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

School:	Flushing High School – Transformation Model	School District:	New York City Department of Education – Community School District # 25
Date of Site-Visit:	January 7, 2011	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Major Capers, Jean Beaudet, Erica Cervine, Susan Megna, Kimberly Santiago, Ira Schwartz

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. Name and describe the activities.*

Findings:
- The school leadership team stated negotiations are continuing regarding revision of the collective bargaining agreement and the development of an evaluation system that supports teacher development. School leadership reported they have received and reviewed initial drafts of several documents regarding the teacher evaluation system. The union and New York City Department of Education (NYCDoE) have agreed that 2010-11 school year evaluations will be based only on the use of a four-tiered rating system and will not be linked to student performance. The Charlotte Danielson Model describes the following four domains the teacher evaluation will be based on:
  - Planning and Preparation,
  - The Classroom Environment,
  - Instruction,
  - Professional Responsibilities.
- The school leadership team reported the school has an evaluation process in place. The school's teachers are evaluated by one of the Assistant Principals and the Principal. The school leadership team is planning to eventually use portfolios for teacher evaluations.

- School leaders stated NYCDoE is working to complete the development of the new evaluation form that includes linking teacher evaluations to student performance, and offers rewards and remediation for staff.
- School Leadership stated there is a new tenure policy in the process of being implemented and principals will receive training on to use it effectively.
- The leadership team reported merit bonuses and remediation plans linked to teacher evaluations are not yet in place.
- The leadership team indicated four master and two Turnaround teachers ("coaches") have been hired.

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:
- The NYCDoE has currently hired staff in several positions, however not all positions have been filled. The school leaders reported they have met staff members (e.g., Director of Turnaround and Transformation) from the NYCDoE, but have not started to receive direct support from the Department.
- The leadership team stated the Principal is in charge of ensuring the transformation model is implemented.
- The leadership team and teachers reported teachers within each academy are provided common planning time.
- Leadership indicated student progress is monitored by specific teachers in each content area and there is a fully staffed attendance office that provides outreach and monitors student attendance rates.
- The small thematic learning communities, called academies, have started for students in grade 9, but not for grades 10-12.
- At the request of the NYCDoE, the school did not receive a Joint Intervention Team review. However; the School Improvement Grant application narrative stated the school conducted a comprehensive needs assessment that identified key challenges to address. They are: ninth grade transition, dropout rate, credit recovery, differentiated instruction, staff and student relations, and integrating guidance and instructional programs.

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:

- The school leadership team stated the Association of Supervisors of Curriculum and Development (ASCD) are providing professional development that is focused on improving instructional effectiveness. The ASCD has provided professional development on differentiated instruction and the ASCD consultant also coaches classroom teachers.
- The school leadership team reported they have attended some professional development conferences (e.g., leadership academy). However; funding is not yet released to support other professional development activities outlined in the school implementation grant. The school has used their own funding to start implementing the transformation plan.
- Staff participated in a full day of professional development to understand their role in implementing the plan.
- School leadership indicated school positions listed in the School Implementation Grant and budget have been filled.
- The leadership team stated the master and turnaround teachers have also participated in a New York City leadership academy provided jointly by NYCDoE and the UFT.
- The school leadership team reported they would benefit from receiving technical assistance on the transformation model, selection of consultants and professional development companies that could best meet the school's needs, and development of inquiry teams.
- The leadership team stated professional development is monitored periodically to ensure staff participates in sessions and use newly learned strategies in the classroom.

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 leadership team reported a program called Skedula tracks student credits and regent examination information for each student cohort.
- The leadership team stated there are data inquiry teams, two of which are led by the transformation mentor Principal. There are teams for teachers, guidance counselors and attendance.
- The Principal reported he reviews school wide data. The cabinet reviews department level data, including credit and Regent Reports. The guidance team reviews credits and credit recovery options and the attendance team looks at attendance data on monthly basis.
- The SED site visit team could not determine how data was being used by staff to inform instruction.

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 leadership team stated instructional time has been increased by one minute for each course and 37.5 minutes have been added at the end of the day for students to make up credits and/or participate in after school tutoring in Math and Science. The 45 minute increase is new this year.
- The school also offers an expanded Saturday program to provide academic intervention services for all students and a summer school transition program for incoming ninth graders.
- The leadership team stated the curriculum has been mapped to NYS Standards, but not to the Common Core Standards.
- There was no evidence of any of the following in the classrooms observed:
    - teachers using a mapped and paced curriculum
    - instructional programming linked to a needs assessment
    - effective teaching practices used to meet the needs of English Language Learners (ELL) or Students with Disabilities (SWD)
- A review of science data indicated some students were barred from taking Regents examinations because they did not complete the required number of labs. To address this problem, the school has embedded the lab lessons into the core subject instruction ensuring that the same teacher teachers both the course and the lab.
- The leadership team stated in some content areas, teachers have begun to incorporate some of the strategies they have learned from master teachers. Demonstration lessons have not yet been conducted in all content areas. Some teachers reported they have positive interactions with the master and turnaround teachers. Others reported they had as of the date of the visit little or no interaction with these teachers.
- The SED site visit team visited numerous classrooms. Because the students were taking a school-wide exam, we were unable to observe any teaching in the area of English Language Arts in grades 9-11 and most of grade 12 classes.
- The SED site visit team observed a Grade 12 AP English class and an honors class where students were engaged and participating in academic work.
- The leadership team stated the network leader meets with principals on a regular basis.
- The leadership team stated Learning Points has not completed a curriculum audit. This audit is scheduled to be completed by April 2011
- The leadership team reported Achieve 3000, an online literacy intervention program, which will be utilized for ELL's, and SWDs, will be purchased by the school to support students both at home and school.
- The leadership team stated students classified as ELL's all participate in English classes. Master and turnaround teachers are being utilized to support teachers.
- There is no Assistant Principal solely dedicated to work with the ELL population.

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:

- In the several classrooms visited some students were observed who were either off task and/or disruptive and rude to their teachers. They were also observed being disrespectful to their peers. This included swearing; making verbal put downs; and pushing in the classrooms, hallways and common areas.
- Two orientations are conducted for incoming students as well as a summer school Bridge program. The Bridge program, which is available to all incoming freshman, serves approximately 120 students. The length of the program varies by year and parents are offered an option of the number of weeks a student attends the program.
- The leadership team stated APEX Learning, Inc. an online credit recovery program, has started to help students catch up with credits, and participation for targeted students is 100%.
- Students stated they would like more emphasis placed on reading and English writing.
- The leadership team reported there is a college office that provides services to students. Students stated they would like to have more time with college advisors. Guidance counselors begin conversations with students about career and college awareness in Grade 9. One of the schools external partners visited the high school and has agreed to lead the college and career initiative for the school. The high school is also reviewing the option of beginning an after school career program.
- The leadership team and staff stated the Respect for All program has started. However; there are only two copies of the materials, and some staff stated the program is not yet being used universally.
- Teachers and guidance counselors stated Grade 9 English teachers and counselors work together one day a week. They discuss different themes, such as bullying and classroom management.
- The leadership team and network partner reported during common planning time teachers discuss student behavior issues. Guidance provides the first level intervention. The Network partner talks to school leaders about things such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). PBIS is not currently being implemented at Flushing High School.
- Leadership and teachers stated tutoring is mandated for all teachers and is provided to students at the end of their school day. Students self select or are selected to participate in tutoring.
- The review team reported in classrooms observed there was a lack of technology (e.g., laptops, projectors) in the building.
- The NYCDoE has not yet released SIG funding so Flushing High School cannot order projectors and other hardware outlined in their proposed budget.
- The schools enrichment program called REACH provides professional development for advanced placement teachers and supports AP students with workshops on test preparation.

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	*School leaders receive appropriate and timely professional development.*

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:
- Based on the SED site visit team conversation with the school leaders and observations with staff around the building, it appears evident the mentor principal continues to perform functions that would normally be those of the school leader.
- The leadership team reported they would continue leadership training when funding becomes available.
- The leadership-team stated it is receiving professional development on transformation and development of inquiry teams. The teams meet monthly to discuss issues related to implementing the model.
- School leaders stated transformation meetings are held at least monthly.
- The instructional and small learning community cabinets are established and are holding meetings.
- Teacher evaluation meetings occur at least once a month. There are also small learning communities (SLC) meetings. The principal completed a walk through of the building in early December and will provide feedback to teachers.

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 SED site visit team observed instances of students wandering the hallways when classes were in session. They were observed hiding behind doorways, in corners or in the stairwells. Students were heard shouting and seen being generally disruptive. Hall security agents were ineffective and were often talking to each other and not engaging with students.
- The SED site visit team observed several areas of the high school by the end of the day were littered and unkempt.
- There was no evidence of the use of a school wide behavior management system.
- Parents stated there is an active PTA and it meets monthly. Teachers and the Principal participate in the meetings.
- Parents spoke positively about the ninth grade academies, home-school communication and English language classes for families.
- School leaders and teachers reported some partnerships have started, however others have not due to the lack of funding.

- Flushing High School has partnerships with International Network for Public Schools and the Asian Americans for Equality. The partners reported their primary goal is to change the school culture to create an environment that supports college and career readiness. The private grant supports a full time staff person for the Guidance office.
- Parents believe the school needs a second parent coordinator to provide outreach to new parents. Funding ($37, 990) has not yet been released to support an additional coordinator and parent involvement activities.
- The school is beginning to receive support from the Children's First network leader who intends to work with the district to identify organizations that can provide the school with technical assistance related to areas of identified needs (e.g., behavior and classroom management).

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:
- The school leaders stated they have only received about 10% of the funding and this money has been used predominately for staffing. The school has used their own money to start implementing the plan.
- The school is scheduled to receive approximately $1 million/year added to its school budget to support implementation of the transformation model.
- The school is using other funding sources (e.g., Title IID) to support the intervention model.

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

Findings:
- The leadership team indicated they feel they are afforded flexible means for implementation by NYCDoE; however they are waiting for funding to purchase services outlined in their implementation plan.
- At the request of NYCDoE, Flushing High School did not undergo a Joint Intervention Team visit; however they participated in a needs assessment which formed the foundation for the development of the school's implementation plan.
- The district made the decision to hire the former principal as the transformation mentor principal, and to hire a new interim acting principal who had not previously served in a school leadership role.

- The master and turnaround teachers are hired and professional development is provided to support the retention of the new leadership team.

Summary:

The New York State Education Department six member site visit team conducted a full day site visit to Flushing High School on January 7, 2011. Although the visit was brief, the team was able to review information and meet with school and community constituents to discuss the school's efforts to begin the implementation of their reform model for improving student learning.

The site review team concluded there are specific areas that we will review during our next visit. They are:

- Receipt of funding (e.g., beyond 10%) to support initiatives outlined in your school implementation grant.
- Collaboration with the Network Leader to select and implement a behavior management plan for the school to improve school climate.
- Extra support services for Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners (e.g., National Staff Development Council).
- Full implementation of the job-embedded professional development plan.
- Implementation of strategies to address low attendance rates.

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.