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

School:	Automotive High School – Transformation Model	School District:	New York City Department of Education – Community School District # 14
Date of Site-Visit:	January 5, 2011	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Susan Gibbons, Andrew McGrath, Kalimah Geter, Jamal Young

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:
- Administrators and teachers reported collective bargaining led to modifications to the instructional day.
- 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 a four tiered rating system and will not include student growth.
- Administrators stated the principal, assistant principals and a United Federation of Teachers (UFT) representative attended workshops regarding the year-long pilot of a comprehensive evaluation system.
- The teaching staff was aware of the new evaluation system. The UFT Teacher Center teacher explained the teaching staff has received information regarding the new system and has seen the rubric. The evaluation plan was rolled out in department meetings in mid-December. Teachers looked at the rubric as a whole, and then focused on one domain. Union sponsored professional development meetings will begin later in January.
- Teachers reported draft rubrics have been provided and the school is on track to begin implementation in February, 2011. Departmental teams of teachers have been working to develop the protocols that will be used for the local assessment portion of the evaluation.

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:
- Two master teachers and three turnaround teachers have been hired. School leaders indicated they were actively involved in the interview process.
- School leaders reported the master teachers will teach four classes, rather than five, and are expected to be leaders in their departments in professional development, content and curriculum. Turnaround teachers work within their own departments and provide laboratory classes for teachers. Inter-classroom visitations will occur in a more systematic way.
- At the time of the visit, a School Implementation Manager (SIM) had not been hired. District officials indicated that the SIM will not be hired during the 2010-2011 school year.
- A school improvement manager has not been hired by the district. The school is represented by staff from the newly-developing turnaround office.
- Evidence regarding implementing activities to assist in meeting Performance Targets was provided. Currently, a Performance Plan Template is under development by the State Education Department (NYSED).
- The school did not receive a Joint Intervention Team review. According to the SIG application, New York City Department of Education (NYCDoE) central office staff, network and school staff conducted a comprehensive review of the school's education program.

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 Analysis	*Professional development is monitored and analyzed to ensure staff participation and classroom implementation.*

Findings:
- Staff and administrators stated they have been involved in regular professional development provided by NYCDoE on the Charlotte Danielson Model.
- Teachers stated they are provided with professional development that includes unified assessment preparation, calendar coordination and planning among subject area and grade level teachers.
- At this time, all professional development is delivered in house, according to administrators. They stated professional development is better organized, with greater teacher buy in, and that the staff has "grown tremendously" because of the transformation training.
- The UFT Teacher Center Director, at the school since 2010, indicated professional development provided by the Teacher Center is geared toward teacher needs. Lesson studies were begun in 2008 and continue as a

requirement under Transformation. The Director teaches one class each day to model for teachers; provides support, visits classrooms and acts as a mentor. There are also two mentor teachers on staff.

- The Teacher Center Director is also the union representative, and the chapter leader role has been redefined as an instructional leader. This role is considered a bridge between the administration and the students.
- School leaders reported a collaborative approach to professional development, which will take place on Tuesday mornings in the next semester for one and one-half hours each session. The coordinators meet weekly to plan professional development activities which are based on a teacher survey and cover a range of topics, from classroom management strategies to the use of Datacation and other tools. They will also address classroom strategies for reading and writing, classroom management through grade level teams, and making curricular connections across disciplines.
- Staff and school leaders stated lesson plan study groups meet regularly to design and discuss lesson plans. They compare assessment results given after lesson delivery to determine effectiveness. Teachers lead these professional development sessions, where they focus on areas needing improvement according to the teacher survey administered in December, 2010. For example, in English, specific writing traits are being addressed through a Design Your Own (DYO) tool.
- The school enrolls a high percentage of students with disabilities (SWD). Staff members have received professional development on various methods of team teaching to provide high quality instruction in the least restrictive environment. The school is implementing a new IEP system and staff received training related to it on January 4, 2011.
- School leaders reported programmatic decisions have been made based on data evaluation, course design, sequences and electives.
- There was no evidence professional development is monitored and analyzed to ensure implementation in the classroom. There appeared to be little alignment between the professional development discussed by staff and the observed professional practice in classrooms.

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 school has partnered with New Visions for Public Schools to improve its data analysis and student tracking systems. Multiple data streams have been combined to provide teachers and school leaders with a comprehensive, user-friendly platform, Datacation. This new system was rolled out to staff for general use in September, 2010.
- The school uses an innovative data collection system to drive support and intervention services for all students. Aspects of the system are underutilized and will require additional training; however, school staff has noted areas of deficiency and plan to make improvements.

- During focus group sessions, teachers and school leaders indicated one focus of their data analysis was to inform instruction. At the time of the visit, the SED site visit team found little evidence to support this claim.
- Administrators stated teachers work by department to analyze assessment results. They are using Datacation, which they described as "Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS)" on steroids." It helps them to look at each individual student, his/her history and present status. This system incorporates Individualized Education Plan (IEP) information and contact information, and access to it is controlled.
- The teachers stated there is more transparency around how to use data. The Tuesday morning time blocks set aside for professional development will include the analysis of assessment data by grade level teams or departments.

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:
- The school day has been extended for ninth graders to focus on writing and math. The schools outside partner, Crossroads, conducts an extended learning time after school as well, for credit recovery.
- The principal reported curricular connections are being made across courses, specifically automotive classes and physics. Classroom observation confirmed this. The literacy team is making a school wide effort toward interdisciplinary instruction involving literacy.
- The school provided limited evidence of effective teaching. In the majority of classes, some students were not engaged in the lesson, were discourteous to teachers, and used profanity. While these behaviors did not apply to a majority of students, these findings were observable throughout most classrooms and in the corridors and other public areas within the school. In one class, students were courteous and engaged. They demonstrated content knowledge and were responsive to open ended questions. Members of the review team noted several students sleeping in class during the day. Teachers, as a rule, did not intervene to awaken students or redirect disruptive students.
- The SED site visit team observed inconsistent differentiation of instruction throughout the building, with limited 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. The administration stated teachers were "clamoring" for training in differentiated instruction. The teachers confirmed their increased commitment to it.

- Evidence of teaching and learning was not apparent in the majority of the classrooms visited. Students gathered in clusters in the classrooms engaging in off-task conversations and behavior. Teachers did not redirect inappropriate language and behavior.
- Administrators and teachers were unaware of the Response to Intervention model or that it was to be implemented in their school starting in September 2010.
- The administration reported a population of students with disabilities (SWD) of 25% and 10% English language learners (ELL) students.
- Administrators reported special education professional development takes place monthly, and that the special education coordinator works with individual teachers as needed.
- Teachers expressed a commitment to educating students in the least restrictive environment.

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:
- The SED site visit team did not observe evidence of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) being implemented in the classrooms or common areas, as indicated in the school's improvement plan.
- School leaders and staff indicated guidance counselors have begun looping, following grade levels from nine through twelve grades.
- School leaders reported Saturday Regents preparation courses are organized by student needs.
- Teachers reported there is a discipline handbook and lessons derived from it are taught in history classes, as part of civics lessons.
- According to the school administration, guidance counselors and teachers meet with groups of students for intervention in such areas as attendance and cutting classes.
- Counselors from the Good Shepard/Crossroads program reported they provide social and emotional support to students in their after school program, doubling interventions for ninth and twelfth grade students, who are the most vulnerable. The after school program is linked to the curriculum. They reported their efforts have helped with increasing attendance rates, particularly for ninth and tenth grade students.
- School leaders reported grade level teams provide support to students who have the same teachers, and some teachers loop with students as they move through the grades, as do guidance counselors, who are part of the teams. Each team sets its own operating guidelines. For example, the ninth grade team of thirty teachers works in committees.
- School leaders reported they support students in crisis and through prevention strategies.
- The student body is 95% male. Teachers discussed a plan to institute the "Pink Pistons," a new program for the 42 girls enrolled in the school, to address related

issues, with its first meeting to be held in February, 2011. A teacher stated, "It's tough being a female in this school."
- Teachers reported there are after school activities available for students, many of which were added recently.
- Teachers stated they have a high level of dedication to the students.
- The school has developed a College Strategy Team to increase enrollment and graduation rates for students.

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 school leader stated she works with coaches from New Visions and another coach from the Leadership Academy. One coach is a former New York City Board of Education Superintendent. All individuals provide professional development for her on a regular basis.
- Teachers indicated this is a teacher-led school, with many opportunities for them to become leaders. New teachers feel very well supported, with many mentors available to them.   With the large number of formal administrative positions, it is not yet clear the extent or impact of the emerging teacher leadership roles in this report noted by the team will be felt by the school community. This will be a focus during the next site visit.
- According to evidence provided on site, the principal oversees two assistant principals and several coordinators, each with clearly delineated responsibilities. During focus group sessions, staff and school leaders indicated the leadership team has been actively involved in the implementation of the intervention model through such activities as the recruitment and interviewing of candidates for the turnaround teacher and master teacher positions and the on site implementation of the plan.
- The school receives support from the New Visions for New Leaders network, which purchased the data system for the school.
- Students were not particularly responsive to the presence of adults in authority throughout the building. In general, discipline was such that the imprint of leadership effectiveness was yet to be realized. The school leadership team expressed great confidence in the modifications which have been made thus far. Students, however, were not similarly confident about the extent to which teaching and learning occurs for their less motivated or needier peers.

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:

- The school's environment creates challenges for teaching and learning. Schoolwide discipline (in classrooms and in common areas) is inconsistent with the imperatives stated by the school leadership team. Schoolwide behavioral expectations are posted and enforced inconsistently throughout the building.
- The SED site visit team observed an environment that was not conducive to learning. The school was not safe, orderly or academically oriented. Students were observed engaging in off task conversations and teachers did not redirect unproductive student behaviors. Students were observed roaming the hallways and stairwells without adult intervention and attempting to leave the building via the side exists. These were constant behaviors observed throughout the day. Teachers, however, stated that they felt the school was safe.
- Rude behavior, disrespectful language and obscene gestures were observed in classrooms and throughout common areas. Numerous students were not in compliance with the school's dress code. The presence of visitors did not seem to deter these behaviors, which continued despite some teacher intervention.
- Classroom interruptions by students were numerous and significantly impacted the ability of teachers to deliver lessons.
- The principal stated cutting class is a serious problem at this school.
- Hallway observations showed heavy security staffing, but this had little or no apparent effect on behavior. Students seemed to disregard their presence and directives, continuing to loiter in the hallways. When asked about the disciplinary action process, teachers indicated that the school safety agents were responsible for calling a dean, who would remove the disruptive student from the classroom, investigate the situation, talk to the students, and usually incidents were resolved or consequences imposed.
  According to the school leaders, the security scanning process in the morning is reportedly running more smoothly and faster than previously, with less loitering in the hallways. Teachers indicated students don't want to be late for class, but this was not confirmed by observation of transitions.
- Staff from the Crossroads program indicated gang involvement is prevalent, in a self-organizing manner, and there is much bullying and stealing from other students.
- During focus group sessions, staff and school leadership indicated they have a shared vision of the school's improvement efforts. The SED site visit team observations did not confirm the consistency of such claims. Neither focus group provided evidence to map out the achievement of the vision, given the current culture and concerns with discipline.
- During their focus group session, parents indicated they were not formally presented with the school's transformation plan. In fact, parents indicated they believed the school was to be phased out and closed. On the other hand, parents reported communication with the school is excellent, and they had been provided with a transformation newsletter to inform the school community about the plan.
- The school leaders reported they focus on parent involvement and conduct periodic "celebrations," such as a Friday night dinner in honor of students with perfect attendance. Over 100 parents attended. However, only eight parents attended the first college workshops held this year.
- Communication with parents, according to teachers, occurs through IEP meetings, phone calls designed to improve attendance, and conferences. Face

- to face meetings are often difficult, as no students at the school live in the zone, and many travel quite a distance.
- Parents expressed satisfaction with the school, the faculty, and the administration. Parent feedback was mixed with respect to academic rigor.
- Student leaders also reported they see parent involvement as a continuing challenge, as they are not as far along as they would like.
- The school has a partnership with Good Shepherd Services to improve attendance and graduation rates at the school. According to school leaders and a partnership representative, student involvement has been doubled during the 2010-11 school year, with a 30% participation rate by special education students.
- "Graduation Guardians," as explained by teachers, is a school-wide initiative designed to connect students and staff in an effort to guide students through the processes associated with graduation, such as applying to college, financial aid forms, required coursework, credit accumulation, and reading transcripts. The "Guardians" are to set up meetings with students during lunch periods to speak with them about assessment results and future education and career plans. The program was begun for twelfth graders, but has been expanded downward through several grades. During their focus group session, students indicated mixed levels of interactions with their guardians.
- Representatives of Crossroads, a part of Good Shepherd Services, stated they provide multiple services to many schools, including in-school counseling and drop-out prevention activities. For the 313 students involved this year, attendance has risen to an average of 88%, and the failure rate is lower than the school as a whole. There is an after school program that involves 200 students in college counseling. Most students go to CUNY schools, but need remedial programs; some are undocumented and cannot receive financial aid.

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:
- School leaders indicated they were directly involved in the funding/budget decisions, and that the use of funds is supporting the implementation of their school intervention model.
- Evidence regarding additional resources to support school improvement efforts was not requested during the on site visit.

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 regarding 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,	*In accordance with SIG requirements, the LEA has a plan for hiring and retaining leadership.*

and retain effective leadership	

Findings:
- As with all schools in NYCDoE is in the process of hiring adequate staff to implement the programs. On the day of the visit, the team received a modified budget and implementation plan.
- On site observations by the SED team indicated there is limited direct support from the district.
- School leaders indicated the district has provided the school with operational flexibility.
- There was no evidence the LEA has implemented all of the requirements of the SIG application and the improvement plan for this school. Teachers and administrators were aware of the Design Your Own (DYO) assessments and the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) platform, but had no knowledge of the Department of Performance and Accountability (DPA) project to be instituted by the district in the fall of 2010. Administrators stated that the school has developed more than the required number of five DYO assessments.
- The district's efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified school leaders was reflected in the school leaders' statement regarding the Talent Office at NYCDoE sending an individual to function as a teacher evaluator and a proposal for a half time and a full time grant writer to be employed over the next two years.
- School leaders reported the cluster and the network work closely with the NYCDoE.

SUMMARY:

The State Education Department four member site visit team conducted a full-day visit to Automotive 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.

Overall, this appeared to be a school in a developmental phase, with lofty goals and ideas but needs support and implementation. Classrooms appeared out of the control of the teachers in many instances and students were allowed to behave in highly improper ways with no consequences. It appeared that serious behavior problems such as shouting, pounding on desks, and ignoring the teacher's pleas to behave (in one classroom, because "You are being observed.") were preventing any instruction from taking place. This area will be a priority to be addressed during the next site visit.

Professional development seems to be a priority, but is dependent upon teacher input and there is no system in place to evaluate its effectiveness.

The implementation of the plan is sporadic, with positions left unfilled, and funds drawn back to the district level with no accountability for the school level. Timelines have been ignored.

During the next full day 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.