



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**IN-Tech Academy (M.S./High School 368)**

**Middle - High School X368**

**2975 Tibbett Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10463**

**Principal: Stephen Seltzer**

**Date of review: March 4, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop**

## The School Context

IN-Tech Academy (M.S./High School 368) is a middle-high school with 967 students from grade 6 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 10% Black, 82% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 14% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.5%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families to support student progress toward those expectations. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

### Impact

There is a culture where clear, focused, and effective guidance/advisement supports are in place to ensure that students, including high need subgroups, own their experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students in grades 6 and 7 have access to the cohort program, GEAR UP. Students in grade 8 have access to the cohort program ENLACE, which is designed to provide Latino students, whom are 82% of the school's population, with academic enrichment in math and science. The program affords students with skills and experiences needed to graduate from high school with honors and advanced Regents high school diplomas on a path leading to high-technology industries where Latino students are currently underrepresented. High school students expressed benefitting from the school partnerships with Cisco and Virtual Enterprise because they are placed in real-life situations, which has helped a student identify his goal in majoring in Computer Science in college.
- Teachers and counselors communicate high and consistent expectations using the "progress to graduation tracker" which indicates whether each school student is on-track or off-track for graduation as well as assisting school staff in identifying struggling students for additional supports and monitoring school wide patterns. Students are able to view their credit accumulation status, as well as Regents passed and failed scores by content area. Conjointly, students are able to discern their college exam data including SAT reading and math scores and CUNY Assessments in reading, writing, and math. A high school student reported, the school's new grading policy is "tough but fair because now I have a better understanding of where I stand academically and why. I also noticed other students are working harder this year because we have to do more than participate to get a good grade. Now we have to actually show what we know (or don't)." The school's 4-year graduation rate is currently 84%, 14% higher than the district average, and 22% higher than the borough average.
- Parents noted their partnership with the school and being pleased with the school's varied communication methods that meet the needs of families who work and at home. The school uses Pupil Path and Skedula, sends letters home via students, mail, and phone calls. Parents attended a school-wide workshop to learn about the school's new grading policy and a grade 7 parent expressed noticing a difference between the level of work her daughter is doing this current school year versus last year. Families are also engaged in the high school and college application process, financial aid workshops, and individually should families request a different level of support.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

All learners including ELL's and SWD's are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills however, the levels of questioning and extensions into the curricula vary so that not all learners are able to engage in appropriately challenging tasks where they can demonstrate high levels of student thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders and teachers believe students learn best when they are engaged, challenged, and thinking critically when they are provided with multiple entry points. In a senior level English language arts (ELA) class, the lesson centered on their thesis proposal writing an effective research paper using the Harvard outline to organize their ideas, claims, evidence, and sources. Students worked in groups on laptops while accessing their Google classroom documents and engaged in peer-reviews. The group roles consisted of facilitator, material gatherer, and share-blogger. The teacher posted the lesson's PowerPoint presentation on Google classroom for students to reference and an outline generator for students who needed additional supports to complete the project task. Conversely, in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom concentrated on classifying triangles, the discussion was teacher directed and due to limited opportunities for student centered discussion, students were not able to make conceptual connections during the math lesson.
- During a Virtual Enterprise lesson, students participated in correctly formatting a resume and cover letter activity resulting in student presentations that demonstrated knowledge of students understanding the purpose of a resume, the basic rules for writing a resume, and how to use a resume for the college and employment applications process. While students provided on-the-spot peer feedback to their fellow presenters, questions were primarily teacher led which established a routine where students waited on the teacher before sharing their feedback, limiting high levels of student thinking and ownership.
- A middle school science classroom discussion involved students making personal connections between the process of reproduction and the passing of traits from parent to offspring. Students were asked, "How can we look at genetics and heredity using the cookbook analogy?", "Why aren't you exactly like one parent?", and as a connecting question to the mini-lesson, "What are genes? What is DNA?" Student responses were captured on the SMART board and students who struggled with their answers and were encouraged to call on a peer for support and not the teacher. The students were able to articulate their understanding of the lesson and for students who were unclear of the lesson objective, explained to the reviewer the process of seeking assistance either from a classmate or the teacher. Students who completed the tasks prior to the end of the lesson had an opportunity to write a reflection using the lesson's vocabulary words and all students had to demonstrate their knowledge of the lesson by completing a graphic organizer titled, "How does this all fit together?"

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curricula</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Coherence across grades and subject areas promotes college and career readiness for all students so that all learners, including ELL's and SWD's must demonstrate their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- In an effort to support the school's high percentage of ELL population, school leaders and faculty have drafted an English as a New Language curricula map for grades 6 through 12 including accommodations for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Resources included in the curricula to address the needs of this population consist of audio, video, iPads, graphic organizers, and teacher-designed materials.
- Lesson and unit plans reviewed include tasks for all learning levels and subgroups. A middle school science plan centered on plate boundaries included differentiation throughout the lesson based on learning styles – auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. Furthermore, flexible grouping was based on student level of understanding, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) accommodations. In a social studies lesson plan focused on defending or disputing a response to a document-based question, peer assistance and conferencing, vocabulary support and language support targeting multiple entry points, and pair and whole class activities were evident in the curricula.
- Unit plans of ICT teachers included the utilization of paraprofessionals in support of assigned students and the classroom in its entirety. Support strategies included different levels of questioning, modeling, and one-to-one conferencing. In a lesson on the collapse of the Roman Empire, students were grouped heterogeneously based on their last assessment and abilities to work well together.
- Curricula objectives in Cisco courses consisted of students explaining the purpose of preventative maintenance and identifying elements of the troubleshooting process, configuring computers to connect to an existing network, and assessing customer needs. Documents also encompass analysis of possible configurations, and administering of solutions or recommendations for hardware, operating systems, networking, and security.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

### **Impact**

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and faculty decided to streamline their grading policy in order to provide clear and consistent expectations for all students. School leadership realized teachers were using different policies, which led to unclear expectations, especially related to participation that varied from 5% to 25 percent across the middle school and high school grades and content areas. For example, the science participation rate was 5%, ELA, 25%, math 20%, and Advanced Placement courses varied from 15% to 20%. The school wide grading policy focuses on measurable formative and summative assessments based on content.
- The school leadership team determined from their June 2015 Regents data, students were failing in the writing portion of the exams, and they re-programmed teachers for the current school-year to focus on writing strategies, specifically for Global History and US History. For example, the school used the New Visions Global History scope and sequence: How often units and sub-units appear on a Regents exam to guide which areas to focus on for multiple choice and document-based questions. The Living Environment analysis revealed the percentage of multiple choice, extended response, and performance indicators.
- Teachers use a planning aligned formative assessments document to assist in selecting strategies that will connect to their planned instructional outcomes and provide students with real-time, developmental feedback. Some of the actionable provided to students occur during individual and small group student conferencing, practice presentation incorporating a standards-based rubric written in student-friendly language that students use as they prepare their work leading them to assessing their own and classmate's performance against the rubric, resulting in students receiving feedback to help them move towards mastery. A student essay on the Manifest Destiny included questions from peers and teachers to push the student's writing such as, "How did the loss of these resources impact the Native Americans?", "Did the benefits outweigh the consequences? Your thesis must present a clear claim." Feedback provided to the student from the teacher, "Provide more details and examples to support your claim. Every time I made a comment asking why or how, it means that you were descriptive, but not analytical. In order to reach the analysis level, you need to combine both sources of information and explain how this example supports or refutes your claim."

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based, professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of CCLS. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

**Impact**

Shared improvements in teacher practice have resulted in strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers, resulting in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During an observation of a middle school teacher team, teachers reported the impact their work is having on their individual practice. “I was so fearful of giving up control and now I am including increased opportunities for my students to talk more and engage in group discussions.” reported a teacher. Another faculty member expressed, “The strength of this team is motivating our collective drive and we are seeing growth with our eighth graders because we all have the same end goal.” As a result of this collaboration, teachers used the Color-Image-Symbol strategy across content areas to assess student learning and noticed increased students engagement and more students handed their assignments in which allowed teachers to better formally assess students who approaching and meeting targets.
- The high school ELA teachers stated they look at student work from the lowest third, ELL’s and honors populations and realized they needed to focus on the development of analysis skills for argumentative essays. This area of focus stemmed from Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) data that teachers’ color-coded to indicate students current level of progress. Teachers reported seeing stronger supportive evidence and thesis statements, and “having an understanding of analysis has deepened since September”, mentioned an ELA teacher.
- The school’s new grading policy has informed the way teachers think about assessment. “We really had to take a look at how and what our kids are learning. If you looked at their report card grades or transcripts, it did not connect to what students knew as it related to the content” stated a high school teacher. An English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher corroborated, “ In ESL we struggled with the participation grading because a lot of our students put a lot of effort into their work, but we worked to understand the importance of a uniform policy with the guidance of school leadership and our colleagues. Teachers also identified much of the work they’ve engaged in this school year has been on analyzing assessment data and thinking differently about the way they are meeting the needs of their students. “, commented an Integrated Co-Teaching team teacher.