ELD will take place during ELA/reading instructional time, and will define what instrument will be used to monitor progress throughout the year for language proficiency of EL students.*

REALMS employs one FTE-TOSA and one P/T-TOSA, but there is no evidence that teachers have received any professional development or coaching support this year. There is also no evidence that anyone monitors classroom instruction using the REALMS Observation Tool. One teacher, while we were on site, questioned the use of lesson objectives. REALMS has a daily schedule published which notes that ELD will be provided for 30 minutes daily, but ELD is not taking place in most classrooms and no one is monitoring this issue. As noted above, the master schedule seems to be a suggestion and is not adhered to with any fidelity.

9. P.E. classes were observed to be lacking organized activities, with teachers watching their students play as if at recess. One teacher sent her students out for P.E. with the Para.
10. The REALMS Petition describes the instructional program and includes the following: *“REALMS will heavily focus on phonics instruction and reading fluency in TK-3 grades. We will use the Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Site Words (SIPPS) and SIPPS Plus programs for Rtl intervention.” “SIPPS will be used for all students in grades TK-6 needing reading fluency intervention. “Teachers will receive guided reading, DIBELS 8th Edition, and SIPPS training annually.”*

REALMS has been operational since 2019-20 but during the site visits there was no evidence that the SIPPS Program was being implemented until recently. The school is in the very early stage of exploring how to implement SIPPS and has contracted with KCSOS to support this initiative. This is just another example of the lack of implementation of the program, as written in the charter petition.