



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

In-Tech Academy

Middle-High School 368

2975 Tibbett Avenue

Bronx

NY 10463

Principal: Rose Fairweather-Clunie

Dates of review: March 24 - 25, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Paul Cosway

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

In-Tech Academy is a middle-high school with 969 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 15% Black, 77% Hispanic, 3% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77.2% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Achievement is rising as a result of the setting of high goals and excellent evaluation of instruction, based on the very detailed analysis of data.
- The school is a very good environment for learning, with high expectations, attractive classrooms and good discipline that motivates students to be eager to learn and to get to college.
- Staff know and care for their students very well, encouraging a high level of trust and respect from them.
- Teachers work as a team, collaborating well to share and improve their instructional practice.
- Information technology is employed exceptionally well for tracking and analyzing trends and for providing students and parents information on their academic progress.
- Interventions and support for special education students and English language learners enable them to make very good progress.
- Professional development is used very well to improve instruction and to meet the assessed needs of all students.
- The principal is an inspirational leader who is very well supported by a unified and very effective administrative team.
- Parents feel welcome and they appreciate the close contact they have with the staff and the very many up-dates on their children's progress.
- Very full use is made of outside organizations and agencies both to provide academic and personal support for students and to enrich the curriculum.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend teacher's skills in differentiating instruction.
- Enhance the curriculum further by offering more opportunities for creative work in art, music, dance and drama during the day and after school.

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.

The school is at the cutting edge in the use of technology as an educational tool to make instruction more effective and learning more exciting and relevant in the modern age. It is also used as a way of recording and analyzing progress data. It is a new school, with up-to-date facilities and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Last year was the first time that a year group of students moved into grade 12 and so on to graduation. Its population has grown, but it still has the benefits of a small school environment. Staff know their students, both academically and personally, very well. They go the extra mile to give students additional help when they need it and students very much appreciate this. The principal, highly regarded and very effective, sets the tone for the school. Her belief in the importance of technology, the value of academic rigor for every child and the importance of working as teams to achieve well is the shared vision that drives the school. Teachers know that they are accountable for their students' learning. As a result of the target setting process and the review and evaluation cycle, they know exactly what is expected of them.

Achievement is rising as a result of the monitoring and evaluation of instruction, based on the analysis of data. The lowest achieving students progress very well because their needs are met well through effective interventions and support. Teachers work in teams, collaborating well to share and improve their instructional practice and they benefit from a very good range of professional development opportunities. The inquiry team has identified students for the focus group and uses a broad range of information and data to plan out the strategies to be used. Parents feel warmly welcomed by the school and appreciate the close and regular contact they have with the staff. A special strength of the school is the way that it makes imaginative use of educational technology to provide students and parents with up-to-date information on academic progress, college applications and help with academic work. It recognizes that language difficulties and a lack of access to computer technology at home prevents some parents from taking full advantage of this and works hard to overcome these problems.

Relative to the size of the school, the curriculum offers a wide range of high school courses, and a broad middle school curriculum. Some students and parents would like more opportunities to study creative subjects both during the day and after school, especially ones that reflect the culture and interests of the ethnic groups that make up the school population.

The school has made good progress on addressing the three areas for development from the previous Quality Review. Four staff developers have been appointed to improve instruction and teachers now have a very good understanding of data. Some are using this well to differentiate instruction, but the setting of differentiated tasks to meet students' needs is inconsistent across the school.

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 school cabinet has an excellent overview of the progress being made by grades, classes and individual students. They record progress over time and assess the relative progress of subgroups. The arrangements to help lower achievers are very effective and these students make very good progress. The proportion receiving academic intervention services rises in the first two years, as needs are identified, and then falls quickly as needs are met. These special education students take the same tests as general education students and are offered a wide range of additional support mechanisms, tailored to their needs, including self-contained classes for those who will benefit from them. Similar support ensures that English Language learners' needs are identified and met well.

All teachers have a comprehensive range of assessment data and for each student there is a portfolio that teachers use as a record of his or her work since entry to the school. These systems provide a clear picture of each student's strengths and areas for improvement. Patterns and trends are identified, highlighting groups of students who will receive special attention. These well-established processes have a positive impact on the progress of all students. They revealed, for example, a trend for underachievement in math, which has been addressed as a result. Teachers are confident in data analysis. There are four staff developers who ensure that teachers in all subject areas have access to all student data and understand its relevance. The principal monitors results in the school in comparison with those in similar schools in order to measure the school's effectiveness and seek out good and effective practice elsewhere. This has led to useful inter-visitations to and from other schools.

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.

All teachers track progress carefully, following individual meetings between teachers and administrators to set targets for the year, based on past and current data and predicted grades for each student. This data is also used to align support service intervention to meet specific needs. This is a very collaborative school. Teachers identify the ways that they work together and support each other as a special strength. Students are very aware of the level they are working at and can explain what they need to do to improve. The school shares its goals with the school community in effective and innovative ways. For example, parents have their own passwords to enable them to monitor their children's progress towards their goals on-line. This is a very good feature of the school's work and parents value it highly.

Goals are set and monitored for all learners with clear time frames and these are accelerating learning. High achieving students are placed on accelerated programs that lead to taking tests early. Low achieving students receive individually tailored additional support. In all cases, the effectiveness of provision is monitored through a series of formal and informal tests throughout the year. Data analysis is regularly shared with teachers

and expectations are made clear. These are reviewed mid-year and revised if necessary. Teachers report that they feel accountable, but at the same time welcome the support they receive from the administration team. The students also have excellent access to their data and their goals through constructive use of information technology programs. They have access to the school web-site, which shows their grades and goals, along with information about their current work.

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.

While the curriculum provides a broad range of experiences and opportunities both within and outside the school day, it does not include many opportunities for the students to study art, music or drama. The school uses a core curriculum across all grades to ensure continuity and progression, supplemented with focused programs to meet specific need. In some middle school classes, teachers are paired to work in teams to meet the needs of students who need extra help to succeed. Data shows their students are making good progress. There are honors courses for grade 9 students who are ready to progress further. The “SAVE” room provides a refuge and support for students in temporary need of a small secure learning environment. It is staffed by a teacher and has full access to technology that students refer to and cover the same work as their peers in class. The extended day is initiated early, in September, to provide further support for students who are in danger of not gaining credits. In order to motivate students, the school uses many successful strategies to interest all students in going on to college, including inviting colleges to make presentations to students.

Teachers use information technology extremely well to plan stimulating, interesting and relevant lessons to motivate their students, making excellent use of smart boards and power point presentations. There is a strong environment of trust between teachers and students. Students identify the fact that all teachers know them as individuals and care about them as one of the main things they like about the school. Many teachers use strategies that differentiate instruction, such as grouping students within a class to establish a balance of strengths and to encourage mutual support. There are occasions when activities are not challenging enough for all students in the class, or the pace of work is too fast for all to keep up with the teacher.

The principal and school leaders plan carefully to make the best use of their budgets and seek all available grants. As a result of this, the school has an excellent range of smart boards and laptops. Attendance has a high priority and is above the City average.

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.

Professional development is very well planned to support the school’s goals. Much of this has concentrated on developing teachers’ skills in the use of technology as an aid to teaching and learning, and there is now considerable expertise across all staff. For example, teachers plan using their individual laptop computers and produce high quality

lessons, incorporating very effective use of their smart boards, to interest and motivate their students. Professional development has also helped teachers learn how to analyze test results rigorously using computer programs and how to adjust instruction to make it more effective. For example, math courses in the middle school now pay good attention to computational skills and as a result the proportion of students reaching Levels 3 and 4 has risen steadily over the past four years.

There is a full program of classroom visits, both formal and informal, many of which are followed by detailed feedback. Teachers and students are fully involved in the process of target setting. Review is regular and plans and targets modified where necessary to raise student achievement. Teachers are able to share ideas at grade planning meetings and to watch each other's lessons. New teachers praise the support that they get, including help from mentors and good induction procedures.

Students whose personal problems affect their progress receive help through effective guidance systems. The school runs very smoothly and discipline is very good, because students are clear about what they can and cannot do and are fully aware, and respect, the school's high expectations of their work, their uniform and behavior. There are very many highly productive partnerships with outside organizations to develop students' technological and business skills, as well as to support their personal growth. Very effective links exist with, amongst many others, Microsoft, Manhattan College, CUNY, Lehman College and The College of Mount Saint Vincent.

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 very effective leader who builds teams and believes in the power of professionals working collaboratively towards stated goals. Six times a year, progress reports on every student provide opportunities for staff to monitor how well students are progressing and present opportunities to revise plans accordingly. School leaders analyze results to set goals for classes and grades at the start of the school year, set targets for teachers and then review them periodically to assess teachers' effectiveness and intervene where necessary. This works well and has resulted in significant gains in achievement. There are good examples of adjustments to instruction, guidance or programs of study mid-year based on the evaluations of interim reviews. One example is the introduction of mentors, called "Angels" or "Wings", who give individual encouragement and support to students who are falling behind.

The principal, who is very well respected in the community, has an exceptionally clear vision for the future development of the school. This is shared with the whole school community, along with opportunities for them to make their own contributions to it. The school is already a long way towards succeeding in meeting its vision statement of a school producing self-reliant learners prepared through technology and academic rigor to become productive and responsible citizens of the local and global communities.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: In-Tech Academy	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