

Promising Practices Series: Professional Development

Center for School Success



Center for School Success Promising Practices Series

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Each publication in this series includes a brief overview of research relating to the practice featured, descriptions of one or more schools using the practice, and resources for finding more information. For access to a library of materials that schools have created in relation to the practices, visit our Center for School Success website at www.newvisions.org/schoolsuccess.

To get the most information about these practices, we encourage you to visit the schools. You will find school contact information listed within each publication. We have also developed a Guide to School Visits (see Appendix) to assist you in arranging and planning a school visit.

For more information about New Visions for Public Schools and our programs, please visit our main Web site at www.newvisions.org.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Center for School Success Promising Practices Series

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CRITERIA FOR PROMISING PRACTICE	2
EXEMPLARY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT:	
THE RENAISSANCE CHARTER SCHOOL	3
EAST SIDE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL	10
APPENDIX:	
REFERENCES	17
RESOURCES	17
GUIDE TO SCHOOL VISITS	19

Center for School Success Promising Practices Series: Professional Development
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Promising Practices Series! This series will introduce you to some innovative New York City public schools and the instructional practices they use to help students learn and achieve. The series is intended for anyone who is or wants to be involved in improving schools, from administrators and teachers to parents and community partners. Our goal is to support people doing the challenging work of school development, and our message to you is: “You are not alone!”

There are many New York City school teachers and administrators who have worked hard to develop instructional practices that help their students succeed. We want to provide opportunities for you to learn from them. Our goal is not to offer “models” to replicate. Rather, we want to provide information on the experiences of a wide range of schools in order to stimulate thinking and innovation. Some of the schools featured in this series have existed for less than five years, while others first opened more than 15 years ago. Regardless of their age, they are all works-in-progress, a distinguishing characteristic of effective learning communities. They have all had to face the many demands of an urban educational system -- from changes in policy and funding to staff shortages -- and these are reflected in the how they have modified their practices throughout the years.

This publication focuses on professional development, a key element of school reform. In order to improve instruction and learning, schools need to increase the capacity of teachers to promote academic excellence in their classrooms. As part of their school and district plans, educators need to include professional development for teachers that is ongoing, school-based, collaborative, and focused on student learning. This investment in teachers’ professional growth will better enable schools to attract, motivate, and sustain quality teachers. The two schools featured in this publication provide examples of professional development that rely on a governance model of distributive staff leadership. In both schools teachers are key decision makers in how professional development is structured and implemented.

New Visions for Public Schools is the largest education reform organization dedicated to improving the quality of education children receive in New York City’s public schools. Working with the public and private sectors, New Visions develops programs and policies to energize teaching and learning and raise the level of student achievement. New Visions started the Center for School Success (CSS) in 1999 to document and disseminate innovative educational practices demonstrated by New Visions’ schools that hold promise for increasing student achievement throughout New York City. The success of these schools should serve as examples that New York City public schools, serving the full range of students in New York City, can work.

CRITERIA FOR PROMISING PRACTICE

A school's instructional model should aspire to meet the following criteria in order to be considered a "Promising Practice."

1. Professional development is part of a school's long-term plan for improving teaching and learning. It is aligned with both the school's and the school district's strategic plans, and is a line item in the budget.
2. Professional development is directly linked to improvements in student learning and demonstrates high expectations for student learning.
3. Professional development is planned by those who will participate in it to address their particular needs.
4. Professional development is, where possible, site-based.
5. Professional development reflects the best available research and practices and exposes teachers to actual practice.
6. Professional development is a group-based and collaborative process that allows for the sharing of expertise and experiences.
7. Professional development includes adequate common planning time (i.e., at least three to four hours per week over four to five days), in addition to teachers' individual preparation periods.
8. Professional development includes ongoing support and follow-up to ensure that content is learned, implemented, and institutionalized.
9. Professional development promotes a cycle of continuous improvement within the school community. It offers opportunities for observation, critique, and reflection and all feedback is incorporated into improving future professional development.
10. Professional development is assessed on an ongoing and continuous basis to determine whether it is having its intended impact.
11. Professional development addresses the needs of all students, by providing teachers with the information and training necessary for them to develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that will ensure that an equitable and quality education is provided to all students.

EXEMPLARY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT . . .

The Renaissance Charter School

Monte Joffe, principal
5-59 81st Street
Jackson Heights, NY 11372
718.803.0060

Year Started: Fall 1993
Enrollment: 474 Students + 6 District 75 Students
Grades: K-12th

OVERVIEW

The Renaissance Charter School, located in Jackson Heights, Queens, was founded by a group of teachers and parents in 1993 and became a charter school in September 2000. Renaissance is a K to 12 school offering students a child-centered, project-based curriculum focusing on the study of New York City. Community, cooperation and collaboration are the principles of Renaissance. Class sizes are small and teachers often keep the same class for more than one year. Teachers work closely together and with parents and school administrators to provide students with a rich instructional experience in a family-like atmosphere.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Professional development at Renaissance aims to provide teachers with the strategies and support they need to take responsibility for their own personal and professional development. Through a process of “teaming,” teachers and administrators develop shared responsibility for professional development. The professional development model is based upon the belief that teachers learn best through active involvement, reflection, and articulation of what they have learned. The main practices of the model include collegial feedback (critical friends), on-site inquiry, study groups, peer review, and classroom visitation. All of these practices are considered to be vehicles for reflection, change, and increased student outcomes.

Professional development is primarily organized and implemented in the form of Critical Friends Groups (CFGs), which began three years ago. For the first two years, there was one critical friends group in the school comprised of a cross-section of faculty. Beginning with the 2000/2001 school year, all faculty have been organized into CFGs. Currently, the peer review process and classroom visitations are completely voluntary—they are not based on “Staff Understandings” that are part of a school-based option (SBO) agreement. It is expected that over time, as teachers see the benefits of this approach, they will officially establish peer review through the SBO voting process.

In addition to CFGs, professional development at Renaissance incorporates a number of opportunities for teachers to meet and plan together. Buddy Partners, teachers who teach the same grade, meet together weekly during prep periods for one hour to plan curriculum. There is also a weekly cluster meeting to discuss non-curricular, student support issues such as student articulation, trip planning, parent meetings, Instructional Education Plans for special education students and other issues. These meetings are scheduled during the times students attend arts enrichment classes. The middle school math teachers also meet weekly for about 40 minutes in order to keep up with their new curriculum (i.e., Connected Math Program — CMP).

Professional development at Renaissance is linked to the partnerships they have established with other organizations that provide instructional enrichment, support, and curriculum development. These include:

- the Davis Dyslexia Correction Program and the Orton-Gilligan Approach to Dyslexia, which help faculty identify and provide effective instruction to children who have been diagnosed with dyslexia;
- the Junior Great Books (JGB) program, which promotes deep literary analysis through shared inquiry and trains teachers on how to facilitate this process in their classrooms;
- the Salvadori Program, which engages teachers and students in design and construction activities as a strategy for teaching and applying math and science skills; and
- the Arts Partnership (i.e., Annenberg School for the Arts), which consists of several programs including the Folk Music Society, Theatre of the Oppressed, Learning-By-Design, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, and Cap-21. Through these programs teachers become exposed to and learn how to incorporate the arts in their instruction.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The Renaissance faculty are organized into five clusters by grades or subject specialty (i.e., K-5, 6-8, 9/10, 11/12, and the arts). These clusters comprise the CFG and are the focus of staff development and peer support. Each CFG group is facilitated by a teacher, who is referred to as a “coach.” The school principal and the coaches meet together as a coaches group to develop skills needed to facilitate the CFGs. This includes engaging in the critical friends’ activities (i.e., peer review and observations) within the group, and using the group to support them in facilitating their own clusters. Each of the CFGs meet no less than twice a month for two hours after school.

The implementation of CFGs involves an evolutionary process since it is dependent upon the establishment of trust among group members. Depending upon the composition of the group, the group members’ prior experience with CFGs, and their orientation toward teaching (e.g., as an individualized act or collaborative act), it may take time to develop trust within the CFGs. Initially, the group engages in team-building activities, establishes ground-rules, and explores the use of protocols for discussion. The development of these processes and skills provides the conditions for introducing the central activities of the CFG, which teachers often perceive as threatening, such as reviews of student work and peer observation of instruction.

Professional development activities vary among the different clusters and among teachers within each of the clusters, depending upon how established the group is trust-wise. For example, professional development activities within the middle school cluster included six classroom observations. Only one observation occurred as part of the elementary school cluster, and none in the high school clusters. Also, within the middle school cluster every teacher participated in a observation, but not every teacher was the focus of the observation. The analyses of student work has a similar pattern. Some groups are still in the process of reviewing third-party work (work conducted by students of teachers in another group), rather than focusing on the more anxiety-producing element of submitting work of one’s own students. Within groups, some teachers will be willing to submit the work of their own students for peer review, but not every teacher is ready to do so.

For the coming school year, the Renaissance faculty plan to continue their implementation of the CFGs and will work toward increasing more teacher involvement in the peer review process. The staff will also continue to work on improving the high school mathematics program. New activities for next year include starting the “History ‘live’” program in the humanities, more professional development sessions for new teachers, initiating 40-minute vertical subject area/departmental meetings, and starting a parent CFG.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The responsibilities for developing professional development plans and activities are shared among administration and staff. Starting with the CFG, the coaches are responsible for facilitating planning for each of the clusters. Within each of the groups teachers identify their individual professional development needs and share them with their group. Throughout the school year, teachers participate in activities that relate to these goals (e.g., discussions of text, review of student work, classroom observations). Professional development objectives are also brought to The Charter School Governance (CSG) team, which is made up of teachers, parents, and administration. Each CFG has a CSG representative who reports the cluster’s needs to the governance team. This team is involved in planning professional development for the school. The school principal also initiates planning. For example over the past school year, he and the teacher in charge of curriculum development met with every humanities teacher to map out the standards and the curriculum over all the grades.

In order to ensure that professional development plans are carried out, there are regular “co-director” meetings attended by the principal and school faculty who are responsible for teacher support, student support, and special needs’ students. This team is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and operations of the school’s professional development plan.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

Renaissance staff have a comprehensive process for selecting new teachers, and all teachers participate on hiring committees. During these interviews, teacher candidates are informed that they are expected to participate in the Critical Friends Groups if they intend to teach at Renaissance.

Renaissance draws new staff from among its student teachers whenever possible. They have university ties with Bank Street, Queens College/CUNY, St. John’s University, and with the Teachers for Tomorrow program. Student teachers are encouraged to participate in the CFGs. The staff has found that those students who do participate are more likely to stay on to teach in the school once they graduate.

ALIGNMENT WITH STUDENT WORK AND OUTCOMES

As a charter school, students are required only to take the State assessment (i.e., fourth and eighth grades). The school offers Regents high school courses and their students take the Regents exams in high school. Student outcomes are taken into consideration when the administration and governing teams make decisions about instruction.

For example, the faculty decided to decrease the size of the high school mathematics classes in a response to students' performance on the Math Regents. Student outcomes are examined by individual teachers in order to determine if teachers have need for additional professional development support. The faculty are interested in learning more about the use of student outcomes in planning professional development. One of the teachers has registered for a Professional Development Laboratory (PDL) on using student assessments.

The review of student work is at the core of the CFG model of professional development. The Renaissance faculty is at the beginning stages of using student work to plan instruction. As they continue with this process, it will become a major force in the school's planning and accountability structure.

ACCOUNTABILITY

A formal investigation of the impact of Renaissance's professional development on teacher practice and student outcomes has not been conducted, but would be welcomed by the faculty. The goal of the CFG process is to develop a process for shared accountability and instructional support that is based on an analysis of teacher practice and a review of student work. One of the initial indicators of whether the CFG process is effective is the extent to which the processes and strategies used within the groups are evident in other areas of the school. There is some early indication that this is happening. A teacher described how the Collaborative School Governance Team started using "Ground rules" to structure their meetings. As a result, those meetings have become more productive. Similarly, the "Critical Incident Protocol" has been used throughout the school for people to discuss "sticky issues." Another outcome is whether the school is successful in establishing a formal peer review process, this would show that the CFGs have been successful at establishing trust among teachers and reducing isolation in the classroom.

Classroom observations of teachers, whether they are voluntary peer or administrative observations, are used as evidence of and information about the quality of instruction. Less experienced teachers are more likely to have formal administrative observations of their instruction. The principal also meets with the more experienced teachers to discuss their goals and accomplishments. Instructional support is geared toward struggling teachers. For example, a struggling teacher may be paired with a more experienced co-teacher.

Feedback from students and parents is part of the accountability process. There has been at least one incident in which student/parental feedback resulted in a co-teaching arrangement to support a struggling teacher.

The Renaissance faculty also consider the feedback they receive from the university pre-service programs to modify and structure their training of student teachers, as well as professional development.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement is high at the Renaissance Charter School, and parents are very involved in the decision-making processes, fundraising, and the day-to-day operations of the school. Parents are aware of the CFG process and have requested their own CFG. One teacher, who has gone through the training, has agreed to coach the parent group for the coming year.

FUNDING

Renaissance uses its general operating budget to fund teacher attendance in PDLs and per-session after-school meetings for CFGs. As a charter school, Renaissance no longer has access to staff developers through the local school district. The school community, particularly parents, vigorously seek grants to enrich their instructional program (e.g., Annenberg Arts grant). These grant-funded programs also provide professional development to teachers. Renaissance staff also receive instructional support when it is offered as part of the package with new curriculum (e.g., Connected Math).

School Statistics: The Renaissance Charter School

SCHOOL MISSION/VISION*

The Renaissance Charter School (TRCS) is based on the conviction that a change in the destiny of a single individual can lead to a change in the destiny of a community, nation, and ultimately, humankind. Its mission as a K-12 school is to foster educated, responsible, humanistic young leaders who have a thorough understanding of New York's heritage. Its determination is to graduate individuals who are independent thinkers, global citizens and life-long learners. At TRCS we believe that effort and hard work are more important than innate ability, so students are constantly encouraged to expand their capability, and teachers are challenged to develop themselves as compassionate educators.

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Teacher Characteristics: 34 Teachers
100.0% Licensed and Permanently Assigned to this School
12.0% Have Less than Two Years Experience in this School
62.0% Have Masters Degree or Higher
- Student Characteristics: 9.5% English Language Learners, Kindergarten-8th Grade, 2000
10.4% English Language Learners, High School, 2000
22.1% White
24.8% Black
40.5% Hispanic
12.5% Asian and others
70.6% Eligible for Free Lunch
94.1% Attendance Rate
66.0% of the Class of 2000 Graduated in Four Years

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT***

State ELA Test Grade 4

Spring	Number Tested	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Levels 3+4
1999	25	4.0%	40.0%	52.0%	4.0%	56.0%
2000	23	4.3%	30.4%	47.8%	17.4%	65.2%

State Mathematics Test Grade 4

Spring	Number Tested	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Levels 3+4
1999	26	15.0%	15.0%	62.0%	8.0%	70.0%
2000	22	0.0%	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%	72.7%

State ELA Test Grade 8

Spring	Number Tested	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Levels 3+4
1999	44	11.4%	45.5%	38.6%	4.5%	43.1%

State Mathematics Test Grade 8

Spring	Number Tested	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Levels 3+4
1999	44	26.7%	35.6%	37.8%	0.0%	37.8%

High School Regents Analysis

Spring	Scores 65%+ /Total HS Roster	Scores 80%+ /Total HS Roster
2000	2.06	0.61
2001	2.49	0.90
Growth	21%	48%

Sequential One/Math A

Spring	Scores 65%+ /Total HS Roster	Scores 80%+ /Total HS Roster
2000	0.35	0.14
2001	0.63	0.19
Growth	79%	39%

Global History

Spring	Scores 65%+ /Total HS Roster	Scores 80%+ /Total HS Roster
2000	0.42	0.08
2001	0.47	0.12
Growth	11%	53%

Living Environment/Biology

Spring	Scores 65%+ /Total HS Roster	Scores 80%+ /Total HS Roster
2000	0.19	0.01
2001	0.42	0.06
Growth	122%	295%

English Language Arts

Spring	Scores 65%+ /Total HS Roster	Scores 80%+ /Total HS Roster
2000	0.29	0.01
2001	0.26	0.01
Growth	-09%	-41%

Sequential Two/Math B

Spring	Scores 65%+ /Total HS Roster	Scores 80%+ /Total HS Roster
2000	0.12	0.03
2001	0.10	0.03
Growth	-22%	-1%

U.S. History

Spring	Scores 65%+ /Total HS Roster	Scores 80%+ /Total HS Roster
2000	0.21	0.03
2001	0.20	0.02
Growth	-6%	-32%

Spanish Comprehensive

Spring	Scores 65%+ /Total HS Roster	Scores 80%+ /Total HS Roster
2000	0.43	0.30
2001	0.43	0.31
Growth	0%	5%

* Obtained from the 1999-2000 Request for Proposals Submitted to the New York State Charter Schools Unit.

** Obtained from the 1998-1999 School Report and as of July 2001, the Principal.

*** Obtained from the 1998-1999 School Report and as of July 2001, the Principal. Some ELL Students not tested.

EXEMPLARY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT . . .

East Side Community High School

Mark Federman, Principal
Jill Herman, Founding Principal (1992/2001)
420 East 12th Street
New York, NY 10009
212.460.8467

Year Started: Fall 1992
Enrollment: 472 students
(172/Middle School and 300/High School)
Grades: 7th-12th

OVERVIEW

East Side Community High School offers a personalized, college-bound academic program for students in grades 7 to 12. Classes are focused on helping students develop “habits of mind”: shaping viewpoints, challenging perspectives, using evidence, making connections, and imagining alternatives. Block scheduling allows for small class sizes and the integration of disciplines. Portfolios are used in all grades and students complete a series of performance-assessment tasks to graduate. East Side’s professional development program is staff-designed, staff-facilitated and collaborative.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PROCESS AND VALUES

Professional development at East Side is directly linked to the school’s governance model of distributive staff leadership and is guided by a set of “Staff Understandings,” which the entire staff reviews and approves annually. Professional development at East Side is primarily school-based. Faculty members play major roles in organizing and facilitating professional development within the school, and some have also provided workshops to teachers in other schools. While the majority of staff meetings are planned and facilitated by the teachers themselves, on occasion the school will call in consultants and staff developers with particular expertise. For example, the Manhattan High School Superintendency has provided East Side with a staff developer in mathematics, a facilitator to address special education inclusion, and opportunities for staff to attend university-based workshops on inclusion. The East Side faculty also invites other organizations, such as the Gay/Lesbian/Straight Teacher Network (GLSTN), to conduct workshops on issues of interest to the staff.

Within several years of the school’s opening, staff development evolved from being principal-led to teacher-led. As the faculty grew more experienced, teachers began to establish different committees and organizing structures for school planning. One of these committees began an action research project to enhance professional development. This project was facilitated by a local researcher as part of an evaluation by the New York Network for School Renewal (NYNSR), of which East Side is a member. Committee members surveyed the faculty to identify their professional development needs and then modified, abandoned and added various forms of professional development. This process established a culture within the school where staff input is sought out and used to guide change, and where professional development is implemented and assessed through a process of group discussion and reflection.

Professional development at East Side is guided by a set of fundamental principles:

- All professional development is guided by a common mission and a common language.
- Ongoing reflection is a central component of effective professional development.
- Staff needs consistent time to meet.
- Professional development activities must be staff-run and conducted in-house.
- The staff's ongoing learning and professional development must mirror and model classroom practice and high expectations for student achievement.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

These principles are embodied in the faculty meetings that East Side has made a central component of its collaborative professional development model. Faculty meet in several different and complementary configurations: curriculum planning teams, vertical teams, full staff meetings and grade teams. East Side staff commits to attending one two-hour staff meeting per week after school. Teachers organize and facilitate these meetings. Attendance at staff meetings is expected as part of the "Staff Understandings," and teachers come to the meetings prepared and actively participate in them. Teachers also hold themselves responsible for improving their professional development experiences.

Teachers who teach the same subject and grade level form curriculum planning teams. In lieu of daily prep periods, teachers on the curriculum planning teams meet four hours a week during common planning time. These meetings take place when students are involved in internships or studio arts classes. The school has designed its other professional development around a team collaborative model. The mathematics and science teachers do not participate in the curriculum planning teams as there is only one of each per grade.

Vertical team meetings, comprised of disciplines across grades 7-12, complement the curriculum planning teams by developing a continuity of curriculum expectations of students. In vertical teams, teachers identify those issues that cut across grade lines, share practices, explore dilemmas, and establish policies. It is within vertical meetings that a student's experience in the school, across all of the grades, becomes well articulated. It also is an important venue for teachers to explore their practice and its relationship to the mission of the school.

For example, the humanities team decided that it needed to look closely at the process of teaching students to do research papers, which students are required to present during senior year as part of their graduation requirement. To prepare students to meet this requirement, the team decided that students should complete a research paper in each grade. The team then spent several meetings discussing effective methods of teaching research, note-taking and research paper writing. Additionally, the team committed to an independent reading program to address the weak literacy skills of the student population and developed a 7-12 program by sharing strategies for creating independent reading components in their classes. Through this focused work, humanities teachers also identified the improvement of research papers and literacy skills as the focus of their professional development.

Within the math vertical team, all teachers have agreed to use a new program called College Preparatory Math (CPM). Math teachers come together to identify and work through issues they are facing with the curriculum and to further develop the mission of the math program. Like science and humanities teachers, they also discuss the use of roundtable presentations, where students reflect upon their work and share it with outside adults.

Teachers meet in grade teams as well to discuss individual students' progress and problems. They troubleshoot and develop strategies to help students improve academically and socially. Special education providers, ESL teachers, guidance counselors and social workers often attend and provide support to teachers. Teachers also plan advisory curriculum together.

While teachers have considerable freedom in planning and facilitating most of these meetings, it is the principal's responsibility to ensure that professional development is consistent with the school's instructional mission. Teachers are expected to consider the "non-negotiables" in the curriculum, such as a commitment to heterogeneous groupings and to performance-based assessment. The principal assesses the progress of the staff planning sessions by meeting with vertical team leaders and grade facilitators. The principal will explicitly direct the staff to address an area of concern that she feels needs attention (e.g., bringing student work to meetings and looking at assignments to see whether teachers' grading standards are similar). The principal also facilitates staff meetings on topics in which she has particular expertise, or when teachers request her guidance. In addition to meetings, the principal provides support to teachers through classroom visits, one-on-one meetings, a weekly letter to the staff and relevant professional articles.

SUPPORT FOR NEW TEACHERS

Support for new teachers is an ongoing challenge at East Side. The school's current professional development program is designed to meet the needs of experienced staff around instructional issues and does not necessarily address the needs of less experienced staff who may want to discuss classroom management issues. East Side seeks to supplement this program for new teachers through individual meetings with the principal, new teacher group meetings, and a peer mentoring program.

This year, East Side has paired each new teacher with a mentor, the majority of whom are former teachers from the school. Mentors understand the philosophy of the school, its mission and its culture. As a result, they have provided extensive support to new teachers and have helped teachers transition into their new roles.

STAFF RETREATS

The faculty attends at least one annual retreat in order to plan curriculum and instruction and to reflect on practices. Additionally, many attend the annual small schools retreat sponsored by New Visions.

ALIGNMENT WITH STUDENT WORK AND OUTCOMES

East Side is a performance-based assessment school, and students must successfully complete performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) in social studies, science, and mathematics in order to graduate. East Side uses the rubric developed by the Performance-Based Assessment Consortium, which is aligned to the New York State Performance Standards, to assess whether students' work meets graduation requirements. All students participate in roundtable presentations, where they present their portfolios to their peers, teachers, parents, and external reviewers. They must also take the English Language Arts Regents in the eleventh grade, and the City and State standardized achievement tests in the seventh and eighth grade.

The professional development process at East Side is informed by student outcomes and student work. When structuring professional development, the faculty focuses on student and teacher work as a means of improving practice.

For example, humanities teachers used an overnight retreat to examine student writing and develop strategies for improving it. Each teacher brought copies of different types of student writing assignments, organized by type of writing (e.g., research paper, independent reading logs, literary response). The staff divided into different teams, and each team examined one type of writing across grades seven to twelve to identify the progression of students' skills through different types of writing assignments. The teachers identified the strengths and weaknesses of their own practice and developed strategies for writing incorporating it into the humanities curriculum.

At other times, professional development is linked to the testing process. For example, middle school humanities teachers worked together to reformat their assignments to more closely resemble questions found on the eighth grade English language arts exam.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The process of hiring teachers is a critical component of maintaining and developing the professional culture of East Side. The school's staff members annually vote to support a school-based option (SBO), allowing them to hire new teachers through a school-based personnel committee. Given the school's highly collaborative structure, it is important that the current staff feel that they can work effectively with the new teachers. Teacher candidates must also know that they will be expected to work as part of a close, collaborative team. These expectations are communicated by giving teachers a copy of the "Staff Understandings" and through discussions with the teaching staff. Prospective teachers are asked to visit the school to determine if East Side's culture is compatible with their own vision of education. They are then interviewed by a group of East Side staff members. Finally, if the staff is interested, the candidate is asked either to do a demonstration lesson at the school or to allow an East Side teacher to visit them at their school to observe their practice. This process helps to ensure that teachers who join the staff share a view of teaching and learning that is consistent with the school's mission.

Whenever possible, East Side draws new staff from among its student teachers. Student teachers come from New York University, Teachers College, New School University, Bank Street, and Hunter. Student teachers participate in curriculum planning meetings and in staff meetings, as their school schedules permit.

REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME

East Side considers several indicators when evaluating the impact of professional development. One indicator is teacher retention: teachers tend to stay in schools where they feel supported. East Side has less staff turnover than it did in the first few years, and the principal attributes this in large part to the sense of ownership that the school's professional development model creates. Teachers play a central role in developing the school's instructional program, and by doing so, they learn and grow along with the students. This way the entire school becomes a learning organization. However, now that the school is established, a new type of teacher turnover is occurring. Some teachers are returning to school full-time to get more advanced degrees, while others are now thinking about moving outside the City where they can earn a higher salary.

Teachers' grading patterns are reviewed every semester. Anonymous lists of each teacher's grades are distributed to staff for review and discussion. An analysis of grading patterns helps the administration locate discrepancies, determine the causes and design professional development accordingly, by isolating, for instance, where teaching in a specific subject area needs improvement or where certain teachers (e.g., inexperienced) have grading approaches that are inconsistent with the rest of the staff.

East Side includes staff and external reviewers on graduation portfolio committees. Staff and external reviewers' evaluations tend to be consistent. By including individuals outside the school in the assessment process, East Side has added an additional layer of accountability to their instructional strategies.

Analyses of student achievement are also used to assess instruction. In addition to the citywide achievement tests, the school district also administers assessments to determine areas of student need. East Side's principal examines the results of these exams in each teacher's class to supplement what she had already deduced about teachers' instructional strengths from direct observation or discussions with them.

FUNDING

To support professional development, East Side relies mainly on the school budget but focuses on the programming/scheduling of staff time to get the most out of its resources. The school uses its budget to pay for teachers to attend conferences or other types of professional development and uses district funds to obtain support in particular areas. Through funding from New Visions for Public Schools and the Annenberg Challenge grants, East Side holds two annual staff retreats per year. With Annenberg's support ending, the school is concerned about how to support these opportunities for planning and reflection for the coming year.

The school also takes advantage of external professional development opportunities (e.g., GLSTN). Through their participation in the NYNSR evaluation, East Side's faculty had access to a researcher who helped the staff develop its action research project on professional development. This then led two staff members to obtain a grant from the Spencer Foundation to continue this work.

Schools Statistics: East Side Community High School

*SCHOOL MISSION/VISION**

We are dedicated to the proposition that all students can learn and that it is the school's sacred responsibility to create an environment in which that will happen. The school's goals for the students are for them to:

- Develop a habit of critical thinking, questioning, and reflection on work.
- Understand problems in a more complex way and imagine alternative solutions.
- Demonstrate an understanding of evidence, viewpoint, and to make connections between theory and practice.
- Recognize that individuals can have an impact in their communities and in their lives.
- Experience a sense of accomplishment, explore career options, take pride in work, and see themselves as lifetime learners.
- Strengthen the ethic of the community, understand systems, and be a contributing member of the community.
- Learn how to work independently and collaboratively, as a participant and observer.
- Enhance respect for others and appreciation of cultural diversity.

*SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS***

- Teacher Characteristics: 36 Teachers
- Student Characteristics: 11% English Language Learners in the Middle School
9.7% English Language Learners in the High School

Middle School	High School
4.1% White	3.4% White
27.9% Black	26.2% Black
60.5% Hispanic	62.6% Hispanic
7.6% Asian and others	7.8% Asian and others

72.3% Eligible for Free Lunch
86.4% Attendance Rate for the Middle School
86.5% Attendance Rate for the High School
63% of the Class of 2001 Graduated in Four Years***

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT***

State English Language Arts and City CTB-Reading Tests Grades 7 and 8

Spring	Number Tested	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Levels 3+4
2000	20	25.0%	65.0%	10.0%	0.0%	10.0%
2001	21	57.1%	42.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

City CTB-Mathematics Grade 7

Spring	Number Tested	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Levels 3+4
2000	22	72.7%	22.7%	4.5%	0.0%	4.5%
2001	20	85.0%	15.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

State ELA Test Grade 8****

Spring	Number Tested	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Levels 3+4
2000	76	39.5%	48.7%	11.8%	0.0%	11.8%
2001	80	30.0%	62.5%	7.5%	0.0%	7.5%

State Mathematics Test Grade 8

Spring	Number Tested	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Levels 3+4
2000	76	40.8%	43.4%	14.5%	1.3%	15.8%
2001	83	63.9%	30.1%	6.0%	0.0%	6.0%

English Regents Examination

Spring	Number Tested	55-100%	65-100%	85-100%
2000	101	78.2%	48.5%	1.0%
2001	13	69.2%	46.2%	0.0%

* Obtained from the 2000-2001 CEP.

** Obtained from the 1999-2000 School Report and the 2000-2001 CEP.

*** Obtained from the Department of Education Website.

**** Obtained from the 2000-2001 School Report. Some ELL Students not tested.

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- Guskey, T. (1995). Results Oriented Professional Development: In Search of An Optimal Mix of Effective Practices. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky.
- National Staff Development Council. (2000). NSDC Standards for Staff Development. www.nsd.org/educatorindex.htm.
- New York State Education Department. Investing in Our Work Force: Professional Development, Teacher Evaluation, Student Achievement. www.emsc.nysed.gov

RESOURCES

Internet Resources

- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
<http://www.ascd.org>
- The Knowledge Loom
<http://www.knowledgeloom.org>
- National Commission on Teaching & America's Future
<http://www.nctaf.org>
- The Professional Development Laboratory, New York University, School of Education
<http://www.nyu.edu/pdl>

Print Resources

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Guide to School Visits

New Visions has developed this brief guide to help you as you prepare to go on school visits. We hope that it proves helpful to you.

1. SELECTING A SCHOOL TO VISIT:

You should select a school that matches your identified needs.

New Visions' Center for School Success has information on many successful and promising public schools in New York City that welcome visitors. You can find the Center for School Success at: www.newvisions.org, or contact Jody Imbimbo, the Center's director, at (212) 645-5110 for information and assistance in facilitating a visit to these schools.

In addition, you should talk to colleagues and professional experts who may know of good schools to visit.

2. PREPARING FOR A VISIT:

Be clear about the purpose of the visit. This may be your only opportunity to see the school, so plan carefully. You will get the most from your visit if you are focused on what you would like to observe and learn during your visit.

Select a team for the visit.

Think about who should go on the school visit and why they should be included. Depending on the team's goals, the team might include an assistant principal, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and students. Assign a team leader who will be the contact person for the team and will make the arrangements for the actual school visit. Another team member should be designated the recorder for the visit. Remember to check with the hosting principal to determine how many team members may participate in the visit.

Prepare an outline of key topics and questions.

We suggest that you and your team prepare an outline of key topics and questions to help you during your visit. If possible, share your questions with the school principal before your visit. For help in thinking about key topics, please refer to Section A, Issues to Explore During a School Visit.

Review the school's Annual School Report before your visit.

The New York City Department of Education publishes Annual School Reports for each public school in the city. These reports provide important background information on the school, including student and teacher demographics and student performance data. Annual School Reports may be found on the NYC Department of Education's website: www.nycenet.edu/daa/reportcards

Determine whether you need a half-day or full-day visit.

Please see the descriptions below. Please discuss the purpose of your visit with the school principal beforehand to ensure that the agenda for your visit best reflects your team's needs and interests.

HALF-DAY VISIT

A half-day visit usually lasts between two and three hours. A half-day visitation typically begins with a meeting with the principal during which time s/he will provide a brief overview of the school and inform you about the school's mission, curriculum, and instructional program(s). You will then be given a tour of the school, which should include classrooms, administrative offices, lunch room, auditorium, gym, library/learning center, computer labs, and guidance and college advisement offices. During the tour, some schools encourage visitors to talk with students; please check with the principal to determine the school's policy. After the tour, you should have the opportunity to meet with teachers, parents, administrators and staff to ask questions and debrief.

NOTE: You may want to structure your half-day visit around the activities that you want to observe and learn about. For instance, if you want to see a professional development workshop, you may want to visit in the afternoon so that you see the after-school professional development program.

FULL-DAY VISIT

A full-day visit is generally more intensive than a half-day visit. A full-day visit should include a meeting with the principal and a brief tour. This visit, however, should allow for more in-depth observations of a particular aspect of the school. Examples of in-depth observations include opportunities to shadow a teacher or administrator, and to conduct classroom observations for a full period. During the tour, some schools encourage visitors to talk with students; please check with the principal to determine the school's policy. At the end of the school day, you should have the opportunity to meet with teachers, parents, administrators and staff to ask questions and debrief.

3. CONDUCTING A VISIT:

While you are walking around a school, try to observe tangible evidence of the school's climate and culture. Look for evidence of a welcoming environment, engaged students, and active learning. Please see Section B, What to Look For on a School Visit.

SCHOOL VISIT GUIDELINES:

Be on time. If you are going to be late, or if you will not be able to attend the school visit, call the school principal or contact person as soon as possible.

Be prepared. All team members should have copies of the agenda, the team's outline and/or questions, as well as pens and paper.

Designate a team recorder. The team should select a team recorder who will be responsible for reporting back to the entire team about the site visit.

Be respectful. You should be aware of the time and effort that your hosts put into the visit.

Be professional. Maintain professional conversation in all areas, including classrooms, hallways, and restrooms.

Do not interrupt a lesson. You are visiting a school and observing actual lessons. Do not interrupt during a class unless the teacher or principal signals that you may ask questions. If you talk to students, keep the discussion brief to avoid interrupting the planned lesson.

Debrief as a team. At the end of the visit, your team should meet to talk about what you have seen and what it means to each of you in relation to your school's plan. Debriefing can take place in a room at the school or at an off-site location.

4. FOLLOWING THE VISIT:

Report back to the team. The designated team recorder should report back on the site visit to the entire planning team. The entire team should discuss the visit in relation to the outline and questions that the team prepared prior to the visit. You should consider whether the team members observed practices that might be incorporated into your school's plan. It is also valuable to identify problems and challenges that surfaced during the visit that might be avoided or addressed by further planning.

SECTION A

ISSUES TO EXPLORE DURING A SCHOOL VISIT

RIGOROUS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM:

Does the school provide all students with a standards-based academic curriculum (i.e., a curriculum which includes requirements for English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and laboratory sciences)?

What types of instructional approaches do teachers use to engage students?

What opportunities are available for students to think critically and become actively involved in problem-solving activities?

What strategies does the school use to encourage students to meet and exceed the standards?

PERSONALIZED RELATIONSHIPS:

How does the school structure time to support personalization (e.g., block scheduling, extended day, after school)?

How does the school structure its instructional program(s) to support personalization (e.g. houses, institutes, student advisory program)?

How does the school identify students' academic and non-academic needs? How are those needs addressed? Are additional supports and resources provided?

How does the school help students who do not meet the standards?

CLEAR FOCUS AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS:

What is the school's mission?

Does the school's mission include high expectations for all students?

Has the school organized all of its functions (including instructional program, student activities, student recruitment and admissions, staff hiring, and budget) around its mission?

How does the school evaluate its progress towards achieving the mission?

Does the school ensure that all students receive the preparation and personalized support needed to set and pursue post-high school goals?

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP:

How does the principal ensure that the school's mission shapes all of the educational programs in the school?

How does the principal exercise leadership in the areas of curriculum and student instruction?

What roles do students, parents, and staff have in school decision-making and governance?

What opportunities do teachers and other school staff have to hold leadership positions in the school?

SCHOOL-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION:

How does the school structure time for professional development (e.g., block scheduling, common preparatory periods, voluntary agreement to meet outside of school hours, and early release of students)?

How does the school use professional development time to focus on teaching and learning (e.g., reviewing student work, developing rubrics, reflecting, and sharing practice)?

How does the school ensure that teachers and staff receive adequate follow-up and support following professional development activities?

What structures have the school put in place to provide teachers with opportunities for peer support (e.g., teachers regularly spending time in each other's classrooms, peer coaching, mentoring, team teaching, and study groups)?

Does the school utilize any outside resources to support the professional development program (e.g., university partnerships, institutes, consultants)? If so, what types of professional development do these outside resources provide?

How do professional developers and the principal provide feedback to teachers?

MEANINGFUL CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

How does the school assess student needs and progress over time?

In addition to standardized tests, what measures are used to assess student progress (e.g., portfolios, performance-based tasks, and teacher tests)?

How are student achievement data reviewed and analyzed?

How do teachers and staff use student achievement data to plan curriculum and instruction?

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY AND PARENT/CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT:

What roles do parents/caregivers and community members have in the school?

What partnerships and alliances have been created with community-based and other organizations?

What types of resources and activities are offered by the school to parents/caregivers and community members (e.g., GED programs, technology training, workshops)?

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:

How do students participate in school decision-making and governance?

How are students' interests and needs reflected and integrated into the instructional program?

Is there a variety of extracurricular activities that address students' interests and needs, including after school and extended day programs (e.g., clubs, athletics, arts, academic enrichment)?

EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY:

Do curricula, lessons, and other activities use technologies that accommodate diverse learning styles, academic skills, and technology skills?

What types of opportunities do members of the school community have to expand their learning and use of technology?

Does professional development promote the effective use of technology, and is professional development delivered using technology?

Do all students have equal access to school-based technology?

SECTION B

WHAT TO LOOK FOR ON A SCHOOL VISIT

1. GENERAL SCHOOL OBSERVATIONS

School Climate

What is the climate of the school (this might include the way that students and visitors are greeted upon entry, the cleanliness/orderliness in the hallways and classrooms, and displays in the hallways)?

How do students interact with adults in the building?

How are desks arranged in classrooms (e.g., in rows, or in clusters)?

Expectations

Are there clear expectations and standards posted in classroom? Have teachers posted rubrics in their classrooms?

Are there displays of student work in the classrooms? Are they examples of good student work? How do the displays show students' individuality?

Is there visual evidence of a college preparatory culture, including a college/guidance office, college displays, and bulletin boards?

Are students comfortable asking questions of teachers?

Facilities

How are students using libraries, resource centers, and computer centers during the day and after school?

Did you notice anything in particular about "common rooms" such as the school library, gym, auditorium, and lunch room?

Are computers kept in self-contained computer labs, or are they kept in classrooms?

In schools that share a building, how do schools divide space between them? How do they share "common rooms" and hallways?

2. TYPES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS (IF IT IS APPROPRIATE TO DO SO)

Knowledge and Awareness

What are you learning?

Why do you need to learn this?

What did you need to know in order to learn this?

How will this help you learn in the future?

Clear Expectations

How do you know when your work is good enough?

Do you know how to make your work better?

When you get a grade on your work, do you know why you received that grade and what it means?

What happens when you make a mistake or answer a question incorrectly?

Student Engagement

Do you get to work with classmates on tasks? If so, when and how?

Are you asked to compare concepts, strategies and skills with other students?

Do you learn from other students?

How much time do you spend at your desk?

Do you have opportunities to learn about subjects and topics that interest you?

Supports

When you are having trouble understanding something, how do you get help?

Do your teachers ask how your work is going, and if you need help?

Does your teacher offer you encouragement?

Do you have the things that you need in order to do your work?

Are you asked to compare your work with another students to learn different ways of doing the assignment?

Is there more than one right answer?



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