



**Office of Innovative School Models**  
 Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA) Schools  
 School Improvement Grant (SIG)  
 Monitoring Report

<b>School:</b>	Queens Vocational and Technical High School – Transformation Model	<b>School District:</b>	New York City Department of Education District # 24
<b>Date of Site-Visit:</b>	April 28, 2011 (Second Visit)	<b>Members of Site-Visit Team:</b>	Alexandra Pressley, LoriAnn Curtin, Owen Donovan

<b>STAFFING</b>	
<b>Collective Bargaining</b>	<i>Negotiations are continuing regarding revision of the collective bargaining agreement in order to support: development of a teacher evaluation system, removal of staff based on the evaluation system and changes in work day, duties and hours.</i>
<b>Teacher Evaluations linked to Student Performance</b>	<i>Teacher evaluations linked to student performance have been put into place. The system and data used must be consistent with State APPR system.</i>
<b>Identify and Reward staff or Remediate/Remove Staff</b>	<i>A clear and transparent process for identifying staff for rewards and remediation is in place (a process must be in place immediately upon the development and implementation of the Teacher Evaluation System).</i>
<b>Implementation of Strategies to Recruit, Place, and Retain Qualified Staff</b>	<i>Activities are funded to recruit, place, and/or retain highly qualified teachers.</i>

**Findings:**

Queens Technical and Vocational High School

- School leaders reported that in late January 2011, they participated in 2 full day professional development sessions on the Danielson teacher effectiveness rubric that is being piloted within the Transformation schools in New York City. The rubric evaluates teacher effectiveness using a four tiered rating system (Ineffective, Developing, Effective, and Highly Effective).
- In February 2011, school leaders reported that they held a faculty conference focused on the Danielson teacher effectiveness rubric. Where they discussed with teachers the characteristics of effective and highly effective teachers, and what evidence would be reviewed to make those determinations.
- School leaders reported that they are conducting frequent walk through observations with teachers based on the Danielson teacher effectiveness rubric, and that they are logging these observations into an evaluation tracker.
- At the time of the visit, school leaders reported NYCDoE had informed them that the use of the teacher effectiveness rubric for teacher ratings was still under negotiation with the union.

- The New York City Department of Education reported in January 2011, that negotiations were on-going regarding the implementation of a teacher evaluation system based in part on student growth, and consistent with Education Law 3012-c. However, shortly after this visit in April, NYCDoE reported that negotiations on the implementation of the new teacher evaluation system have stalled. As a result, in the Year 2 Update School Improvement Application submitted for Queens Vocational and Technical High School, the model implemented has been changed from Transformation to Restart.

<b>PLANNING</b>	
<b>Implementation of Timeline</b>	<i>The district/school is on track to complete activities in accordance with the approved timeline for implementation, or to submit an approvable School Improvement Grant (SIG) application. Identify elements that are off-track.</i>
<b>Performance Targets</b>	<i>The district/school is implementing activities which will help them meet the school's performance targets. (Performance targets are tied to the school's achieving "In Good Standing" by the end of the 3 year grant period. Refer to the school's Performance Plan Template, as available.)</i>
<b>Implementation of JIT Recommendations</b>	<i>The district and school are implementing the plan based on the JIT recommendations. The recommendations of the JIT are addressed as delineated in the SIG application or Restructuring Plan, as applicable.</i>

### **Findings:**

- The school submitted an amendment to its SIG 1003(g) that has been approved by the network and by the New York City Department of Education.
- According to the amendment submitted, and according to school leaders and the network leader, the "Transformation Mentor Principal" position, originally delineated in the SIG, is now being paid for through NYCDoE local funds due to the late arrival of SIG funds at the school. According to the school leaders, funds arrived from SED to NYCDoE in December 2010, but the school did not receive funding from NYCDoE until February.
- According to focus group interviews with school and district leaders, the school improvement manager (SIM) position has been filled by a current NYCDoE school improvement liaison that is now filling dual roles. Since the week of March 2011, the SIM reported the following.
  - Currently, he does not have a set schedule for visiting Queens Vocational and Technical High School. He stated he has been on site several times in the past two weeks to help the school prepare for the SED site visit.
  - He also fulfills the position of SIM for Long Island City High School and for Flushing High School.
  - His role is to ensure that the school improvement grant (SIG) is implemented with fidelity.
  - In his role as a school improvement liaison (SIL) for the district, he also participates in Joint Intervention Team (JIT) visits.
  - He communicates with the administrative team at Queens Vocational Technical High School often via phone and email.
- According to school leaders, the net books that were delineated in the SIG are still on order.
- School leaders reported being told by NYCDoE leaders that they are no longer allowed to implement certain initiatives in their approved SIG applications because the initiatives are not ARRA approved. One example is under code 40 – purchased services through "High Schools that Work". The school leaders were told by NYCDoE leaders that this was a stipulation from the SED.
- Additionally, the amendment written for the school's SIG 1003(g) funding does not address the changes in funding for High Schools that Work, if in fact, the school cannot spend that money as originally planned.

- School leaders reported being told by NYCDoE that they can not reimburse staff members for personal out-of-pocket costs laid out for attendance at conferences, even though attendance at these conferences was approved in the school's original SIG 1003(g) budget. It is unclear whether or not the amendment submitted accounts for this change in use of SIG funding.
- The Performance Plan Template is still under development at the State Education Department, therefore implementation of activities to meet targets are not applicable at this time.
- As stated in the monitoring report from the first site visit, Queens Vocational and Technical High School did not receive a Joint Intervention Team (JIT) visit during the 2009-2010 school year; therefore there are no JIT recommendations to implement.

<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>Quality, On-going, Job-embedded Professional Development</b>	<i>Implementing job-embedded professional development, as defined by the USED, and as approved by NYSED.</i>
<b>Supportive of Instructional Needs</b>	<i>All professional development is researched based and supportive of the instructional needs of the school.</i>
<b>Monitoring and Analysis</b>	<i>Professional development is monitored and analyzed to ensure staff participation and classroom implementation.</i>

#### **Findings:**

- Staff reported common planning time is being used to embed professional development during the school day. In addition, professional development is embedded during the small learning communities planning time.
- As reported after the SED site visit, the school submitted a professional development plan which lists on-going monthly workshops led by High Schools That Work (HSTW). The topics of these workshops will include: leadership, literacy across the curriculum, and rigor and engagement in the math classroom. However, as stated above, the school is being told that this initiative can not be funded through the SIG, despite the fact that it was originally approved.
- School leaders and teachers interviewed indicated that the following professional development, which is both researched-based and supportive of the instructional needs of the school, is aligned with their goals for the 2010-2011 school year:
  - Using student assessment performance data to increase literacy school wide;
  - Increasing differentiation of learning opportunities for students;
  - Improving math instruction by increasing student engagement;
  - Implementing a literacy plan with a focus on getting students to read more and using reading strategies across the curriculum; and
  - Developing and implementing best practices to increase rigor in instruction and developing and piloting standards-based grading policies.

<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>	
<b>Data to Inform Instructional Programming</b>	<i>Data is used to identify and implement research-based instructional programs that are aligned with state standards</i>

<b>Data for Instructional Decisions for Student Achievement</b>	<i>A system is being implemented which allows for the continuous use of data to make instructional decisions for students.</i>
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**Findings:**

- School leaders and teachers cited the following sources of data are used to identify and implement research-based instructional programs that are aligned to state standards:
  - They administer Acuity assessments in English language arts and mathematics on a quarterly basis.
  - In all core subject areas, teachers administer common assessments for each marking period. Teachers then compare notes and use the data to discuss re-teaching.
  - Other sources of data include the NYCDoE ARIS system which includes a graduation tracker, and the district’s ATS system which includes attendance, graduation, cohort and Regents exam data.
- Master teachers are creating performance-based assessments. Pretests for some, but not all core content courses, were given in March 2011. This is the first time they were administered. The performance-based assessments were written by an outside source and were approved by the NYCDoE’s turnaround office. Post tests will be given in May. Next year performance-based assessments will be administered twice in the fall and twice in the spring.
- School leaders and teachers reported the following evidence of data being used to make instructional decisions for students:
  - Every small learning community uses the ARIS and ATS data to ensure that their students are on-track to graduate.
  - In February 2011, the school began working in inquiry teams to analyze data to make informed decisions about instructional needs of students.

<b>CURRICULUM AND TEACHING</b>	
<b>Increased Learning Time</b>	<i>The school has implemented a longer school day, week, or school year to significantly increase the total number of school hours to provide additional time for instruction in core academic subjects, or in enrichment subject areas, or added time for teacher collaboration.</i>
<b>Mapped and Paced Curriculum</b>	<i>The written district/school level curriculum is aligned to NYS standards, performance indicators, the core competencies and is being implemented. Pacing guides are developed, used and monitored.</i>
<b>Instructional Programming is Linked to Needs Assessment</b>	<i>Curricular decisions have been made to meet the needs of all students.</i>
<b>Effective Teaching</b>	<i>There is evidence of rigor, relevance, pacing, and alignment of curriculum to State Standards, and student engagement from Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT).</i>
<b>ELL/SWD</b>	<i>The necessary instructional programs and highly qualified staff are in place to support the needs of English Language Learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD).</i>

**Findings:**

- Students and staff stated that PM classes are offered at the end of the school day. During these PM classes, students can make up missing credits or pursue an advanced Regents class. Teachers reported that students were using the APEX online credit recovery system during the PM classes.

- Teachers reported that there is added time for teacher collaboration during the Small Learning Communities meeting times, which occur weekly.
- According to the school leadership and the Master Teachers, Master Teachers have been charged with planning school-wide strategies for differentiated instruction. Master Teachers were recently involved in providing a professional development focused on different student learning styles.
- Teachers reported that staff are focused on continuing the transformation of the school, specifically through the following activities:
  - Continued development of a uniform, cohesive curriculum that all staff understand, and with the necessary materials;
  - Continued focus on differentiated instruction;
  - Realignment of the math curriculum with the Common Core standards, through work with High Schools that Work; and
  - Building partnerships with organizations that make connections between life and school, as well as between subject areas.
- As part of the NYCDoE approved School Improvement grant application, school leaders hired 4 Master Teachers at the beginning of the school year. The administration stated that they will retain the Master Teachers for the next school year, and that they are pleased with their work. However, school leaders also stated that if given a choice, they would not have allocated School Improvement Grant funds for the Master Teacher program. Because they believe the Master Teachers are teachers within the school who would have filled this support/leadership role regardless of the additional funding.
- Staff stated the Master Teachers had been able to provide support to them in ways that directly affected their teaching practice.
- The Master Teachers stated they have created open classrooms, performed exemplar lessons, and make classroom visits weekly to support staff.
- Teachers indicated school leaders are continually doing walk-through observations of classrooms. Teachers reported that the school leaders provide them with informal feedback from these walk-through observations at least once a week.
- School leadership reported that ELLs were receiving push-in support from teachers in Social Studies classrooms.
- Teachers reported that they received flash drive with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) for all Students with Disabilities (SWDs). Teachers stated this was a valuable resource in planning for instruction for SWDs because the IEP was readily available.

<b>STUDENT SUPPORT</b>	
<b>Additional Support</b>	<i>Students are receiving extra academic and developmental support based on student need (AIS, character development, PBIS).</i>
<b>Counseling</b>	<i>Student support services are in place to provide students in need with additional social support (education/career counseling, social work, drug/alcohol/violence counseling, school psychologist, health/mental health professional)</i>
<b>Enrichment Opportunities</b>	<i>Students have opportunities to participate in academic and social enrichment activities during and after the school day and during the summer.</i>

**Findings:**

- As referenced earlier in the report, school leadership, teachers, students, and parents all stated that opportunities for tutoring exist before school, afterschool, and on Saturdays.

- School leaders stated that Regents review materials have been ordered for all subject areas, and include consumable books for student practice.
- School leaders reported that they have partnered with Kaplan for PSAT and SAT preparation. PSAT/SAT preparation classes are in session for juniors and seniors. Next year, these classes will be provided to all students. Teachers will receive professional development from Kaplan in June and September.
- Students mentioned that prior to the end of every marking period, teachers inform students if they are off track. Students stated that teachers will schedule them for before school or afterschool tutoring if necessary.
- Students indicated they have received support for applying to college or entering a career. According to the students the College counselor, who is new to the school this year, meets with juniors and seniors every couple of days to keep students on track with applications.
- School leaders reported they hired 3 new school aides, one for each Small Learning Community

<b>TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP</b>	
<b>Effective Leadership</b>	<i>The school leader has the experience and skills needed to successfully implement a turnaround model and to act as a change agent for the school.</i>
<b>Leadership Development</b>	<i>School leaders receive appropriate and timely professional development. Mentoring or coaching programs are in place and effective.</i>
<b>School Improvement Manager/External Providers</b>	<i>The school is being guided and informed by its partnership with its School Improvement Manager or external provider.</i>
<b>Building Level Leadership Team</b>	<i>The school is utilizing its Building Leadership Team to implement the intervention model.</i>

### **Findings:**

- As was referenced in the January 2011, visit report, the Principal stated she has continued to receive mentoring and daily support from the Transformation Mentor Principal.
- Both the Principal and the Transformation Mentor Principal stated that their mentoring relationship has evolved as the Principal has gained more experience through out the school year.
- The Transformation Mentor Principal stated that the NYCDoE had informed her that she may remain at the school until the end of the grant period. She stated that she is still considering whether she will remain.
- The Principal and the Transformation Mentor Principal said they are continuing to participate in the professional development opportunities offered by NYCDoE, the network, and the principals' union.
- The school leaders mentioned they have contracted with ASCD to work with the leadership team. The contract is for 5 professional development days a year, with 4 days during this school year, and one day during the summer.

<b>SCHOOL CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Environment is Conducive to Learning</b>	<i>The school is safe, orderly and academically-oriented. Supervision is sufficient, respectful and consistent.</i>
<b>Shared Vision</b>	<i>School staff understands the focus/ vision of the school's improvement efforts and supports them in a consistent and effective manner.</i>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<i>Administrators, teachers and staff communicate openly, positively and effectively. Professional learning communities exist and affect</i>

<b>SCHOOL CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>	
	<i>improvement efforts.</i>
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	<i>Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of parents.</i>
<b>External/Community-Based Partners</b>	<i>Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of community partners.</i>

**Findings:**

- The site visit team observed hallways and corridors to be orderly, safe during class-periods and in transition times between class-periods.
- The site visit team observed classrooms to be orderly, collaborative, safe, and conducive to learning.
- The students interviewed reported they feel safe and supported both within the school and on the walk home.
- The students interviewed indicated there was at least one adult within the building that they could turn to for help with an issue or a problem.
- The school leadership stated an increase in attendance and an increase in parent outreach/involvement are the result of the 3 newly funded “School Aids”
- Teachers interviewed reported that the discipline code [in terms of access to web-based sites and content ] is a barrier to instructional technology use
- Parents interviewed stated feeling as though the school is a welcome place.
- Parents interviewed identified efforts to recruit and engage other parents to participate in the school community.

<b>OTHER FUNDING SOURCES</b>	
<b>Use of 1003(g) or 1003(a) grant funding</b>	<i>The LEA is using School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding to support the implementation of or planning for school intervention models.</i>
<b>Use of Other Funding Sources besides 1003 (g)</b>	<i>In addition to SIG 1003(g) and/or 1003(a) funds, the LEA is using a number of other resources to implement the school intervention models or the Restructuring Plan, as applicable.</i>

**Findings:**

- The school administrators explained that Small Learning Community grant funds, along with funds from a Learning Technology grant are being used to increase student achievement.

<b>DISTRICT SUPPORT AND PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>District Support Provides Operational Flexibility to the School</b>	<i>The LEA provides or is planning to provide the school operational flexibility (such as matters staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting).</i>
<b>District has a systemic plan for intervention and improvement</b>	<i>The LEA has incorporated all JIT recommendations and requirements of the SIG Application into the improvement plan for the school.</i>
<b>District has a plan to identify, recruit, place, and retain effective leadership</b>	<i>In accordance with SIG requirements, the LEA has a plan for hiring and retaining leadership.</i>

**Findings:**

- The School Implementation Manager (SIM) reported visiting the school two times in the 3 weeks prior to the NYSED visit. Additionally, the SIM reports having no set schedule or expectation of time that needs to be spent with Queens Vocational.
- The SIM reported still maintaining responsibilities as a School Improvement Liaison (SIL).
- The school leader attributed school successes in part due to the Network Leader and their ability to make staff aware and ready for key actions.
- The school leaders report that it would be useful to have more clarity from the NYCDoE on the expectations (e.g., expectations of Master Teachers).
- The school leaders report that it would be useful for NYCDoE to provide uniform support and professional development that is unique to the transformation model implementation.

### **Summary:**

The SED three member site visit team conducted a full-day visit to Queens Vocational and Technical High School on April 28, 2011. During this visit, the SED team was able to ascertain information about the school's efforts to continue implementation of their reform model for improved student learning.

The next full-day site visit will be conducted in the Fall of 2011, and will focus on the most recent academic achievement and leading indicator data for the school, as well as on the transition of the school from the Transformation model to the Restart model.