



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Transit Tech Career and Technical High School

High School 615

**1 Wells Street
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Larry Kalvar

Dates of review: February 25 - 27, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Transit Tech is a high school with 1638 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 66% Black, 28% Hispanic, 1% White, 4% Asian students and 1% other. The student body includes less than 1% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 80% of the students enrolled and girls account for 20%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 85.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 71% eligibility.

The school has purpose-built facilities for experiential learning, such as the railcar lab. The considerable ongoing increase in student numbers means that some facilities are limited. Students travel from all five boroughs to attend Transit Tech.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The strong principal is a highly respected, effective leader who models the respect evident throughout the building.
- Through continuous monitoring and review of plans and goals the principal and cabinet cohesively drive the school forward to improve student outcomes.
- The staff are dedicated, mutually supportive and totally committed to offering a quality education to students.
- The curriculum is relevant, motivating and works to individual student needs and strengths.
- Analysis of data from multiple sources underpins the continual review of progress and forward planning.
- The school offers a respectful, smoothly run, safe and stimulating learning environment.
- Excellent partnerships potential future employers significantly enhance students' skill development and personal growth.
- Through close, collaborative work amongst staff and students the school successfully provides built-in timely support to ensure graduation.
- Parents greatly appreciate the high expectations and open communication.
- Students enjoy the extensive experiences available and the individual attention they receive within this caring community.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all lessons consistently address different learning styles, including through challenging, varied tasks.
- Explore further opportunities for sharing best practice and interdisciplinary planning, with associated mapping.
- Refine the use of the student reflection sheet to include meaningful, measurable success criteria with linked timescales.
- Consolidate new initiatives, such as individual student action plans, and evaluate the impact on student and school performance.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Transit Tech offers high-quality academic and vocational education to students drawn from all over New York City. The expertise of its valued partners ensures that the rigorous curriculum offers thorough preparation for the future. The school is responsive to the changing needs of society's workforce and consequently regularly attracts ten applications for each place. Its reputation continues to grow. It is recognized by New York State as a high-performing, gap-closing school, it has citations as a "School of Distinction" and is highlighted by the Annenberg Foundation, out of Brown University, as a school that "Beat the Odds". Chicago educators are using this school as a model for their own technical and vocational career high schools.

The principal is in his second year at the school and has made significant positive impact. His consultative, listening style is highly valued. He is a respected, visible presence who sets the positive tone for the building. The school is a caring community, which meets the challenges posed by significantly increasing student numbers, but retains focus on the individual student. Extensive extra-curricular activities promote personal development, enrich the students' experience and give alternative ways of achieving success. Students are well supported and they are highly successful in competitions.

The inquiry team has established its target group. Its findings inform action in all subject areas. The recommendations from the previous Quality Review have been carefully embraced. School plans are clear and indicate success criteria. Student engagement is generally high as a result of ongoing professional development on differentiation of instruction. Although, not all lessons address different learning styles and offer sufficient challenge. Opportunities for cross-curricular skill reinforcement and sharing of best practices are yet to be fully exploited. Attendance continues to be high priority. While data analysis is more refined, the school continues to build capacity in deepening understanding of data and its applications. Initiatives, such as student action plans and reflection sheets, are not yet embedded.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The administration and teachers effectively use a wide range of data from multiple sources to benefit students. Systematized cohesive data analysis gives a holistic view of students' progress, starting with prior achievement in grade 8. Comparisons over time and with similar schools are part of this process. Cohort data is plentiful and regularly updated. All teachers use spreadsheets detailing prior achievement for the individuals in their classes for all subjects. Assistant principals have overview of their department, for all grades. Additionally, the six marking periods, mid-point checks and electronic grade gathering facilitate regular overview of individual performance.

The school looks for trends through analysis of groups, such as gender, special education students and ethnicity. Literature selections to capture Hispanic males' interest resulted from such analysis with positive impact. Continual crosschecking of extensive information and in-depth analysis means that no student is overlooked. Scholarship reports are also examined daily to highlight any patterns and to provide the school with information to take suitable action. Training in the effective analysis and interpretation of data is ongoing to meet individual and school needs. New sources such as Scantron and Acuity complement the already comprehensive battery of data the school employs.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school is characterized by consultation and collaboration. The administration is driven to continually review, reflect and plan to improve student outcomes. Regular data review checks for slippage in students' progress towards reaching graduation. Whole-school and department goals are realistic and measurable with interim checkpoints. Teachers create action plans for all their students, with particular emphasis on the lowest achieving third at any time. Regular review and realignment of programming ensures that those "at risk" are well supported. Special education students make considerable gains with the assistance of the instructional support services department, such that many move to less restrictive environments or are decertified and join all mainstream classes. A particular focus on grade 9 within the first marking period ensures freshmen build solid foundations and experience success early.

Students graduate and are successfully prepared for the future through rigorous monitoring and review systems. Parents and students are fully involved in this progress review and acknowledge it provides a solid foundation for success. Credit recovery is a particular strength of this school, which also supports some students from another school in this area. The school works to maximize the potential of each student. High expectations are conveyed through frequent communication, strong support structures

and clear boundaries. Teachers set goals for students through action plans and students are empowered by the student reflection sheet they complete for each subject. Because it is a new initiative, these are not yet always specific, measurable and time referenced.

Parents appreciate the quality of education provided by the school, its care and concern for the individual. One parent commented, "Everyone here goes above and beyond." The parent coordinator and the new school website complement the extensive efforts of the staff to welcome families into the learning partnership.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

This school's relevant and motivating curriculum serves as a model for other technical high schools. The arts are not neglected in this packed program, with music instruction and art infusion. The school meets individual student's needs and strengths through allied data collection, rigorous monitoring and flexibility in planning. The introduction of a life skills course for lower-achieving students is one successful example. Programming decisions are rooted in data so that timely interventions are effective and result from analysis of scholarship reports. With Regents, local and individual education plan diplomas, including vocational-endorsed diplomas, students graduate to college or vocational opportunities. The school has an excellent graduation rate. Teachers are dedicated to providing quality education with collegiality and mutual support. They serve as excellent role models for students. Students are challenged and different learning styles are addressed in the majority of lessons, but this is not consistent.

Extensive extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities such as driver education, track and basketball teams, performance groups and the school newspaper provide additional opportunities for students to experience success, develop social skills and be part of winning teams. Respect is evident and students report they feel valued. High staff visibility around school, including the principal, reinforces stringent expectations and strengthens positive interactions between staff and students. The school's comprehensive efforts and outreach result in excellent attendance for this student population and a significant continuing reduction in tardiness.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The administration facilitates wide-ranging professional development opportunities within a supportive framework of collegiality and collaboration. Formal and informal observations and scrutiny of data inform planned professional development that is specific to whole-school, subject and individual needs, with the United Federation of Teachers' teachers' center at the hub. Teachers are self-directed and mutually supportive. Mentoring is an established practice, both formally and informally. The

school wishes to explore even further opportunities for sharing best practice and interdisciplinary planning.

A caring culture pervades the school with strong support for personal growth by guidance counselors and all staff. Guidance services are an integral part of the whole-school team approach to each student. Preventative recovery programs and pre-entry summer programs, such as “Jumpstart” and “Bridge” for freshmen, give students an early start and experience of success. Students flourish as a result of consistently applied behavior boundaries, staff role models and the safe, purposeful atmosphere that pervades the stimulating learning environment. They show commitment and a responsible attitude as a result of the chances offered by the school. “There is always room for redemption”, a comment from an assistant principal, shows the philosophy that helps students to succeed.

Significant and mutually beneficial partnerships with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Transport Workers’ Union, Building Trades Local 363 and many other companies and organizations mean that internships and jobs are available to students, parents and the community. Students develop transferable practical and interpersonal skills such that the school is widely recognized for the thorough and rigorous preparation it offers students. Specialist areas such as the railcar lab, electrical installation and computer workshops give exceptional realistic training. The technology curriculum is continually modified in the light of ongoing liaison with partners.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The principal is a strong and effective leader who demonstrates the passion that is evident throughout the building. The cabinet shares his clear vision for the future of the school, with short-term, intermediate and long-term strategic preparation. The school leadership team is fully involved in whole-school goal setting, with student members playing an integral part. Qualitative and quantitative data is used very effectively to inform decision-making. Thorough planning and regular review with response to changing needs and circumstances, based on data, permeate the school. Analysis of student suspension data and consequent classroom management training resulted in a significant decrease in reported occurrences. Staff are passionate about the school and its mission. Clear, realistic whole-school and department goals with interim checkpoints mean that there is a cohesive approach to school improvement. Teachers set goals for students and these are now streamlined into action plans for each student. As these are new initiatives the action plans and student reflection sheets have not yet been fully evaluated and refined. The very successful programs and timely interventions mean that the school meets and exceeds State standards. Holistic profiles of all students are regularly updated so that there is cross-reference of skill acquisition and all departments can support student needs and strengths more effectively. Regular meetings at all levels revolve around tracking results to evaluate impact, modify or revise plans and practices. This highly successful school is not complacent and engages in ongoing refinement of all aspects of its work. As a consequence, in the words of one student, “This school gives you a head start.”

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Transit Tech Career and Technical High School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?					X
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped