

NYSED/NYCDOE JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code/DBN:	24Q455
School Name:	Newtown High School
School Address:	48-01 90 Street Queens, New York 11373
Principal:	John Ficalora
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Persistently Lowest- Achieving
Area(s) of Identification:	Graduation Rate
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	October 19-20, 2010

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

Newtown High School serves 2,990 students in grades 9 through 12. The school enrollment is 63 percent Hispanic, 22 percent Asian, nine percent Black, five percent White and less than one percent Native American. There are 289 students with disabilities. Within this number, 129 are in self-contained classes and 55 are in Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes.

There are 920 English Language Learners (ELLs). Of this number, 605 students are in Transitional Bilingual classes (Chinese and Spanish), and 315 students are receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) services. There are 83 ELLs with IEPs. Although once a neighborhood school, students now travel to the school from several surrounding neighborhoods in Queens and other boroughs.

The administrative team is comprised of 12 Assistant Principals (APs) and the Principal. While most of the APs have been in their present position for six years or more, there are approximately four who are probationary (non-tenured), including the newly assigned AP Science. The Principal has led the school for 18 years. There are approximately 140 teachers on staff; eight are new to the school this year. The school does not have a high teacher or administrative turnover. The percentage of teachers who are not highly qualified is 13 percent.

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	
-	The school has negative trend data for one or more identified subject/areas and subgroups for the past two consecutive years (2007-08 and 2008-09), 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	✓

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
	identification.	
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for 2007-08 and 2008-09 show an increase in the number of subgroups that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in identified area(s).	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for 2007-08 and 2008-09 indicate an increase in the achievement gap between identified subgroups and the <i>All Students</i> subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	✓
-	For 2010-11, the school was identified as a <u>Persistently Lowest- Achieving school.</u>	✓
-	The school's Total Cohort Graduation rate of 55% is below performance index (60%).	✓
	NYCDOE Quantitative and Qualitative Performance Measures	✓
-	2008-09 NYC Progress Report Grade of C for school year (SY) 2008-09	✓
+/-	NYC Quality Review Score of Proficient	✓

B. School Strengths

- The tone of the school is positive; students are articulate and well-mannered.
- Some staff members are fluent in languages other than English.

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:

- The school did not have a written English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum that is aligned with New York State (NYS) Standards. This was evidenced by the absence of an ELA curriculum in the document binders reviewed and through interviews with staff.
- In most self-contained classes for students with disabilities, instructional resources appeared to be insufficient, while in some of the ESL classes, many of the materials used were below the level of appropriateness expected for high school.
- The student tracking system used for the ESL program was not well-defined.

Recommendations:

- The school should develop a written, comprehensive, coherent, and rigorous ELA curriculum aligned with NYS Standards that consists of scope and sequence, pacing calendar grade by grade,

suggested reading materials by genres, benchmarks and assessment. The school should reach out to the Network Instructional Support Specialist for assistance.

- Expectations for the identified subgroups should have the same level of rigor and quantity of instructional resources as in mainstream classes. Teachers of classes of students with disabilities should be provided with a variety of instructional materials to maximize student engagement and learning. Instructional resources used in the ESL classes should represent levels of rigor that are commensurate with high school.
- The school should develop a plan for appropriate placement of ESL students into leveled classes.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Based on interviews and classroom visits, the review team found an inconsistency in meaningful instructional activities, i.e., in one class, the Level IV ESL group was doing basic “getting to know you” activities that would be more meaningful for beginning level elementary school students. There also did not appear to be a clearly articulated plan of native language support.
- There was no consistency in maximizing learning time from class to class. For example, time allotted for the completion of the “Do Now” was excessive, resulting in little time for the teaching of the actual lesson. The lessons were not summarized, nor were the assignments of homework given in a timely manner.
- Minimal attention was given to the development of academic English that ELLs needed to ensure success on standardized tests and eventual success in college. The level of questioning tended to be literal or simply required a “yes/no” or a one word response resulting in low level writing activities, e.g., “Where can you buy pens and pencils?”
- There was limited differentiated instruction in some of the classes observed. In some of the ESL classes, the student point of entry did not appear to be considered when forming groups, i.e., level of academic English. The purpose of each grouping configuration was not apparent in facilitating the simultaneous acquisition of content and language. In classes for students with disabilities, differentiation of instruction was limited to the formation of groups. There was minimal use of technology.
- In one of the ICT classes visited, the co-teachers did not share instructional responsibilities, i.e., the special education teacher acted more as an observer than as a co-instructor.

Recommendations:

- The ESL curriculum should be reviewed and/or revised to ensure that it includes what students should know and be able to demonstrate at each level. A workshop on identifying these different instructional levels should be provided for all ESL staff. On-going observations of ESL teachers and daily walkthroughs should be conducted to identify staff who need professional development (PD) support. Intervisitations should be scheduled by the AP for ESL teachers to observe effective and meaningful instruction. The school should ensure that all bilingual and ESL classrooms include native language resources, such as libraries, dictionaries and bilingual glossaries.
- There should be departmental workshops focusing on the importance of lesson planning and implementation. Sample lesson plans should be used to reinforce effective pacing and sequencing

of lesson components such as the “Do Now.” The importance of the lesson summary should be emphasized along with the assignment of homework as they impact student outcomes. Additional PD on time management should be provided schoolwide.

- PD in the use of questioning strategies that promote higher order thinking and problem solving skills, such as Bloom’s Taxonomy, should be provided for all staff. PD for all teachers of ELLs should be ongoing in supporting the acceleration of academic language development, e.g., Quality Teaching for English Learners (Q-TEL). The PD selected should reflect proven research-based strategies. Teachers of students with disabilities should also use academic vocabulary word lists.
- The Network should provide PD on how to interpret data, develop small groups for differentiated instruction, use data to drive instruction, particularly for ELLs and students with disabilities, and maximize instruction through varied instructional strategies.
- In all ICT classes, both teachers should plan together and participate fully in the instructional practice. PD should focus on the use of various models of integrated co-teaching.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- There was little evidence that the leadership had created an effective learning environment to address underachieving subgroups. In the 2009 Total Students Graduation Cohort, there were 106 students with disabilities, yet only 27 students (25 percent) received diplomas; of the 326 ELLs, only 170 (52 percent) of these students received diplomas. These results demonstrate a lack of urgency on the part of the school leadership to improve instruction that would have led to higher achievement and an increased graduation rate.
- Through interviews and review of teacher programs, it was evidenced that common planning periods were scheduled. However, there was no articulation between core subjects and subgroup departments. Also, there was minimal evidence of collaboration between the ESL and ELA departments.
- There was little evidence of high expectations during interviews with the school leader. Although the Principal conducted walkthroughs, it was evident that he relied on his APs to ensure that instruction was taking place. There was also evidence of poor instruction; the “Do Now” activity was the entire lesson, and students were not engaged. It is evident that the leadership team has not ensured that optimum use of instruction is provided when lessons are solely, “Do Now” activities.
- Observation reports appeared to be inconsistent in quality by department, i.e., minimal meaningful feedback.
- During classroom visits, there was inconsistency regarding the quality and level of instruction. The appropriateness of materials in some classes for students with disabilities and ELLs was questionable.
- Upon review of the data on credit accumulation, it was noted that there were 244 grade 9 students who earned zero to four credits at the end of school year 2009-10, while only 22 grade 9 students had earned 11 credits or more. There were 431 grade 10 students who earned only 11-15 credits, while only 36 grade 10 students earned 33 credits or more.

- Grade 9 attendance for school year 2009-10 was 80 percent, the lowest attendance of all grades. The school leader acknowledged the low attendance rate of the grade 9 students and their high dropout rate, i.e., nearly 20 percent for grade 9 students in past years. Though the school initiated small learning communities for incoming grade 9 students, it was implemented late.
- The Principal relies on the school programmer/program manager to provide data to the school. There is no data specialist on staff. During the interview with the programmer, it was clear that he did not have an understanding of accountability measures. The data shows that the school had 55 percent of their students graduate in 2009-10. Neither the Principal nor his administrative team could indicate how they were specifically addressing the 45 percent of students who did not graduate.

Recommendations:

- The Principal should become proactive in the analysis of the data for all subgroups and establish a committee to create systems to track their progress. The Principal should engage in intervisitations to other high schools that have established best and promising practices for ELLs and students with disabilities that have resulted in higher levels of performance.
- The Principal should ensure that common planning time is scheduled, especially for ELL and students with disabilities teachers, to incorporate articulation across curriculum areas and subgroups. There should be increased collaboration of the ESL and ELA departments, with ongoing PD involving both departments. The ESL and ELA APs should collaborate to ensure a smooth transition of ELL students into the ELA classes.
- The Principal and APs should work closely to develop common expectations of what good instruction should look like. Multiple data sources should be used to provide a specific focus for observations and walkthroughs, e.g., accountable talk, classroom environment, grouping, and differentiated instruction. PD should be provided on effective lesson planning and time management.
- The Principal should, in concert with district/Network support, develop a series of in-house workshops for the APs, focusing on how to write effective lesson observation reports to provide meaningful feedback to teachers to improve instruction.
- The Principal and APs should monitor classrooms for quality of instruction and appropriate materials, with a focus on ELL and students with disabilities classrooms. The AP of ESL and the AP of Instructional Support Services (ISS) should meet with teachers during common planning periods to review and develop effective strategies for implementation to improve instruction. They should develop a needs assessment tool related to instructional resources and distribute it to teachers for feedback. The AP of ESL should develop pacing calendars and curriculum guides that reflect high levels of challenge that will maximize ELLs success on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), Regents examinations and coursework examinations. Both APs should model lessons that are cognitively appropriate for the level of the students in each subgroup. Specific workshops should be scheduled based on feedback from teachers. The AP of ISS should provide additional training opportunities for ICT teachers, such as intervisitations to other ICT classes. ICT and Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) classes should be monitored and supervised on a regular basis.
- The school leader should develop an action plan to increase the number of credits that grade 9 and 10 students accumulate after their first or second year. There should be a plan to address

students who are now repeaters. Ineffective instruction needs to be addressed through effective observations with meaningful feedback along with intensive PD. Effective Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and increased guidance support should also be provided.

- The school leader and administrative team should continue implementing small learning communities for the next grade and always examine the data correlation among attendance rates, course passing rates and scholarship program. Off-track students should be addressed in a timely manner with the goal of raising the graduation rate.
- The Principal should reach out to the Network to recommend a data specialist to oversee the school's overall data and provide PD to staff on how to interpret data to move instruction to increase the graduation rate.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Finding:

There was no evidence of high expectations for rigorous teaching and student achievement. There was no sense of urgency to increase levels of achievement, especially for students with disabilities.

Recommendation:

The Principal should promote high expectations by taking an active role in analyzing the data of the subgroups. He should support teachers in understanding the barriers that prevent the subgroups from being successful in making AYP. Teachers should use the data to drive instruction to address student needs.

V. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- There is a disconnect in the application of data collected by the school and New York State Testing and Accountability Reporting Tool (nySTART). While data was generated, it was not systematically analyzed and used to identify root causes of low graduation rate, e.g., the Language Allocation Policy (LAP) reflected minimal analysis of ELL related data to inform instruction.
- Extensive data from multiple sources was provided to APs on student performance and credit accumulation; however, there did not appear to be a comprehensive plan in place on how to disseminate these reports to teachers for targeted instruction for identified subgroups.

Recommendations:

- An administrative level data specialist should be placed on staff to gather and analyze achievement results. The data specialist should meet daily with the school leader to apprise him of the data collected and discuss next steps.
- Inquiry Teams or interdisciplinary committees need to be established by content area to examine the subgroups most at risk, i.e., long-term ELLs, Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE); new immigrants; students with poor attendance; and students with disabilities. Teams should examine and analyze all available data to establish goals; determine specific interventions that respond to the identified needs; implement those activities; and evaluate the success of strategies implemented.

- The school leader, in collaboration with the administrative team and guidance counselors, needs to carefully examine participation rates and effectiveness of current interventions, e.g., Achieve 3000, Quality Teachers of English Learners (QTEL), credit recovery, tutoring, the Saturday Program, after-school and summer school.

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- There was little evidence of a comprehensive PD plan. Documentation reviewed consisted mainly of bulleted listings of past and upcoming topics/workshops.
- Feedback mechanisms were not evident.

Recommendations:

- A teacher survey should be conducted to identify PD needs, and a schoolwide comprehensive PD plan should be developed to address those needs. The assistance of the Network should be enlisted to identify high quality and meaningful PD activities (both on-site and external) that would retool key staff members, especially those who serve ELLs and students with disabilities, to optimally meet the needs of students who are most likely to drop out of high school.
- Feedback mechanisms, such as debriefings after walkthroughs, should be established to ensure all staff are using the same lens to identify expectations. An accountability protocol for monitoring instruction should be developed to ensure strategies learned in PD are being implemented. Following each PD offering, staff should complete an evaluation to determine its effectiveness.

VII. District Support

Findings:

- The school became Title I eligible in the 2008-09 school year, and it appears that the school had little understanding of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability measures up until that time. District/Network support needs to be provided in understanding accountability rules.
- There was insufficient evidence that the district/Network had communicated priorities and provided adequate guidance and support for the school to improve its academic program.
- Support for the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) by the district/Network was limited to review of the plan and suggestions for revisions.

Recommendations:

- The district/Network should recognize the urgency of prioritizing support to this school and realign/redeploy available resources to ensure a higher future graduation rate at the school.
- The district/Network should communicate a set of priorities that will allow for adequate guidance to support and improve the school's academic programs.

- The district/Network should provide support for the implementation of the school’s approved CEP.

Other Concern:

There are 10 self-contained classes with approximately 100 students.

Recommendation:

The school should plan and work towards the goals of reducing the number of self-contained classes by moving students into ICT classes as per IEP re-evaluation.

PART 3: OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

Reference	Review Team Finding	✓
(a)	The school has not made sufficient progress in identified areas, and is unlikely to make AYP under the current structure and organization.	✓

B. Overall Recommendation

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	✓
(a)	Develop and implement a new plan that could include <u>significant changes in staff, organizational structure, leadership and/or configuration</u> , to address issues that continue to negatively impact student academic performance in identified areas.	✓

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

- Remove members of the leadership team who are relevant to the school’s failure to make adequate yearly progress.
- Given the review team’s overall findings and recommendations for significant changes in staff, organizational structure, leadership, and/or configuration of the school, the following information may be helpful in supporting the District in making a final determination:
 - The school has high percentages of ELLs (32 percent) and students with disabilities (10 percent). An effective school leader and administration is needed that has a keen awareness and knowledge of all of the students’ instructional needs in order to provide them with an effective and supportive learning environment to improve their graduation rate.
 - There appeared to be no urgency exhibited on the part of the administration to respond to the low graduation rate of ELLs, students with disabilities and other groups of students with low achievement.
 - Small learning communities for the next grade should continue to be implemented to ensure students are closely monitored and supported.