



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Transit Tech Career and
Technical Education High School**

High School K615

**1 Wells Street
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Marlon Bynum

**Date of review: April 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Musa Shama**

The School Context

Transit Tech Career and Technical Education is a high school with 1,049 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 64% Black, 28% Hispanic, 1% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 86% of the students enrolled and girls account for 14%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 85.9%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to the community through constant messaging and have developed structures to ensure that staff, students, and families are supported in meeting those expectations.

Impact

Staff are held accountable through planned training and observations. Ongoing feedback to families helps them understand student progress towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have created venues to develop partnerships with families to clearly communicate expectations around college and career readiness and provide detailed information regarding student progress toward those expectations. Highlighted by the school community were the Career Technical Education (CTE) Student and Parent Program Articulation Night, College and Financial Aid Workshops, Career Day, college speakers at parent meetings, and newsletters to parents about the college application process. Parents spoke highly of the parent coordinator who they say is very accessible and responsive to parent needs and ensures that parents are informed of upcoming events.
- The school hosts numerous events that bring professionals from trades aligned to their CTE programs to speak to students regarding a path to various careers. For example, the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and other career partners and guest speakers, including former students who are now attending college, come to speak with parents and students. Guidance counselors visit classrooms to review progress to graduation, conduct transcript informational sessions, and meet with students individually. In addition, students are part of the College Summit program and act as peer leaders to support their classmates in the college application process.
- The principal's cabinet includes teacher leaders from each discipline as well as his parent coordinator. This cabinet helps develop school wide goals and expectations. The principal stated that, from the first day that staff returns, he began messaging the instructional focus and school wide goals of promoting student discussions and improving argumentative writing skills, and structured professional development to support teachers in developing the skills necessary to achieve these goals. Through scheduled observation cycles, he uses the instructional focus and goals to provide teachers with targeted feedback to build teachers' instructional practice. Teachers attested to school leaders supporting them in developing strategies to engage students in discussions and writing across the curriculum by providing feedback in observations and conducting professional learning opportunities for faculty in these areas.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teaching practices are becoming aligned to curricula and are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best through emphasis on reading, writing, and engagement in student-to-student discourse.

Impact

Teaching practices informed by Danielson's Framework for Teaching are not yet consistent across classrooms leading to uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has developed an instructional initiative, "Triple A Thursday" to promote strategies aligned to the core belief that students learn best through active engagement. The "Triple A" strategy focuses on the use of annotation, accountable talk, and analysis of text to increase student engagement and academic performance. Although activities and tasks that incorporate these skills are scripted into plans, they are not always executed with proficiency. For example, in a global history class, students were not prompted to annotate, nor did a majority of students engage in annotation as they read the articles assigned and answered questions. In the discussion portion of the lesson, the arrow of recitation was from teacher-to-student, student-to-teacher. Students responded to questions from the teacher but were not prompted to elaborate, defend their thinking, or respond to a peer's contributions.
- Student work products in CTE classes visited reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. For example in an Electrical Systems class students worked on circuitry for a sump pump. Students engaged in a discussion utilizing technical electrical trades language to support each other in the construction of a control circuit consisting of a float switch and a selector switch and explained the difference between a magnetic motor starter from a contactor. However, in a math class lesson on applying the exponential growth formula to real world problems, although the teacher directed students to use the "Triple A" strategies, students did not discuss their work with peers and were not prompted to engage in student-to-student discussions to analyze the problem and their approach to solving. Students worked on worksheet tasks and volunteered answers to the teacher who then acknowledged their responses.
- Student work products that reflected higher order thinking skills were exemplified in a Physics class with the aim; "How can the value of resistors be determined?" Students used a multimeter to measure resistors' resistance capacity and worked collaboratively to conduct several experiments populating a data table conducting analysis such as, "Predict which factors affect the difference between given and measured values." Students used academic vocabulary and were able to discuss the application of these concepts to their related technical education courses. However, in a ninth grade English language arts (ELA) class, students were asked to turn and talk and to write down some ideas as to what they believed would cause a child to become a soldier. Although students jotted down some ideas and were prompted to discuss what they had written, only four pairs of students were observed discussing the question as the rest of the students waited for the teacher to begin the lesson.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Faculty members are working collaboratively to adopt and develop Common Core aligned academic tasks that emphasize instructional shifts, rigorous habits, and higher-order thinking skills. However, curricula and quality of tasks is not coherent across grades and subjects.

Impact

Curricula, as yet, does not consistently promote rigorous habits and higher-order skills that promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula maps reviewed designated Common Core learning standards, instructional shifts, and included performance tasks that indicated instructional shifts, skills assessments, and documented differentiated resources for low, medium, and high performing students. Teachers stated that they collaborate to refine multiple entry point strategies that go with each unit of study. The school's instructional focus of using evidence to "support arguments in discussion" was referenced across all content areas. Maps included essential questions and writing tasks that required students to use textual evidence to support claims and build academic vocabulary related to content areas.
- The math department uses Common Core aligned curriculum maps developed by the Association of Mathematics Assistant Principals Supervision of New York City (AMAPS) in addition to performance tasks from Engage NY. Science and social studies are following the New York City Department of Education Scope and Sequence. Although these resources are developed aligned to Common Core learning standards, the faculty is in the process of making further adaptations to meet the specific needs of students at Transit Tech.
- The principal stated that he expects that lesson plans incorporate higher-order thinking skills, such as interpretation, synthesis, summarizing, and inference as well as questions and tasks that are on Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels 2-4. Plans reviewed evidenced tasks that require annotation of non-fiction text and engagement in writing tasks or text based discussions. For example, students in a unit on exploration in a global history class, cited textual evidence to substantiate their thinking in answering the questions "What is the author's main claim?", How does the author support his claim that Columbus did not discover America?"

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers across classrooms create and use assessments and rubrics aligned to curricula to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Teachers and students have actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Student assessment data is used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Common assessments in content areas include end of marking period assessments, midterms, and final examinations. Data is analyzed in department meetings and faculty conducts item analysis and uses this information to refine curricula. For example, the analysis of student data in Geometry revealed student misconceptions of abstract concepts that led to redevelopment of lessons to engage students and the development of scaffolds. Adjustments in curriculum have led to increases in student pass rates in Geometry courses. Teachers articulated that they also use this information to support flexible grouping strategies depending on the assignment.
- The school has implemented a school-wide writing rubric to support coherence in writing expectations across grades and subject areas. The rubric prioritizes development, textual analysis, reasons/evidence, organization, and conventions. Students confirmed that teachers use this rubric in their classes. Also, students were able to articulate their areas of strengths and weaknesses and said that teachers gave them clear feedback to improve their work, noting, although, that the frequency and clarity of the feedback varied by teacher. Classroom student work displays evidenced that rubrics accompanied tasks and that teacher feedback aligned to rubric criteria. Additionally, teachers use a scoring guide for annotations to promote student self-reflection and offer students feedback on how to refine their annotation skills.
- A teacher who supports students with disabilities has been assisting colleagues in analyzing assessment data to track special education students' progress and identify specific learning needs. Information is contained in a data spreadsheet and informs goals in Individual Education Plans, modifications that students may need in exams, and creation of scaffolds designed to support students in accessing curricula. Teachers have introduced strategies such as leveled texts, flexible grouping strategies, and the development of strategic questioning strategies.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Standards. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Teacher teamwork and teacher leadership is strengthening teachers’ instructional practice and has given teachers a voice in contributing to key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly to work in either content or cohort teams. Data driven identification of struggling learners for effective instructional groupings and provision of academic intervention services is a highlighted practice. Teachers also indicated that this data is used for curricula revisions and the development of instructional strategies, noting that the school’s “Triple A” strategies developed to support mastery of Common Core skills in the comprehension and analysis of complex text were one of the key outcomes of teacher teams’ analysis. Teams document their work using graphic organizers that highlight areas of weakness, areas of strengths, and post intervention outcomes for students they are focused on. The principal reviews outcomes and next steps with instructional leaders.
- To support teachers’ instructional practice as well as build capacity in teacher leaders, a professional development lab was created to showcase and share best practices across the school. With the input of teacher leaders and the instructional cabinet, professional learning is planned based on needs identified through analysis of student work and teacher pedagogy. The school has developed a professional development menu for teachers to have a voice in their professional growth.
- The school is participating in the Learning Partners Program to develop teacher leaders. Through on-site and off-site professional development and sharing of best practices, teachers receive feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework as well as participate in peer observations.