



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

In-Tech Academy

Middle-High School 368

**2975 Tibbett Avenue
Bronx
NY 10463**

Principal: Yvette Allen

Dates of review: December 17 - 18, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Shirley Wheeler-Massey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

In-Tech Academy is a middle-high school with 1034 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 11% Black, 82% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English Language Learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 92.4% for the middle school and 91.5% for the high school.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Various partnerships, embedded structures, and collaborative efforts, contribute to a school environment that promotes learning and enhances students' personal growth. (1.4)
 - School administrators meet with deans and guidance counselors daily for their “on the same page meeting” to debrief on interactions with students and situations that require follow up related to attendance, mediation or conflict resolution. The administrative cabinet also meets weekly to discuss curricula as well as gather information on school culture that is shared with key constituents across the school in order to continually provide a safe, inclusive, and positive environment that emphasizes student safety and success. At the beginning of the year the administration conducts a Town Hall meeting to remind students of the school's expectations and the various programs. The school faculty closely monitor daily student attendance and follow-up with any chronic attendance issues and provide counseling and support as needed. During lunch and free periods, teachers avail themselves to students for academic support or just to talk. Selected teachers act as mentors through the school's “Angels Program” to ensure identified students are on-track. One student shared that, if it was not for her “angel”, she would not know where she would be; that he really pushed her to get it together. Another student shared how he appreciates how much everyone in the school is there to support students with whatever they need. Partnerships with Manhattan College and the on-site Riverdale Neighborhood House provide academic supports to students through tutoring and remediation for targeted students, and Gear Up, and the College Bound Initiative (CBI) Program that provides the school a full time college counselor that assists students with college preparation, both assist the school's efforts in preparing students for higher education. . As a result, students state that they are excited to come to school and learn and participate in various programs, and the school well supports the academic and social-emotional needs of its students, along with maintaining low suspension and incident rates.
 - Teachers are surveyed at the beginning of the year to see what supports they need in addressing both the academic and social-emotional needs of their students. During teacher team meetings, team leads provide teachers with supports and strategies on how to address and support the growing English language learner (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD) population so that students gain the confidence and tools necessary to be successful. Teachers provide ongoing communication with parents through PupilPath and Skedula, which increases parent knowledge of academic behaviors. Students also utilize these tools to monitor and track individual progress in their classes and obtain information regarding assignments and projects. One parent stated, “The teachers are really interested in our children's progress and I really feel a part of a school family.” As a result of these support systems, the school's culture continues to strengthen, enabling staff, students, and parents, to develop a trusting and positive environment.

- School faculty engage in structured professional team collaborations using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams, organized by grade levels and departments ensure consistency and coherence across grades and subjects. The various teacher teams meet weekly to examine student work, analyze data, and engage in professional development sessions focused on the implementation of the new Common Core programs for English language arts and math. Teachers collaboratively set their teams' goals, aligned to the school's goals, at the beginning of the year, and team leads provide feedback to the principal on the team's progress and next steps. Teacher team meetings also serve as an opportunity where teachers share best practices and ideas in order to improve teacher practice. Additionally, teachers participate in inter-visitations, and upload and share unit and lesson plans using Google.docs. During one of the teacher team meetings, the presenting teacher shared how she found the feedback from her colleagues really helpful and that she liked what they were telling her and that the information really helped her plan for all of her students. Teachers state that they take on leadership roles as teacher team leads, team facilitators, or present and turnkey information from external and network professional development to their colleagues. Teachers feel that they are trusted to make curricula decisions and that teacher teams provide them with a forum to discuss and plan accordingly. As a result of ongoing collaboration and shared leadership, teachers' instructional capacity has increased, resulting in an improvement of targeted students' work products reviewed from student portfolios.

- The principal organizes resources, including teacher and student assignments, and partnerships, to provide intentionally targeted supports for students in meeting the school's instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The school's technology program is considered the flagship of the school community. The principal uses RESO A funding to upgrade technology throughout the school. All classrooms are equipped with computers, Smart boards, and document cameras, that are used to support student learning. Additionally, a computer lab and media center with video conferencing enables students to have access to the internet for research projects and to receive training and certification on various Microsoft functions.. A literacy consultant, from a previous grant, has been maintained by the school's budget to support the efforts of training teachers, upkeep the school's Google domain, which is used by all students and staff, and to ensure the effective use of technology within the classroom. Partnerships with several colleges, such as Manhattan College, Lehman College, and Mount Saint Vincent, provide students with academic and remediation support and enrichment opportunities via tutoring and credit recovery, Regents preparation, as well as, on campus internships within Manhattan College's engineering department. Staff members designated as teacher team leads and the data specialist, engage teachers across grades and content areas in the analysis of student work and data to determine progress towards meeting the school's instructional goals. Therefore, the principal's utilization of available funding and resources, results in effective programmatic and

organizational decisions, thereby maximizing the school's efforts to meet and support students' needs, as noted in Common Core aligned lesson plans and student work products displayed on bulletin boards.

- School administrators place a strong emphasis on hiring dual-certified teachers, particularly in special education and ESL, to meet the needs of their growing population in both sub-groups. New teachers are mentored by teachers within their content area, and are provided with yearlong support and job-embedded professional development. Identified students participate in the school's various after-school programs for academic remediation, Regents preparation, ESL services for beginning English language learners and a Saturday Academy Program for students with disabilities and English language learners. This year, all eighth grade students were provided individual programs, in an effort to provide them the opportunity to take Regents' courses and better prepare them for the high school structure. Additionally, struggling students are partnered with selected staff to act as their "angels" within the school's Angel Program, to provide support and encouragement and get them on the right track. As a result of these strategic supports and opportunities, students are being equipped with the skills and tools necessary to meet the demands of high school and to be college and career ready.
- The school implements a standards based curriculum that emphasizes analytical thinking, leading to coherency across grades and content. (1.1)
 - In collaboration, faculty, and school leaders selected Common Core aligned materials recommended by the New York City Department of Education to support literacy and math instruction. Additionally, the school is taking part in the Middle School Quality Initiative, which provides interventions for middle school students that include the Word Generation Program, an interdisciplinary vocabulary development program that focuses on developing students' abilities to use and articulate academic vocabulary across disciplines and into their everyday use. Through this Middle School Initiative, social studies and science teachers have also received training in using the West Ed's Apprenticeship Program, which supports them with developing lessons that assist students in making meaning of higher level, non-fiction texts. On the high school level, the school is implementing the College Preparatory Math Program in all of the Integrated Algebra classes, which is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and designed to remove students off of the remedial track in college. The instructional shifts were noted within teacher lesson plans and in the content of materials across disciplines. In English language arts and social studies classrooms, teachers require students to cite evidence from the text in order to support their answers. In some math classrooms, students are asked to explain their answers in writing and make real world connections in problem solving. This results in a unified curricula focus, leading to a coherent expectation to prepare students for the demands of high school, and ensure college and career readiness.
 - Weekly planning meetings by grade and content level provide teachers the opportunity to develop and modify curriculum units and review performance tasks in an effort to meet the needs of all students. .
During the grade 8 team meeting, teachers were providing feedback to a

presenting teacher on the math Fall performance task and whether it hooks and engages all students and whether it requires students to make real-life connections. Throughout the meeting, teachers provided suggestions on what graphic organizers and tools to use to make the tasks clearer for English language learners and other supports, such as word banks to assist students with disabilities and struggling students, and strategies to ramp up the tasks for honors students. As a result of this practice, curricula, lesson plans, and academic tasks are planned and modified as a means to address the needs of all students, providing them with opportunities to be cognitively engaged. .

What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen depth of questioning, student discussion, and use of varied activities, in order to enrich and promote students' participation and their developing critical thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Some teachers prepare and execute lessons that target the specific needs and strengths of students and employ strategies that address a range of student ability levels. Some employ open-ended questions to spark discussions and students in some classrooms, are questioning each other's assumptions and claims. For example, in a ninth grade English class, students participated in Socratic seminars centered around the concepts of materialism and consumerism within the United States. Different groups of students were required to make a claim around these topics and cite textual evidence to support their claims and present their ideas using the fishbowl strategy. The other students within in the class listened tentatively; some took notes using a graphic organizer, and later provided feedback on the group's process and asked follow-up questions regarding the stated claim. The teacher posed higher order questions to check for understanding, as students engaged in questioning of each other to clarify and solidify their claims and understanding of the presented topic. However, in other classrooms, questions and answers are more often between the teacher and individual students, with limited opportunities for all students to engage in higher-level discussions amongst each other. Additionally, although most students sit in groups, teachers do not always use formative data to make these assignments to fully support struggling students or to develop sufficient challenging tasks and questions to further accelerate high achievers. As a result, academic tasks, work products, and discussions that demonstrate activities that stretch the thinking of all learners, including English language learners, students with individual education plans, and those performing at the highest achievement levels, are not yet evident school wide.
- Improve teacher assessment practices so that there is daily monitoring of student progress in order to make instructional adjustments and offer clear next learning steps, leading to enhancing student progress. (2.2)
 - Across classes and grades, teachers use Common Core aligned assessments and performance task rubrics generated from Scholastic's Code X and Pearson's Connected Math (CMP3) programs to determine student progress toward performance benchmarks. Teachers maintain records of student data in assessment binders and in Skedula, an online grading system, and use item analysis to create action plans and develop supports, which are noted in some teacher's lesson plans to address

student deficits. Some observed teacher practice reflects checks for understanding in the form of check-ins and whole class shares to gauge student progress and understanding. However, across classrooms, structures for gathering assessment data that include ongoing checks for understanding during the natural flow of daily instruction, recording close observations of students to track progress of data-defined needs, engaging students in self-and peer assessment, and providing immediate intervention and support to address students' needs, is uneven. For example, in an eighth grade enrichment English class, students were engaged in a whole class discussion around the 'Do Now' activity of explaining their understanding of stereotypes. Students were encouraged to make connections and cite evidence from the text, "We Beat the Street"; however, students were not engaged in any meaningful tasks that supported their level of understanding of the text. The follow-up activity from the 'Do Now' was a round-robin reading with some low-level questions that didn't address the learning needs of the students' varied performance levels within the classrooms, thereby, not supporting the high achievers or students who were able to be work beyond the basic tasks provided. In a sixth grade English class, students were engaged in small group tasks of defining different vocabulary words and literary skills and finding examples of those words from the Scholastic's CODEX text. Although the teacher roved the classroom to monitor student understanding, she did not utilize a tool to track understanding, nor use misconceptions or misunderstandings of specific skills to immediately address or support individual student inaccuracies. Instead, the teacher asked students within two different small groups: "Do you understand?" or "Does everyone understand?" In another tenth grade English class, the students were working on a series of differentiated questions related to the text "The Great Gatsby", which the teacher noted were created based on students' reading levels. However, when some students from different groups were asked why they were in specific groups or what skills they were having challenges with, they were unable to explain or articulate that information. Consequently, teachers miss out on using data sufficiently to strategically adjust instructional strategies and learning tasks, and impact higher levels of student performance.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: In-Tech Academy	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