

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Transit Tech Career and Technical Education

High School 615

**1 Wells Street
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Marlon Bynum

Dates of review: May 27 - 28, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Transit Tech Career and Technical Education is a high school with 1,100 students from grades 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 66% Black, 25% Hispanic, 1% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 85% of the students enrolled and girls account for 15%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013 - 2014 was 86.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders engage in goal setting which involves all members of the school community in decision-making and regular monitoring, promoting collaboration around teacher practices towards school improvement. (3.1)
 - School leaders and staff have developed a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) that articulates a set of annual goals and action plans based on the Progress Report and New York State Regents' data, and concentrates primarily on improving student achievement and teacher practices this year. Adjustments of action plans are made based on teacher and student progress towards school wide goals. Professional development planning, based on initial walkthroughs in September, resulted in a combined effort to hone in on specific components from the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FfT) rubric including questioning and discussion techniques (3b) and engaging students in learning (3c). The professional development plan along with the CEP provides a clear correlation in the support for teachers as they develop teaching practices in domain 3 based on the FfT in order to enhance teacher pedagogy. In addition, the principal combined the English language arts (ELA) with social studies departments in order to formulate a humanities department, integrate strategies and skills, and provide interdisciplinary lessons to further increase student engagement. The cabinet monitors Advance data to determine the progression of teachers in their movement into the effective and highly effective rating areas. As a result of these planning efforts and adjustments, teacher practices are improving as evidenced on Advance reports.
 - Schools leaders make a conscious effort to involve and communicate goals with all constituents, which leads to an inclusive culture around school improvement and decision-making and includes various members in the school wide planning process. For example, parents reported that they "were involved" via School Leadership Team meetings with the goal setting process and felt that the principal was working hard to make changes in the school. In addition, students reported that their student council members participate in meetings, which involve discussions on the school improvement process. For example, the students stated that the administration shared school wide goals with them and even posted the instructional focus around the school as a reminder of the initiative. As a result of the ongoing communication efforts between the administration and school community, the school demonstrates a strong commitment to improve student learning.
- The school utilizes their budget to support the prioritized goals through partnerships, professional development, and technology, to improve instruction and support students' learning needs (1.3)
 - In an effort to meet instructional goals this year, resources such as three new computer labs and programs like Media Spot, which integrates interdisciplinary learning, were purchased to provide students opportunities to be interactive and fully engaged in the curricula. Other

intervention programs were obtained such as Achieve 3000 for assessing student reading levels, and Apex, which provides credit recovery for at-risk students in danger of being retained in certain courses. Other resources were purchased such as PD 360 and Common Core 360 to provide individual professional development to teachers. In interviewing teachers, several of them felt that this resource provided the support they needed and they enjoyed watching the videos provided on the website. As a result of introducing these initiatives, student work demonstrates growth as evidenced in folders and notebooks.

- The school offers a highly structured student schedule in order to support the academic and career technical programs. Interventions are programmed in the morning and afternoon to provide students with tutoring and credit recovery in core subject areas to improve learning outcomes. In addition, the school offers a Saturday academy for tutoring as well. Partnerships with programs such as Global Kids which provides students with training to become leaders within their school community promotes positive personal behaviors. When hiring and matching teachers and students, staff members consider the teacher's strengths, former classroom experiences, and licensing, to inform their programming decisions. Adjustments are made throughout the year to ensure students are receiving the maximum amount of time relative to courses needed for graduation requirements. For example, changes were made to the Spanish program in order to enable students who required the class access to it, and for those in need of credit recovery, an opportunity to make up credits after school or during the Saturday program. As a result of these programming decisions, interventions, and teacher placement, students have equal access to learning opportunities that lead to college and career readiness.
- The school has created a safe and nurturing environment that implements structures to foster a positive culture thus promoting students' academic and personal growth. (1.4)
 - The school's safe and inclusive culture is achieved by efforts made by the principal to advocate with outside resources to support student safety and maintain a positive culture. For example, the school was lacking in school safety agents at the beginning of the year, which caused issues with the culture of the building. As a result of the principal's efforts to work with his assistant principal of security, the network, and district personnel, more safety agents were provided and safety routes for students and staff to exit the building without harm were established. To continue the support for a safe school environment more school aides and deans were hired to monitor hallways and stairwells regularly ensuring students and teachers arrive safely to class. During an interview with students, when asked if they felt safe, one student stated, "Of course. There is an adult around every corner of this building." In addition, students and staff members felt they were able to communicate their thoughts and ideas via school wide meetings where they felt "heard". For example, the student council advocated for more computers earlier in the year, which resulted in the installation of three new computer labs. As a result of these efforts, the administration has developed a school culture that integrates positive behaviors which has resulted in improved student behavior as evidenced during classroom visits.

- The school provides multiple opportunities to enhance student-learning experiences towards the promotion of academic and personal behaviors. This year, they became an Expanded Success Initiative (ESI) school, which provided training for nine staff members and administration on combining three facets, social emotional learning, college readiness and culturally relevant education, resulting in an ESI inquiry group, to deepen teachers' understanding of this concept when working with struggling students. In addition, the school has provided training for teachers via the Conference of Boys of Color to promote instructional approaches relative to progressive discipline and culturally relevant education. Lead staff provides training for teachers on these approaches to promote specific culturally relevant strategies around the school. The school communicates their vision for cultural relevance and acceptance to students via assemblies and guidance counselors while the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings promote it to the parents. Parents are also provided information of student progress via meetings with teachers and through an online grading system. As a result of the opportunities provided to parents, teachers, and students, the school demonstrates growth in the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine curricula and tasks to fully integrate the instructional shifts and provide access to learning opportunities in order to meet the needs of diverse learners. (1.1)
 - School leaders and staff are in the process of developing curriculum maps and lesson plans to fully integrate the instructional shifts in different subject areas. Currently, staff members utilize modules from sites such as Engage NY in English language arts and math to develop their own teacher created units of study. Lesson plans reflect planning to provide some exposure to learning tasks that lead students to rigorous thinking. However, the school has yet to fully adapt all curriculum materials to reflect the instructional shifts embedded in the CCLS into all school wide instructional maps. For example, a review of curriculum materials such as unit of study maps and corresponding lesson plans, demonstrated a lack of full alignment and integration of higher order learning tasks reflective of the instructional shifts in science and certain areas in math and social studies. Therefore, the school's ability to provide coherent rigorous instruction in all classrooms is hindered.
 - Some lesson plans reflect strategies to provide students some access to learning tasks. Included within these planned activities are the use of mixed level grouping and visuals and scaffolded questioning strategies. For example, in one earth science plan, lesson modifications included timing and a computer station with a video for students who needed a refresher on eccentricity. However, several lesson plans were not fully refined to reflect full access for diverse learners across subject areas. For example, in examining curricula and lesson plans, few provided clearly defined strategies for struggling students to comprehend the concepts taught. As a result of the absence in the refinement of all curricula, missed opportunities lead to some students' lack of cognitive engagement in the learning tasks.

- Strengthen the use of teaching strategies to embed multiple entry points so that academic tasks challenge all learners resulting in work products reflecting high levels of engagement. (1.2)
 - Some classrooms engaged students in varied activities such as paired and group work. However, in the majority of classrooms visited, all students worked on the same task and most teachers did not provide extension activities to support struggling and advanced learners in deepening their learning, thus hindering them from reaching their full potential. For example, in some classes, teachers used graphic organizers and peer support to scaffold teaching concepts for struggling students. In other classrooms, most of the questions provided were low level, recall questions. Few teachers took the opportunity to provide a continuum of questions to support rigorous thinking. As a result, teaching practices do not allow all students to consistently engage with rigorous tasks, thus limiting their opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking in their work.
 - Some discussions engaged students in sharing ideas about conceptual ideas. For example, in an English class, students engaged in working as group members to develop an argumentative essay, resulting in high levels of thinking and diverse discussions on improving writing skills. However, this was not common across classrooms, as several lessons were teacher dominated with only a few students responding when asked. In other classrooms, when grouped, some students did not fully participate in conversations with their peers. For example, in one social studies class, the teacher asked questions about a historical figure but only a few students were involved resulting in low-level whole class conversations. As a result, the use of low level questioning limits students' ability to think deeply, resulting in insufficient opportunities to engage in high-level discussions.
- Expand the work of teachers in using assessment tools to monitor student progress in order to provide actionable feedback and adjust instructional practices so that all students' learning needs are effectively addressed. (2.2)
 - The school uses rubrics to collect information on student performance on varied learning tasks, common assessments such as Achieve 3000 to determine students' lexile levels, and performance-based tasks with a baseline to determine students' progress. Departmental grading policies guide performance, which is communicated, to students and parents using an online grading system. Teachers are encouraged by the principal to set goals based on data to determine students' progress on performance tasks. However, a review of student notebooks and work folders indicated written actionable feedback is limited across classrooms. When interviewing students, although much of the student work consisted of a grade and students knew what they needed to improve upon, there was limited written guidance provided as to next steps for assignments. Some writing tasks indicated "add more" and posed questions such as, "Who says this?" yet did not provide clear strategies to support the student when rewriting the piece. Limited feedback to writing thus hinders students' ability to enhance tasks resulting in missed opportunities to accelerate their learning.

- Across classrooms, teachers used questioning and observation to determine student understanding of concepts. In a few classes, teachers used exits slips as a means to collect data, and posed written questions for self- assessment. However, checks for understanding did not lead to instructional adjustments within the lessons and opportunities for self- and peer-assessment were limited. For example, in one English class, the whole class took turns to provide a presenting student with feedback on a writing task at the beginning of the lesson, which provided the student an opportunity to self-reflect and adjust his own writing piece during class. Although this activity enabled students in one class to reflect and refine their work, this practice was not common across classrooms. In other classrooms, students appeared to be only partially aware of assessment criteria, and the teacher monitored student learning for the class as a whole. Therefore, inconsistent teacher practices led to limited opportunities to effectively adjust pedagogy in the moment, in order to meet students' learning needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Transit Tech Career and Technical Education					UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score						X		
Instructional Core								
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>					UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?						X		
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?						X		
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?						X		
School Culture								
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>					UD	D	P	WD
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?							X	
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?						X		
Systems for Improvement								
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>					UD	D	P	WD
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?							X	
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?							X	
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?							X	
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?						X		
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?						X		
Quality Review Scoring Key								
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed	