Quality Review Report

2017-2018

In-Tech Academy (M.S. / High School 368)

Secondary School 10X368

2975 Tibbett Avenue
Bronx
NY 10463

Principal: Stephen Seltzer

Dates of Review:
June 5, 2018 - June 6, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Jorge Estrella
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

In-Tech Academy (M.S. / High School 368) serves students in grade 6 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>School Culture</strong></th>
<th><strong>Area</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rating</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Area of Celebration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Well Developed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Systems for Improvement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rating</strong></td>
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<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Additional Finding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Proficient</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings

Effective in-house systems and partnerships with local agencies support students and families via learning opportunities that place a high priority on improving student outcomes.

Impact

The school’s strategic approach to professional development for staff around social-emotional learning and ongoing collaboration with families has resulted in students becoming more responsible for their own learning, attendance and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- The guidance team works with every student and family member to address areas of concern and provide the necessary social-emotional support to ensure the student’s success. If necessary, students and/or families are referred to Riverdale Mental Health. The school also partners with Morris Heights Health Center, which has a school-based clinic providing health care and mental health services to students. Furthermore, in partnership with The Charles Hayden Foundation, the school offers a summer bridge peer mentoring program which matches incoming freshmen with upperclassmen in academic and enrichment activities for four weeks over the summer. These services impact positively on their academic and personal growth, creating a pathway to build leadership skills and work habits that support college and career readiness.

- The attendance team meets weekly to analyze and track students’ attendance by looking at attendance patterns which result in interventions such as, phone calls, one-on-one conferences with parents, or home visits. As a result, the school sustains an attendance rate of 92.5 percent. In addition, staff members know individual students very well and have developed close and confidential relationships with a number of them. Students reported that they have more than one person they can go to should they need support. This was also echoed by parents.

- Parents reported that teachers and school staff keep them informed of school programs and support opportunities through the school’s online platform, monthly calendars, school website, and phone calls. Families are also supported through workshops on such topics as puberty and adolescence, teen relationship and consent, and classes on nutrition, healthy eating and exercise are offered to enable parents to support students at home. Parents are also an integral part of scheduled town hall programs to celebrate the academic and social achievements of students. Thus, parents shared that they are committed to ensuring that the school continues to offer students additional academic and social-emotional support by keeping in contact with school staff and applying tips offered in the workshops offered in the school.

- School leaders ensure that teachers that teachers are equipped with the necessary instructional support to address the social emotional needs of the students. For example, teachers participated in professional development sessions on using de-escalation techniques and strength-based language. These sessions cover how to support young adults in a school setting, brain research (Brainology Research Project), and student sexual identification. Furthermore, during professional development teachers are provided with lesson plans regarding identifying physical safety, emotional safety, and harassment both inside the home and school, understanding bullying and respecting sexual differences. These lessons are fully developed and adjusted in team meetings. In addition, school leaders engaged, based on individual needs, in one-on-one supports for teachers who may need additional support in classroom management or addressing cultural awareness in the classroom. Teachers reported that professional development (PD) around social-emotional learning has been critical as a team and individually to be able to identify, prevent or rectify social-emotional issues. As a result, teachers develop activities to better engage students in lessons while promoting a positive classroom and school tone.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers create and use assessments, rubrics, and checklists aligned to the school’s curricula. Pedagogical practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment to determine student progress towards the learning objective.

Impact

Teachers use rubrics to provide students with actionable feedback. Most teachers’ assessment practice results in effective instructional adjustments during classroom instruction, but some missed opportunities to provide actionable feedback or use assessments to adjust instruction were observed.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers reported that across classrooms, they use a school-wide grading policy, teachers’ created rubrics aligned to curricula as well as Regents rubrics to assess student work. An eighth-grade science assignment; the marathon runner performance task rubric includes five criteria for success. Criteria include claim, evidence, reasoning science concepts, future runner feedback, and writing mechanics and organization communication. Five levels are used to assess student work; level 0: no evidence, level 1: attempting standards, level 2: approaching standards, level 3: meeting standards, and level 4: exceeding standards grade level. A level 4 reasoning science concepts reads, “Includes explanation of science concepts that link evidence to the claim, and they are sufficient, clearly stated, and accurate.” During the meeting with students, they reported that rubrics are used in all content areas and while they shared their work, they articulated the expectations for the task they brought, the feedback they received, how they improved the selected piece, and how they can continue to improve. The review of student work products revealed that teachers provide written feedback and next steps. For example, one feedback reads “You need to cite at least four documents to provide evidence to support your claim.” “Next time I challenge you to include more outside information to better explain and support the document evidence.” As a result of these assessment practices, most students are aware of their next steps in meeting their achievement expectations.

- During classroom visits, teachers were observed conferring with students to ensure they understood their task, clarified content and strategies to accomplish their task by using methods for annotating text, expressing more details and ideas in their writing, understanding how to interpret graphs, different approaches for problems solving, and citing text. As teachers checked on student’s progress, they pushed students’ thinking, as evidenced in observed lessons. Furthermore, most teachers use conference notes, exit slips, and group assessments as part of checks for understanding to make on-the-spot adjustments to lessons to meet the individual and instructional needs of students. For example, in an Algebra II class, during the warm-up activity while students were working on exponential and logarithmic functions, teachers circulated around the room noting students’ responses. Then, the teacher used a colored approach (green, yellow and red) to gauge students’ understanding of the lesson. Based on students’ responses, students were reassigned to colored assigned groups; where the red groups will have a least one green student to facilitate and help students with the group activity. Students in the yellow groups worked on their own. However, this practice is yet to be implemented across the vast majority of classrooms.

- Students reported that they engage in self-assessment activities using rubrics or checklists to reflect on their learning. For example, in a US History class, students were using Regents rubrics to self-assess their essays. To self-assess a Living Environment assignment, students used a Document Based Essay (DBQ) rubric and were provided with a graphic organizer requesting students to offer an explanation of their score based on rubric criteria and elaborate suggestions for next assignment. In other classes, students were observed in peer assessment activities.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders and faculty strategically integrate literacy in the curricula and ensure that curricula include the instructional shifts and are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Academic tasks coherently embed rigorous tasks and higher-order skills across grades and subjects for all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

**Impact**

College and career readiness are promoted coherently within curricula across grades and subjects for all students. Across grades and subject areas, rigorous tasks, and higher-order thinking are embedded in all units and all students have access to curricula, including students with disabilities and ELLs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and teachers align teacher-created curricular materials to New York State and Common Core Learning Standards with the focus of integrating literacy across the curricula. The review of instructional planning documents revealed that there is a coherence of embedded English Language Arts (ELA) and math instructional shifts and skills across content areas and grades. Curricular documents reviewed evidence that units and lessons are planned to integrate higher-order thinking skills by engaging students in academic tasks, requiring them to formulate opinions, express claims/counterclaims, and cite evidence from text to support their verbal and written viewpoints by using academic vocabulary and solving real-world problems. For example, in an ELA lesson plan on the novel *The Outsiders*, questions listed include, “How do perceptions lead to stereotyping and pressure to conform? Why it is important to recognize that all people have common life experiences that are both positive and negative?” Similarly, in an Algebra II lesson, the students were to use the third logarithm law to solve real-world problems, solving exponential equations using logarithms and finding the value of a logarithmic expression or equation. They were then to explain their process in writing detailing how they arrived at their solutions. As a result of these curricular decisions, students take part in a coherent curricula across grades that prepares them for the challenges of college and career.

- Across grades and content areas, teachers plan lessons that engage students in challenging tasks. Higher-order questions are embedded in the curricula. Task expectations are the same for all students, which is presented using different approaches, so all students have the opportunity to interact with content, engage in research, and deepen their understanding across subjects. Instructional planning documents revealed that instructional activities engage students in collaborative and intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open-ended questions and classroom or small-group discussions. In an economics lesson about advertising and marketing, for example, students were to create their own advertisements, creating a storyboard, script, video clip with sound, and presentation. Lessons incorporate texts on a particular topic, with varying levels of complexity, along with the use of graphic organizers, sentence starters, assisted technology and one-on-one supports. This allows the ELLs and special education students to access lessons and gain content knowledge and understanding of units taught.

- Instructional planning documents revealed that teachers design activities to involve students in collaborative and intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open-ended questions as well as whole-class and small-group discussions. This dialogue engages students in discourse and writing where they cite evidence to support and refute claims and counterclaims. Math lesson plans revealed that teachers require students to use mathematical language to explain their reasoning, collaboratively solve problems, and assess one another’s work. Students are expected to explain relationships between equations and graphs. As a result of the school’s rigorous curricula, students participate in challenging tasks that promote high level thinking and engages students in authentic learning experiences.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and the use of technology consistently provides varied entry points into the curricula. Students’ work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Students produce meaningful work products and high levels of student thinking, discussions, and participation. However, higher achievers are not always challenged to their maximum capabilities, consequently limiting opportunities for all learners to engage in higher-order thinking tasks to accelerate and own their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Multiple entry points allowed many learners access to the material. In a seventh-grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) ELA lesson on determining the theme and central idea of a text, each group (based on their needs) had visuals, dictionaries, sentence starters, and one-on-one support with a teacher. In a ninth-grade English lesson on analysis of a poem’s central idea, students worked in groups with one eleventh- or twelfth-grade students who were provided with guiding questions and acted as facilitators for their respective groups. Students were provided with a close analysis checklist to help identify the central idea and literacy technique, as well as a chart to organize evidence and analysis. In a global studies class, teachers used Virtual Reality (VR) devices so each student could have an opportunity to take a virtual 360-degree trip exploring the architecture of the Renaissance and Middle Ages. This experience enhances the range of learning opportunities that enable students to work to their full potential and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

- Across classrooms, student work products consistently demonstrated engagement, collaboration, and student voice. During classroom visits, most students were involved in challenging tasks, even though not all tasks included extensions for higher achievers and there were a few missed opportunities to support students who experienced difficulties in accomplishing their tasks. In an eighth-grade living environment class, the students were working on how plants and animals use to obtain nutrients and create energy. Students worked in groups at each station for eight minutes discussing their specific task, and most were highly engaged in their tasks. However, there were a few students who needed support and waited several minutes for the teacher while others completed their tasks within two to three minutes remaining idle until it was time to move onto their next station. As a result of a lack of effective structures and supports to address specific groups of students, some students may not have opportunities to reflect high levels of thinking.

- During classroom visits, students were observed engaging in small-group and whole-class discussions that reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. In an algebra class, students engaged in small-group discussions focused on a unit on systems of equations, referencing their different approaches to solving their problems in the discussions and using their problem-solving rationales to support their approach to solving the math problem. In a Virtual Enterprise class, students presented to the class possible products that they believe could be marketed. In their presentations they explained the pros and cons of the products, the uniqueness of the product, potential marketing strategies, and company structure. After the presentation, all students engaged in conversations, in which they provided presenters suggestions about possible potential customers, as well as impact on the environment. Students referred to their notes as they shared opinions with the class. As a result, most students demonstrated high levels of engagement and participation on a real-world activity.
Findings

School leaders and staff successfully communicate high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and effectively partner with families to establish a culture for learning that nurtures effective habits for students.

Impact

The school’s partnership with families has contributed to students’ progress towards college and career readiness, as evidenced by a high percentage of students enrolled in college or other postsecondary programs within six months and by taking Advanced Placement courses.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers share expectations for student achievement with parents at the beginning of the school year during orientation sessions and regularly-scheduled parent workshops and maintain partnerships with families throughout the school year. During the meeting with parents, the parents articulated the different approaches used by school leaders, teachers, and staff to keep them informed of their children’s progress and feel supported in helping to prepare them for college and career readiness. Parents shared that the school uses an online grading system that keeps them informed of their children's academic and social-emotional progress. Other approaches used are emails, text messages, phone calls, monthly calendars, the school website, and in-person meetings. Parents stated that they attended a financial literacy workshop at the school; other parents mentioned that they participated in Urban Advantage field trips and most of them participated in workshops about learning how to install and use the online grading system. Other parents recalled participating in sessions about special education and bilingual education.

- In order to support the school’s shared commitment of developing academic and social-emotional skills that prepare students for college and career, school leaders and teachers actively seek and develop collaborations with outside programs and institutions. For example, the College Bound Initiative (CBI) partners with the school to provide the necessary support to students and families to help realize their higher education goals and life potential. CBI places a full-time college guidance advisor in the school who works with school counselors to maximize students’ college awareness, access, and financial aid awards. In collaboration with school counselors, CBI hosts two college fairs, several college tours and visits, career day, alumni day and an annual college night. These opportunities promote college preparedness and allow students early exposure to the college process. As per the 2017 School Quality Snapshot, 78 percent of the students graduated from high school and enrolled in college or other postsecondary program within six months of graduation, which was higher than comparable schools group at 68 percent, Borough at 49 percent and City at 57 percent.

- Students shared that the school pushes them toward college, and many of them articulated that they are also learning skills that could earn them competitive jobs by the time they graduate. These opportunities include participating in Advanced Placement (AP) architecture, physiology, literature and language, music classes, Virtual Enterprise, and CISCO networking class. One student stated that his interdisciplinary research assignments have helped him make real-world application of learned content in different subjects, as well as helping his oral presentation skills. Another student reported that having writing assignments across content areas has been important in improving her grades, passing Regents exams, and being college ready. She stated, “I improved my skills to annotate and use textual evidence to support my claims and counterclaims.” As a result, the school’s Regents metrics reflect that average Regents completion has increased twelve percentage points, from 42 percent to 54 percent comparing school year 2016 with 2017, representing six percentage points above Borough results for 2017.
**Findings**

All teachers are engaged in structured collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership affords teachers a voice in decisions.

**Impact**

Professional collaboration results in refinement of pedagogy, while structures in place have increased instructional and leadership capacity for teachers to have a voice in key schoolwide decisions that affect student learning across grade levels.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders ensure that all teachers collaborate in professional teams at least twice a week in ongoing collaborations in implementing the Common Core and the instructional shifts. The focus of these team meetings is the instructional core, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. This is followed by intervisitations and debriefing sessions, resulting in improved quality of data-based lesson planning that includes multiple entry points, student choice, real-world connections, and developing student-centered instruction. The literacy team analyzed the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) diagnostic test for middle school students to determine students’ strengths and areas that need improvement, to implement proper intervention groups in specific reading areas, such as decoding and encoding, morphology, fluency and comprehension, and band, virtual enterprise, or reading club. As a result of effective targeted interventions and using literacy across content areas with an interdisciplinary approach, the school is promoting higher levels of student achievement and enhancing the instructional capacity of teachers.

- During the observed math team meeting, teachers discussed key strategies for effective formative assessment, such as color-coded approach using green, yellow, red to mark students’ progress towards lesson goals and to make on-the-spot decisions based on students’ responses who will be regrouped to address their needs. Also, one teacher shared his approach and tools used for Regents’ assessments item analysis. Teachers reported that collaborative work has been essential to their professional growth through discussing instructional strategies that they aligned to school instructional focus and schoolwide goals leading to increased achievement for all learners. During the teacher meeting, one teacher, new to the school, reported that compared to her experience in several New York City schools, she feels fully supported by colleagues and school leaders. She added that teachers’ collaboration and intervisitations have helped improve her teaching practice, resulting in better student outcomes. The 2017 School Quality Snapshot shows that 86 percent of the students graduated within four years, higher than the comparison group at 84 percent, Borough at 67 percent and City at 74 percent.

- Teachers shared that their voice is represented in schoolwide activities, curricula, and instructional initiatives. Teacher leaders collaborate regularly with school leaders to help select instructional resources as well as design and facilitate professional learning opportunities. Several teacher leaders participated in professional sessions offered by The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; they then turnkey them to their colleagues. Furthermore, as part of teachers’ initiative, teachers are integrating a computer science curriculum in the middle school instructional program and also coordinating student internships with various organizations such as Staples and Manhattan College. As a result of their collaboration, teachers determined that additional reading interventions were needed to ensure that all students would achieve their literacy goals. As a result, a positive culture of professional learning communities has taken root with increased trust in distributed leadership, better communication about what is happening across grades, and coherence of team planning work, which has led to positive changes that affect student learning across the school.