



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

<b>School:</b>	Unity Center for Urban Technology High School - Transformation Model	<b>School District:</b>	New York City Department of Education District # 2
<b>Date of Site-Visit:</b>	April 14, 2011 (Second Visit)	<b>Members of Site-Visit Team:</b>	Kathryn Ahern, Sharon Holder, Sandra Norfleet

<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 workday 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. Name and describe the activities.</i>

**Findings:**

- The administrative team reported the collective bargaining agreement is still under negotiations, conversations continue around the area of the teacher evaluation system. The union and New York City Department of Education (NYCDoE) have agreed that for the 2010-11 school year evaluations in the city transformation schools will be based only on the use of a four-tiered rating system, and will not include student growth.
- The administrative team reported that the staff conducted a book study of the Charlotte Danielson Model, upon which the evaluation rubric is focused. The rubric elements based on the four domains of the Danielson Model were studied, implemented and then used in each teacher's evaluations in the following order:
  - Instruction,
  - The Classroom Environment,
  - Planning and Preparation, and
  - Professional Responsibilities.
- The administrative focus group indicated the NYCDoE developed the rubric and scoring guides for the teacher evaluations. The principal and the assistant principal, who was hired on as a full-time staff member shortly after the January monitoring visit, have studied the four domains along with the teachers, as well

as the rubric. They implemented the evaluation rubric one domain at a time for informal evaluations of each teacher as a co-learning process with the teachers and each other.

- The school has continued to create and pilot performance tasked assessments since the last monitoring visit.
- Merit bonuses or remediation processes linked to the teacher evaluations were not yet in place.
- The district level positions have been filled since the last monitoring visit. The following positions are now fully staffed:
  - School Improvement Liaison (SIL),
  - Director for Partnership Development and Capacity Building
  - Director for Pipeline Development
  - Associate Director for Pipeline Development
  - Associate for Business Operations
  - Analyst/Administrative support
- At the school level, the master teacher for English language arts (ELA) and turnaround teacher for social studies have been in place since the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year. The administration reiterated they were afforded minimal opportunity in the hiring process.

<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 SIL was hired at the end of March. She has been able to meet with school staff approximately weekly since then.
- The master teacher and turnaround teacher have been hired. The master teacher and the turnaround teacher continue to teach ELA and social studies.
- The school continues its vendor/partner relationships with SanJae Education Resources, with Symphony Consulting Services, The Door and Children First Network (CFN) 305.
- Evidence regarding Performance Targets was not requested at this time. Currently, a Performance Plan Template is under development by the NYSED.
- The school continues to work on resolving the key findings from the last quality review. A new quality review was completed just prior to the monitoring visit, but the report was not yet available from the NYCDoE review, nor was a preliminary report available.

<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>
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**Findings:**

- The administrative and teacher focus group reported the study of the Danielson Model and its implementation in the teacher evaluation rubric were nearing completion. The last section of the rubric will be implemented in May 2011, after the monitoring visit.
- CFN 305 continues to offer professional development (PD) sessions in response to teacher and principal requests. The principal and assistant principal were supported by CFN 305 during the implementation of each domain of the teacher evaluation rubric with coaching and advice on how to give fair, effective and useful feedback to teachers.
- Teachers continue to use a daily common planning time for ongoing PD. They have established inquiry teams to create collaborative learning experiences and look in depth at student performance. The outcome of collaborative inquiry sessions with a focus on student work has been to seek understanding of what is working, why it works and how to readjust to increase individual student performance. This type of problem-solving sessions takes place two times weekly.
- English language learners (ELL) continue to have a daily pull out session, with teachers meeting regularly during the common planning time to prepare strategically for instruction. Students with IEPs and those academically achieving in the lowest one-third of each grade are the students, along with the ELL, are targeted for differentiation. Each subgroup has been the focus of differentiated class activities based on performance.
- CFN 305 has continued its monitoring of the PD with a focus on supporting teacher inquiry to build capacity to refine the staff’s use of data and to support student performance.

<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>

**Findings:**

- Unity Center for Urban Technology High School (or “Unity”) continues to analyze student performance data. As mentioned earlier in the report, the teachers continue to create and pilot performance tasks. Samples of the assessments from each teacher, showing student work, student performance data on the assessments and reflections by the teachers implementing the assessments concerning refinements and “fine tuning” plans were made available to the monitoring team for inspection.
- Earlier training last fall on using the *SnapGrades* program has yielded a rich pool of data that teachers examine regularly to develop differentiated classroom activities. The tutoring program for reading and literacy mentioned earlier is also evidence of how teachers are using data to meet student performance needs.
- *Eduware* has been used for exam creation for periodic internal assessments. The item analysis of these assessments every six weeks was employed in the PD sessions held during teachers’ common planning time. This data analysis

was the springboard for developing the “evening school” and for teachers’ continued dedication to staffing the sessions voluntarily.

- Based on the ongoing study of student performance data, teachers have developed tutoring sessions for literacy development in reading across content areas. Questions of academic rigor, higher level questioning, more effective strategies for probing student understanding and deliberate engagement in metacognition, or “thinking about thinking,” was reported by the teacher focus group.
- Cohort transcript information is analyzed and credit recovery options are provided to students based upon this analysis. The *OpenBook* program by SanJae Education Resources is used for credit recovery in English language arts (ELA).

<b>CURRICULUM AND TEACHING</b>	
<b>Increased Learning Time</b>	<i>The school has implemented a longer school day, week, or school year to increase significantly 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, 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:**

- An “evening school” session from 4:00 – 7:00 pm was instituted to support student efforts in credit recovery. Any student in need of further academic assistance or review, to make up work due to an absence, or for individual academic enrichment has been instituted. Four teachers volunteer each day for these sessions.
- According to the administrative focus group, students who are in danger of failing or who have fallen behind are invited by their classroom teachers to participate in tutoring on an individual basis throughout the day, or to attend the “evening school.” The sessions are voluntary and are heavily attended by students, as evidence by attendance data collected by the school.
- The NYSED site visit team observed evidence of instructional programming linked to needs assessment.
- The NYSED site visit team again observed inconsistent differentiation of instruction throughout the school, with some evidence of rigor, relevance, pacing or alignment to curriculum standards. Some lessons seemed below the level of what might be expected in difficulty for the grade and course.
- Students worked in small collaborative groups on tasks in most classrooms.
- The nature of some of the small group tasks did not appear to warrant the extensive use of a collaborative grouping, with some students observed off task and others sitting silently, but not participating in the assignment.

<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, after the school day and during the summer.</i>

**Findings:**

- The administrative focus group indicated a social worker is on site everyday. These social workers give support to those students who are eligible by providing individual and group counseling, as well as conducting home visits when necessary.
- Teachers provide extra tutoring support to students during and after school. Advanced Placement classes are available to students who have earned an 85 or higher on the regent's exam. A credit accumulation program is in place to keep students on track.
- An attendance teacher is in place to deal with all persistent student attendance issues. Partnership for Children counsels students with attendance issues. They conducted a raffle to help improve student attendance at the school.
- The Leadership Program provides opportunities for after school enrichment such as the leadership council, fashion club, dance club and spirit squad.
- *Aventa*, and *Achieve 3000*, credit recovery programs also have been employed for enrichment during the evening school sessions. Between the tutoring and support for students in danger of failing, and the enrichment opportunities for more talented and gifted students, the sessions are attended each evening by 30 to 40 students, or approximately 15% to 22% of the school population.
- Students interviewed during the visit reported that the “evening school” is popular and valued by both students and parents. The principal literally shuts off the lights to encourage the students to go home for the evening.

<b>TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP</b>	
<b>Effective Leadership</b>	<i>The school leader has the experience and skills needed to implement successfully 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 turnaround model.</i>

**Findings:**

- The administrative focus group indicated the principal works very closely with the team and shares leadership with them in addressing school needs. CFN 305 has supplied instructional coaching support on at least a weekly basis for the principal and assistant principal. The Leadership Academy supplies the principal with an academic coach at least twice per month.

- The network holds monthly meetings for all the principals in the network to address common needs, which the principal found is a valuable resource.
- A SIL is now employed to work with the school in implementing the transformation plan and in providing PD on the transformation model.
- The principal stated he continues to work in collaboration with the teachers, parents and students to improve student achievement.

<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 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 NYSED site visit team observed an environment that was conducive to learning. The school was safe, orderly and academically oriented.
- Students were observed engaging in off task conversations in during some collaborative tasks, and a few teachers did not redirect unproductive student behaviors.
- Teachers indicated they embrace the vision of the school's improvement efforts to improve student achievement, to increase test scores and graduation rates.
- Parents, students and teachers perceive the school overall as congenial, even warmly supportive with a strong familial sense.
- External/community based partners are active and present throughout the school.

<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:**

- At the time of the visit school leaders indicate they were using an integration of funds to implement the intervention model.

<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 regarding staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting).</i>
<b>District has a systemic plan for intervention</b>	<i>The LEA has incorporated all JIT recommendations and requirements of the SIG Application into the improvement plan for the school.</i>

<b>and improvement</b>	
<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 administrative focus group indicated they feel they are afforded flexible means for implementation by NYCDoE.
- As previously stated, Unity Center for Urban Technology 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 retain former Unity Center for Urban Technology High School principal because of the short length of his tenure.

**Summary:**

The State Education Department three-member site visit team conducted a full-day visit to Unity Center for Urban technology High School on April 14, 2011. Although the visit was brief, the team was able to ascertain information about the schools efforts to implement of the plan for improving student learning and achievement. The school is making excellent progress in implementing its transformation plan.

The master teacher and turnaround teacher have continued in their respective positions, and the School Implementation Liaison has been hired. The administration as well as teachers reported professional development is a primary focus for the school. Teachers continue to use a daily common planning time for ongoing professional development. These planning times are used regularly to collaboratively study students' performance and pass rates, and to plan for differentiation.

According to students, the leadership of the school is both supportive and effective. They reported, although the school is small, the learning environment is positive. The evening school sessions were very popular among students in danger of failing or those wanting enrichment opportunities. The sessions are voluntarily staffed by four teachers with the principal and attended regularly by 30 to 40 students, or roughly 15% to 22% of the school's population.

The school was recently informed that it would lose its current location by June 30, 2011. The NYCDoE has informed the Unity that it will move uptown to become one of two new schools in a multi-school facility next summer. The students and parents are aware of the impending move, and the school leadership team, along with teachers, is contemplating strategies for integrating the students into a much larger student population center, while still protecting and maintaining its close, supportive sense of community.