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

School:	Queens Vocational and Technical High School – Transformation Model	School District:	New York City Department of Education – Community School District # 24
Date of Site-Visit:	January 5, 2011	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Alexandra Pressley, LoriAnn Curtin, Sharon Holder, Susan Megna, Kimberly Santiago

STAFFING	
Collective Bargaining	*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.*
Teacher Evaluations linked to Student Performance	*Teacher evaluations linked to student performance have been put into place. The system and data used must be consistent with State APPR system.*
Identify and Reward staff or Remediate/Remove Staff	*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).*
Implementation of Strategies to Recruit, Place, and Retain Qualified Staff	*Activities are funded to recruit, place, and/or retain highly qualified teachers.*

Findings:
- School leaders stated collective bargaining continues around the area of the teacher evaluation system. The union and NYCDoE have agreed that 2010-11 school year evaluations will be based only on use of the four tiered rating system and will not include student growth. Draft rubrics have been provided and the schools are on track to begin implementation in February 2011. The elements of the rubric focus on four domains of the Charlotte Danielson Model which are:
    o Planning and Preparation,
    o The Classroom Environment,
    o Instruction, and
    o Professional Responsibilities.
- Administration and teachers indicated meetings have been held at the school regarding the implementation of the new teacher evaluation system.
- The Transformation Mentor Principal and the Master Teachers stated they meet weekly, and are currently focused on developing training for teachers on the draft rubric, which will be rolled out by the end of January.

PLANNING	
Implementation of Timeline	*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.*
Performance Targets	*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.)*
Implementation of JIT Recommendations	*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.*

Findings:

NYCDoE

- The New York City Department of Education (NYCDoE) created a full-time position titled, "Transformation Mentor Principal" for the school's former principal, and hired a new principal for the school. The former principal mentors the new principal.
- The Turnaround Office at NYCDoE is not yet fully staffed and functioning. Only the Director for Turnaround and Transformation Schools and Deputy Director for Turnaround and Transformation Schools positions at the central office have been filled. Each transformation school was scheduled to receive a part-time School Implementation Manager to monitor plan implementation. Although the job description for the School Implementation Manager is being revised, these positions have not been filled.
- The NYCDoE representative interviewed stated the district has not yet hired, but is planning to hire the following: six school implementation managers, an associate director for pipeline development (the director for pipeline development has already been hired), an associate for business/operations, and an operations analyst.

Queens Vocational and Technical High School

- Administrators indicated although the Master Teacher program is on track, the school is somewhat behind in contracting with professional development contractors and in purchasing materials. Administrators stated this is because the NYCDoE has not yet released SIG funds to the school.
- Administrators and teachers both emphasized their belief the transformation process really began before the school was identified, in 2004 when the Smaller Learning Communities were implemented.
- 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.
- 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.

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

Analysis	

Findings:
- 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.
- The school's professional development plan also includes three professional development sessions regarding the teacher effectiveness model.
- One additional professional development session (half day) will focus on "Lesson Writer". The goal is to instruct teachers in how to "create lessons with embedded literacy skills and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students".
- One additional professional development session (half day) will focus on training the faculty on "how to stop bullying in the classroom".
- Teachers interviewed stated each small learning community (SLC) director plans professional development based on the instructional needs of the school and also allows them to give input on the topics that need to be addressed.
- Teachers interviewed stated most of the professional development that is offered is on-going, and is embedded during their SLC common planning time. They said there is one day of professional development per week in each SLC. However, it is rare (just a few days per year) that they come together as an entire faculty.
- Teachers interviewed indicated the four new master teachers receive additional professional development, which they will in turn present to the rest of the staff.
- The professional development plan submitted includes information regarding how each session will be evaluated for effectiveness.
- The administrative team indicated along with the staff developers from High Schools That Work, they create specific walk-through rubrics for use after each professional development session.

DATA ANALYSIS	
Data to Inform Instructional Programming	*Data is used to identify and implement research-based instructional programs that are aligned with state standards*
Data for Instructional Decisions for Student Achievement	*A system is being implemented which allows for the continuous use of data to make instructional decisions for students.*

Findings:
- The SED site visit team saw evidence of data being used to implement research-based instructional programs that are aligned to state standards.
- The SED site visit team observed all core area subjects are using formative assessments to increase student achievement.
- Teachers stated they are using data from Acuity math and English language arts assessments to make instructional decisions such as; the professional development needs of the staff.
- Teachers indicated they are using common planning time to develop benchmark assessments in each of the core content areas. In addition, they stated there is a team across all eleven funded transformational model schools in NYCDoE that are coming together on a regular basis to develop benchmark assessments.
- Teachers stated they received professional development in how to use data formatively during the 2009-2010 school year.

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

Increased Learning Time	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.
Mapped and Paced Curriculum	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.
Instructional Programming is Linked to Needs Assessment	Curricular decisions have been made to meet the needs of all students.
Effective Teaching	There is evidence of rigor, relevance, pacing, and alignment of curriculum to State Standards, and student engagement from Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT).
ELL/SWD	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).

Findings:

- Parents and teachers described the many opportunities for additional instruction available, including before, during and afterschool, as well as on Saturdays.
- Teachers and administrators reported a schoolwide approach to literacy that is evident throughout core subjects and career and technical classes.
- The SED site visit team observed the scope and sequence of instruction across subjects at each grade level is aligned with standards and differentiated for student needs.
- Students interviewed expressed a need for more rigorous math courses.
- School administrators and teachers reported the school provides targeted instruction to students before, during and after school to improve student achievement regarding English language arts and mathematics.
- The school submitted to the SED site visit team curriculum maps and pacing guides for English language arts and mathematics. The school administrators stated the pacing guides are monitored; their curriculum is aligned to NYS Standards, performance indicators and the core competencies.
- School leaders reported 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). However, specific evidence was not requested during the on-site visit. Evidence will be requested on the next site visit.

STUDENT SUPPORT	
Additional Support	Students are receiving extra academic and developmental support based on student need (AIS, character development, PBIS).
Counseling	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)
Enrichment Opportunities	Students have opportunities to participate in academic and social enrichment activities during and after the school day and during the summer.

Findings:

- Teachers and students interviewed described one of the small learning communities (SLC) called Advance. Advance is an SLC devoted credit recovery. It provides opportunities for overage and under-credited students to get caught up credit-wise. After students are back on-track, they join one of the school's other SLCs.
- Students interviewed stated they receive additional academic support from the teachers in their SLC, as needed.
- Students stated they are able to receive social/emotional/organizational support from guidance counselors, deans, and coaches.
- Parents and students are pleased with the level of support services offered.

TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	
Effective Leadership	*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.*
Leadership Development	*School leaders receive appropriate and timely professional development. Mentoring or coaching programs are in place and effective.*
School Improvement Manager/External Providers	*The school is being guided and informed by its partnership with its School Improvement Manager or external provider.*
Building Level Leadership Team	*The school is utilizing its Building Leadership Team to implement the intervention model.*

Findings:
- The Principal and the Transformation Mentor Principal stated they have attended the following professional development:
  - Four full day professional development sessions regarding the new teacher evaluation system,
  - The Network provided professional development related to the Common Core Standards this past summer,
  - The Network provided professional development on conducting instructional rounds, and
  - Professional development given by the principals' union on the relationship between Principals and Transformation Mentor Principals
  - Monthly meetings with High Schools that Work
- The new Principal stated in addition to the support of the Transformation Mentor Principal, she has been assigned a new principal mentor who meets with her once a month.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
Environment is Conducive to Learning	*The school is safe, orderly and academically-oriented. Supervision is sufficient, respectful and consistent.*
Shared Vision	*School staff understands the focus/ vision of the school's improvement efforts and supports them in a consistent and effective manner.*
Collaboration	*Administrators, teachers and staff communicate openly, positively and effectively. Professional learning communities exist and affect improvement efforts.*
Parent Involvement	*Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of parents.*
External/Community-Based Partners	*Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of community partners.*

Findings:

- During the SED site visit, the school was safe, orderly, and academically-oriented. Students were not seen roaming hallways, and discipline issues in classrooms were minimal.
- Teachers stated support for the school's administrative leadership, and believe the administrative team has created a climate of progress and change.
- Teachers indicated a strong partnership exists between the school, the High Schools that Work consultants, and the Children's First Network.
- Parents stated they feel welcome at the school. School leaders are supportive and visible when parents need assistance.
- The parents interviewed stated there is a Parent Teacher Association that meets monthly.
- Parents indicated several workshops are offered including: health and nutrition, computer skills and English as a Second Language.
- Teachers reported the administration encourages them to become leaders, and participate in shared decision-making.

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES	
Use of 1003(g) or 1003(a) grant funding	*The LEA is using School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding to support the implementation of or planning for school intervention models.*
Use of Other Funding Sources besides 1003 (g)	*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.*

Findings:
- According to school leaders, the school has not yet received the full amount of its SIG 1003 (g) funds. They have only received 10% of their allocated budget. This 10% is available only to pay the salary of the mentor principal, and master teachers. (NYCDoE indicated that the Office of Business Management for the City is holding the funds because they have been tied to ARRA funds. Schools that do not have other funding to front the money for plan implementation have not been able to enter into the envisioned agreements with intervention partners. This has had a negative impact in some schools on such activities as professional development and student support services.)
- The school administrators indicated that Small Learning Community grant funds, along with funds from a Learning Technology grant are being used to increase student achievement.

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

leadership	

Findings:

- School leaders stated the district had given them operational flexibility in terms of programming and scheduling for the school day.
- However, school leaders also stated they were not given operational flexibility to hire teachers outside of the ATR pool.
- School leaders indicated they were given a say in how to utilize the transformation funding. They worked with a network leader to formulate the transformation implementation plan.
- As previously stated, Queens Vocational and Technical High School did not undergo a Joint Intervention Team visit; therefore, they did not have JIT recommendations to incorporate into their SIG application.
- The district made the decision to hire Queens Vocational and Technical High School's former principal as the transformation mentor principal, and to hire the former assistant principal as the new principal.

Summary:

The State Education Department five member site visit team conducted a full-day visit to Queens Vocational Technical High School on January 5, 2011. Although the visit was brief, the team was able to ascertain information about the schools efforts to begin the implementation of their reform model for improving student learning.

During the next full day site visit, the team will also focus on findings outlined in this report and will again conduct document reviews and interviews in the following areas: staffing; planning; professional development; data analysis; curriculum and teaching; student support; school leadership; school climate and community engagement; and district support and planning for development.