

NYSED/NYCDOE JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code/DBN:	2M620
School Name:	Norman Thomas High School
School Address:	111 East 33 rd Street, New York, NY 10016
Principal:	Philip Martin, Jr.
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Persistently Lowest-Achieving
Area(s) of Identification:	Graduation Rate
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	October 26-29, 2010

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

Norman Thomas High School (NTHS) serves 1,765 students in grades 9-12. The school enrollment is 70 percent Hispanic, 26 percent Black, three percent Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander and one percent White. Two hundred twenty-seven students are students with disabilities; 31 percent are recent immigrants; 317 are English Language Learners (ELLs); and 1,320 are in Career Technology Education (CTE) programs.

NTHS receives students from all parts of the city. Students and families attending the school can seek support from a number of local community partnerships. These include the Harlem Center (for conflict resolution), Bellevue Hospital (for in-school full services), Sports and Arts in Education and "Educate on Line" (for tutoring). NYU offers evening classes in the building, and in turn provides NTHS with funding, technology, commencement accommodations, furnishings and signage. The Principal is working with NYU to open college transition classes.

The Principal is new to the school as of July 2009 and is supported by an administrative team that includes nine Assistant Principals (APs) with various assignments by department and/or function. Of the 126 teachers, 20 percent are new to the school in 2010-11, 10 percent have worked at the school for less than one year, and 20 percent for fewer than three years. All teachers are highly qualified. There has not been a history of administrative turnover, nor has there been a high teacher turnover rate.

NTHS has a long, multi-year history of poor attendance, high dropout rates, low graduation rates and failure to meet AYP and was scheduled to begin phasing out in September 2010. The current Principal was hired to provide instructional leadership and support to the remaining faculty and students during the phase-out period. Since then, the principal has re-organized the school into academies, whereby, students and staff are placed in one of three academies, with one of the APs assigned to serve as a Director. The Empire Academy is for English Language Learners (ELLs); the Media Technology Academy, which has a Special Education concentration; and the Mid-Town Business Academy.

PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL’S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

A. Performance on Key Indicators of Student Achievement Trends and School Progress

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
	NYSED Quantitative Performance Measures	
-	Negative trend data for one or more identified subject/areas and subgroups for the past two consecutive years as indicated by a decrease in the percentage of students performing at or above Level 3 and/or a decrease in the Performance Index.	✓
-	School is ten or more points away from meeting its Effective Annual Measurable Objective (EAMO) for one or more identified subgroups in subject/area(s) of identification.	✓
-	For 2010-11, the school was identified as a Persistently Low-Achieving school.	✓
-	Total Cohort Graduation rate is 43 percent, below 60 percent target	✓
	NYCDOE Quantitative and Qualitative Performance Measures	
-	Grade of D on the most recent NYC Progress Report	✓
+/-	NYC Quality Review Score of Proficient	✓

B. School Strengths

- The academy structure offers great potential for supporting and assisting teachers and students. Students and teachers seem to like the academies and feel a greater sense of belonging as a result of them.
- School administrators are actively involved in ensuring that there is a safe learning environment.
- Teachers exhibit caring and responsibility for students and are somewhat bonded with one another in their commitment to student success.

C. Key Findings and Recommendations

Summary of the key issues (causal factors), and other areas of concern, identified during the on-site diagnostic review that are negatively impacting student achievement in identified areas, as well as recommendations, as related to the seven JIT Indicator Categories:

I. Curriculum

Findings:

- Many of the curriculum resources presented could be obtained from the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) and New York State (NYS) website and did not align with the school’s instructional program.
- Curriculum documents were presented in English, mathematics, science and social studies. Some were aligned with NYS Standards, performance indicators and core competencies, while others were not.

- Based on classroom observations, written curriculum was rarely the foundation for classroom instruction.
- Scope and sequence guides and pacing calendars were not presented for each core academic subject. Additionally, there was no evidence of grade to grade alignment.
- Teachers posted standards and performance indicators with daily lessons but did not demonstrate in either instruction or follow-up conversation a depth of understanding of or fluency with the NYS Standards and performance indicators. A lack of resources or access to them served as a prevailing excuse for not delivering aligned curriculum.

Recommendations:

- Common planning time should be used to align curricula and resources with school goals and students needs.
- The APs should work with teachers to ensure that curricula, particularly in social studies, mathematics and science, are aligned with NYS Standards.
- Formal and informal evaluation processes should focus on the extent to which classroom instruction is aligned with the written curriculum.
- Cross-content and cross-grade conversations need to be continually supported with clear short and long-term planning (vertical and horizontal integration).
- Training for NTHS administrators and teachers in how to implement the new State Common Core Standards in ELA and mathematics should begin at once. This could take place during the common planning time, or funding should be allocated for this professional development (PD) activity to take place after the school day.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Although teachers seem to be working toward a diversified pedagogical culture, they are not yet well-versed in research-based instructional strategies. Teachers who were observed did not demonstrate a variety of instructional strategies or resource use. The predominant mode of teaching is lecture. Administrators in interviews acknowledged a lack of instructional strategy use. Little use of technology to support instruction was evident.
- Lessons are aligned with basic learning outcomes, and teaching lacks rigor. Students are not engaged in critical, higher-order thinking skills and activities. Observed questioning strategies neither promoted higher-order thinking nor problem solving skills. Teachers often ignored wait time and answered their own questions. A number of students complained that they were under-challenged or repeating what they had learned previously.
- Instruction is not differentiated; repetitive tasks are too often the norm. Instructional plans and decisions are not driven by data about learning outcomes.
- Grouping was not evident in most classrooms. There were no instances of whole group direct instruction or small group differentiated instruction observed. Students were given limited

opportunities for interaction, shared learning, and collaboration to problem solve. When grouping was observed, it was done without planning or intention.

- Co-teaching classrooms existed on paper; however, within the classrooms, no co-teaching practices were observed.
- The academic disciplines and special education programs are not closely interrelated and, as a result, are not mutually supportive of each other.
- Learning time was not maximized in the classroom. Logical transition between topics was not evident in observed classes. Instructional time was often compromised as a result of transition between activities and classes. Transition between activities often caused disruption and loss of control of the class.
- In many classrooms, the topic of the daily lesson/standard was posted in the front of the room; however, there was no evidence that students understood the standard. As a result, students demonstrated difficulty in self-assessing based on the learning target.
- A few examples of student work with rubrics were observed in isolated instances; however, these neither had a direct connection to the standards nor did they represent high quality.

Recommendations:

- Leadership should develop a PD plan that includes training on specific research-based strategies as informed by student data. The Inquiry Team should also be used to assist in the identification of these strategies.
- NTHS should create a focused, short and long-range plan for PD with the goal of improving literacy skills in the content areas, higher-order thinking skills and an enriched and varied instructional repertoire for all teachers. This PD plan should include formal and informal evaluations as follow-up to assure accountability for classroom implementation of strategies learned in PD.
- Administrators and other evaluators should review and analyze lesson plans, looking for rigor, high-quality pedagogy, and clearly targeted learning outcomes and formative assessments.
- Common planning time should focus on PD that is informed by observations of teaching and learning and analysis of various data sources, including student work. Sharing best practices among colleagues should be encouraged, but only as part of an overall professional development plan that also includes training in classroom assessment and grouping techniques.
- Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) is apparently a NTHS goal, but staff should receive comprehensive PD in this area, including basic training and coaching, for it to move beyond rhetoric into practice. Once basic special education concepts and techniques are reviewed or taught, CTT staff needs to be held accountable via evaluations to assure implementation.
- The academic disciplines and special education programs should be more closely interrelated and mutually supportive.

- Intervisitation with other high schools should be considered in order to provide concrete models of schoolwide best practices.
- To maximize instructional time, NTHS should institute and value “bell-to-bell” teaching. Learning outcomes or expectations need to be clearly articulated and posted.
- Academy meetings will benefit from a clear agenda developed collaboratively with a substantive focus on teaching, learning and implementing the PD plan.
- NTHS should use NYS Standards and Performance Indicators to develop rubrics for tasks that are rigorous and standards-based. These should be clearly articulated to teachers regarding what students are expected to know in order to demonstrate proficiency and mastery level. These rubrics should be posted and referred to for every activity assigned. Student responses that demonstrate proficiency should be posted as models alongside the rubric so other students can refer to them for future assignments.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- PD for the leadership team has been somewhat random and of uneven or low quality. Although some administrators appear to be qualified and prepared to provide leadership in pedagogy, such leadership in action was not observed, other than incidentally. There was no modeling of best practices, despite rhetoric citing the value of modeling.
- A comprehensive, short and long-term plan to continuously improve teaching and learning is not evident.
- The school leader does not widely communicate high expectations for the performance of all students and staff.
- Though the school leader organizes the school’s instructional schedule to provide opportunities for common planning within and across grades or curriculum areas, as well as time for on-going articulation among support staff and classroom teachers, there was minimal discussion on student needs and the PD necessary to address them.
- The school leader has not developed an effective formal system of teacher and staff evaluation that provides feedback, support and pathways for instructional improvement.
- The School Leadership Team (SLT) agendas do not focus on student needs.
- The school leader’s involvement of parents in decisions that impact the education of their children has been limited to the parents on the SLT.

Recommendations:

- Supervisory support for the APs should be requested from the Network. These actions should be documented and progress checked on midyear and final supervisory evaluations.
- The dual organizational structure (academies and departments) for teachers should be maintained. However, more direct leadership and guidance should be provided to both

academies and departments with regard to planning (short and long-term), the use of data to inform instruction, PD to enrich the instructional repertoire, and multiple measurements to ascertain student learning outcomes, so that the findings from measurement data are applied to adjust or modify classroom practices.

- The administration should use the SLT as a mechanism for communicating expectations to staff and students. The goals that they formulate should be referenced at meetings and in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). The Principal should provide administrative and instructional memoranda to the staff. Administrators should be held accountable for ensuring that the expectations articulated in meetings and in principal's memoranda are being implemented by staff.
- Administrative classroom observations/evaluations, both formal and informal, should be much more regular and frequent, adhering to a plan articulated among the team and communicated to the staff.
- Common planning time activities should be aligned to student needs. These activities should be documented in the school's PD plan and facilitated or monitored by the APs. Interim benchmarks for each activity that are aligned to the NYS Performance Indicators should be established. The results should be reviewed with the instructional team periodically to evaluate the effectiveness of these activities.
- The school leadership team (SLT) is a resource whose potential is far from developed, and it should attend to the CEP as the centerpiece of its agenda.
- A structure should be developed that fosters stronger relationships among all constituents in the NTHS community. Nascent student governance structures should be fostered, and more formal and informal communications and interactions should be initiated to comprehensively embrace all constituents.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- Science labs and the science resource room are accessible only during periods one and five. Language labs were disconnected as a result of restructuring the school into school academies.
- While a number of initiatives have been or are being made with regard to credit recovery and intervention services for social and emotional needs, students overall do not feel sufficiently challenged and staff expectations widely vary.

There was no evidence that administrators and staff have high expectations for the achievement of all students. Teachers challenged their students or addressed differentiation in only a few classes. In some classrooms, the teachers completed the "Do Now" on the board rather than requiring student demonstrations of knowledge. At the time of the review, no formal observations were completed for this year.

- In classrooms observed by reviewers, students disrupted lessons and classroom management was often an issue. Teachers did not use any of the options or consequences listed in the Student Handbook. Enforcement of discipline and behavioral expectation policies is very

uneven. Some teachers were observed to be complacent about or ineffectual in addressing student disruptiveness.

- The school is a much safer place than it has been in past years. The security and safety are assured by vigilant NYPD staff, together with scanning equipment. Attendance seems to be marginally improving. Various supports, including PPS services and community program collaborations, exist. However, the impact of these programs is not being recorded or analyzed, so that their impact is not clear.
- Articulation opportunities with student support services staff and teachers were not well-organized and were not driven by data.
- The ESL Level One class was severely overcrowded. In the Empire State Academy, some ELL instruction was not aligned to content area standards. Much of the instruction observed was whole class and lecture. Technology and differentiation were not in evidence to any great degree.
- While parent involvement is encouraged in many ways (parent conferences, open houses, SLT involvement), much work needs to be done to enlarge the number of parents involved with the school and to deepen their experiences with the school. There is no systematic process to involve parents and families.
- There was little to no evidence during the building tour or classroom observations that computers, software/applications, differentiated materials, and differentiated instruction supported the unique needs of students at-risk. The class.com program is accessible to students for credit recovery but no data was available in terms of student success.

Recommendations:

- Science labs should be accessible for most, if not all, periods of the day. The computer network supporting language labs needs to be reinstalled.
- Leadership should clearly articulate the need for high expectations for students to be reflected in the alignment of lessons and assessments to State Standards. This should be discussed at department and academy meetings. Administrators should be held accountable for reinforcing this via formal and informal teacher evaluations.
- A written Student Code of Conduct should be uniformly implemented in all academies. Consequences for student misbehavior should be clearly understood by all. Clear expectations for implementation of the code of student conduct should be reinforced at faculty meetings by administrators and documented in observation reports.
- While the superstructure of the academies appears to be embraced by students and staff, much of the “heavy lifting” of creating a functioning infrastructure for student success needs to be solidified. A detailed plan must be developed that clearly articulates how the academy structure will be leveraged to identify at-risk students and provide them with support earlier in their school career. This should include student support services involvement in all aspects of the academy structure.
- Data regarding the impact of various student support programs should be compiled and analyzed. Data on student attendance, student discipline, subject failure rates, etc. should be reviewed monthly to track progress and make corrections.

- The ESL Level One class size should be reduced. This is an area that has a clear, administrative solution. The other findings here noted again attest to the disarray of the infrastructure found in each of the academies to varying degrees and the absence of systematic efforts to correct deficiencies.
- Parent newsletters, evening meeting schedules, PTA's, etc., all need to begin or be more fully developed.
- Goals and expectations for school initiatives need to be clearly stated in writing, with corresponding measurable objectives to determine if progress is being made. Frequent monitoring of this progress needs to be done with staff so adjustments to the initiatives can be made in a tighter time frame.

V. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- While some teachers understand the value of data to inform and guide instruction and lesson planning, most seem to be at a loss as to how to actually engage in this activity.
- No interim benchmarks have been set to monitor progress toward meeting the school's annual goals. Schoolwide and grade-level student performance trend data has not informed classroom instructional strategies and are not used to inform a continuous improvement plan. Additionally, data are not used to develop instructional strategies for academic intervention services.
- The inquiry process that teachers use to uncover root causes has not resulted in effective strategies to address targeted populations and differentiate instruction.
- Data is not used to inform decisions about purchasing and allocating resources.
- There is no evidence of an explicit plan to address the issue of low student graduation rate.

Recommendations:

- Secure data analysis training from the Network for APs. Each AP should turnkey the training to staff at the department and academy levels. Resources should be reallocated to hire an F-status (per diem) data manager in order to support the efforts of the administration in staff training, identifying data analysis tools and highlighting key data reports to help inform the school's comprehensive educational planning process.
- Define benchmarks, evaluate progress against measurable targets and make appropriate interim adjustments. Use student trend data to inform instructional practices. The administration should include this data as part of their teacher evaluations and teacher professional growth plans.
- Plan and provide PD for professional learning teams to ensure they understand the inquiry process. Refer to and use the "Inquiry Space" documents. NTHS should create a formal comprehensive plan and schedule for PD on the use of the Accountability Reporting

Innovation System (ARIS). Intervisitation with other high schools exhibiting successful use of data would be helpful.

- Develop a systematic process for all administrators to use data to make informed decisions about purchasing and allocating resources and review decisions periodically as to their impact on teaching and learning.
- Develop a comprehensive plan that addresses the school's low graduation rate. The plan should be developed with input from staff, parents, CBOs and students and include long and short range goals and actions plans that are targeted and measurable. Progress towards meeting the goals should be reviewed and shared with the school community

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- Long-range, comprehensive PD is not evident at NTHS. A scattering of PD programs is occurring, sometimes aligned with school goals, but often not. The PD schedule is a mere one-page listing of ten topics with the dates of delivery entered for September through June. The Professional Development Plan (PDP) does not define student learning outcomes and does not support individual teacher needs.
- There is no plan connecting PD and student learning outcomes with classroom observations and teacher evaluations.
- The APs do informally evaluate teachers for accountability by means of the "snapshot" technique—an informal observation committed to writing and discussed with the teacher. Formal observations had not begun even by late October.
- The new academy structure provides teachers with common planning time, but the time is not effectively used because more than a few teachers arrive late. The "planning for planning" has not occurred. The agenda for these times seems random and consumed by immediate management issues.
- There is no comprehensive PD planned or provided to help teachers meet the needs of ELLs, students with disabilities or at-risk students. These are large sub-populations at NTHS.

Recommendations:

- A comprehensive PD Plan should be developed targeting specific student learning outcomes and a calendar for implementation. This plan should include interim benchmarks, measurable outcomes and the instruments used to measure results.
- The Network should provide supervisory support regarding PD strategies for teachers. APs should be paired-up and mentored by other APs that are knowledgeable in pedagogy and content.
- Formal observations/evaluations should begin immediately and snapshots should continue. These processes should reflect clear expectations regarding the implementation of PD into classroom practices.

- The daily morning common planning times should be continued, but there should be a required attendance policy and an agenda that is informed by student data and focused on the goals in the CEP.
- Well-planned PD should be provided to teachers working with ELLs, students with disabilities and at-risk students. The resources from the Network and central should be used to implement this plan.

VII. District Support

Finding:

- The Children First Network (CFN) is the basic support for Principals' PD. The Principal and administrators indicated that the support provided is not sufficient to meet their needs.
- The CFN did not monitor the school's 2009-10 CEP.
- High turnover in Network content specialists has resulted in poor planning and limited continuity of programs.

Recommendations:

- The CFN should provide support to NTHS as it develops a PD plan. The CFN should align its resources to ensure that the support is timely and targeted to the school needs.
- While there are plans for monitoring in 2010-11, the CFN should begin monitoring and making suggestions earlier in the current year.
- The Network should provide additional on-site support to ensure that programs initiated are being implemented with fidelity.
- The Network should provide support in implementing the recommendations of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT).

PART 3: OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

Reference	Review Team Finding	✓
(b)	The school has not made sufficient progress in identified areas, and is unlikely to make AYP without further significant change.	✓

B. Overall Recommendation

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	✓
(b)	Phase-out or close the school.	✓

C. In the space below, include specific information to support the District in determining how the above recommendation should be accomplished.

There is little evidence that NTHS will meet AYP in the near future, and is highly unlikely to do so in the three years beyond 2010-11, even though the professional commitment and integrity of staff have been noted. Many new initiatives have begun, and others may be on the drawing board, but these are in their infancy at best and, in any case, no effort is evident that they are given coherence and integration by a comprehensive, long-range plan.

Additionally, the development of a strong, working relationship with the District seems to be imperative for the success of NTHS. Services to the school that would provide a clear sense of direction and prioritization of student needs would be key in moving toward student success. Additionally, providing critical staffing support and targeted PD training are equally important to ensuring success. A school facing the challenges that NTHS faces cannot “go it alone” but must turn to the District for critical support and nurturing while on its road to improvement.