



INTEGRATING CAREER PATHWAYS
IN HIGH SCHOOLS

The Community's College

Using College Faculty and Space

LEARNING BRIEF #9

INTRODUCTION

The Transfer 2 Career Collaborative (T2C) approach provides students with multiple postsecondary readiness opportunities, from career exploration and awareness to training and credentials. This brief describes an innovative relationship between a community college and two Queens-based high schools that enables high school students to physically and academically experience a college environment and network with working professionals—all while gaining tech industry experience and credentials.

T2C AT VOYAGES PREPARATORY AND NORTH QUEENS COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOLS

Both Voyages Preparatory High School and North Queens Community High School entered the T2C collaborative with their students' interest in technology careers top of mind. The school leaders learned through relationship-building in the T2C Learning Community meetings that LaGuardia Community College was able to offer technology education and certification training through its Division of Adult and Continuing Education.

In addition to the T2C implementation grants, LaGuardia identified funding to sustain this new offering from an Arconic Foundation grant in support of high-quality STEM education opportunities for students, engineering and technical skills training, and access to the STEM fields for underrepresented individuals. Chandana Mahadeswaraswamy, LaGuardia's senior director of career and professional programs in the Division of Adult and Continuing Education, recognized these funding streams as a perfect opportunity to offer a customized, on-campus foundational tech course to T2C's transfer high school students while also advancing LaGuardia's mission to serve the underserved and drive equity in the tech sector.

Given the strong student interest and foundational curriculum, the T2C School Design Team's¹ central questions became: **How can we ensure that transfer high school students get the most value out of this experience? And what barriers can we anticipate and remove before the program begins?**

T2C LEARNING:

LEVERAGING LAGUARDIA'S INSTRUCTORS AND FACILITIES

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE T2C TEAM, LAGUARDIA CREATED A CUSTOMIZED EIGHT-WEEK FUNDAMENTALS PROGRAM IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) ENTITLED "TECHNOLOGY AT WORK."

LaGuardia built the following elements into the course structure:

- **Saturday scheduling:** Because faculty for grant-funded continuing education courses are hired directly from the field to provide the most up-to-date, sector-specific guidance, courses are offered on evenings and weekends, outside of typical industry working hours. Although the T2C model prioritizes embedding career development into schools, an exception was made for this premiere opportunity due to it being off-campus by design.
- **Industry-recognized credentialing:** The training program prepares students to take the exam for the CompTIA ITF+, an industry-recognized certification that covers all areas of IT. It focuses on the essential IT skills and knowledge needed to perform tasks commonly done by entry-level IT professionals, including using features and functions of common operating systems and establishing network connectivity; identifying common software applications and their purpose; and using security and web browsing best practices. Because the course is taught by industry professionals, they are able to easily incorporate real-world applications and scenarios to guide the coursework.
- **Paid MetroCards for students:** To ensure that transportation costs are not a barrier to student engagement, LaGuardia uses part of its Arconic Foundation grant funding to provide round-trip MetroCards for the duration of the eight-week program.
- **Creation of educational case manager position:** LaGuardia has hired a part-time education case manager for the program, who is available both inside and outside the classroom. This person observes the class to understand barriers to learning or challenges with the course for both the instructors and the students. The case manager serves as a liaison between the students, LaGuardia, and the transfer schools' guidance counselors, ensuring that all parties are in communication about student attendance, course progress, and any social and emotional challenges that students may be facing.

- **Industry panel event:** LaGuardia organizes an evening event with panelists from different areas of the tech industry. The goals for this event are to provide students with a broader perspective of the many careers in the tech industry; to offer them networking opportunities with workers in the field; and to allow them to learn about different academic and professional journeys in the field of technology.

Mahadeswaraswamy credits the T2C initiative with sparking innovation in the relationship between the community college and its wider community: *“To be honest, I wasn’t very familiar with transfer schools before joining T2C. Being able to work with schools and other workforce partners created opportunities to think through who [LaGuardia] should be serving, beyond who we are already reaching. These are our future students.”*



LESSONS LEARNED

A number of lessons learned from the first cohort will enable LaGuardia and its school partners to make improvements as they engage new cohorts of students moving forward:



Barriers should be removed. Students in the first cohort felt that this program came at the right time in their education and appreciated the supports provided, such as free transportation to and from campus and additional resources through the case manager check-ins. As noted by Mahadeswaraswamy, students seemed deeply committed to the program. In light of the fact that some students may not have had any intentions of attending college or may have come from families where no one has attended college, the inclusive nature of the program made a difference. *“This program gave students the opportunity to step inside a college setting without the pressure of being in college,”* Mahadeswaraswamy said.



Seeing is believing. Providing students the opportunity to travel on their own to a college campus and take a course in a college classroom can enable them to see themselves as future college students. Being immersed in this environment for a few months can help students choose the best postsecondary pathway for themselves, whether at LaGuardia, another college, training or employment in the tech sector, or something else.



Engagement matters. For some students, the college environment did not feel interactive enough to hook them into the program. It is thus important that courses maintain age-appropriate instructional strategies to foster student engagement. For instructors, this may require additional training on pedagogy and facilitation methods to best serve younger adults.



Students should explore before training. Students should have ample opportunities to engage in career awareness and exploration activities prior to signing up for trainings. While some participants found the coursework interesting and enjoyed being on a tech sector pathway, others did not have enough knowledge of what they would be learning or hadn't yet done enough self-assessment and work-based learning activities to determine if this was the right training for them. To ensure student commitment, career awareness and exploration is needed prior to an advanced training program such as this one.

Moving forward, LaGuardia plans to partner with transfer high schools to offer tech training and may expand its program offerings beyond technology to include course offerings in multiple industries on its campus with college staff.



ABOUT T2C PARTNERS



NORTH QUEENS COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL, located in Flushing, is a partnership between the New York City Department of Education and SCO Family of Services, a human services organization serving New York City and Long Island. The high school serves students who are over-age and under-credited. The school uses a “house system” in lieu of traditional grades, placing students in one of four ascending “houses” according to their credit accumulation and Regents exam completion.



VOYAGES PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL is a collaboration between the New York City Department of Education and Queens Community House, a multisite, multiservice settlement house that serves the diverse neighborhoods of Queens. The high school is located in Elmhurst and serves students who are at least sixteen years old and are struggling to earn credits in a traditional high school environment. It provides individualized academic and instructional supports and enrichment activities, including paid internships, after-school Regents exam preparation, after-school and Saturday workshops, field trips, and guest speaker events and panels.



LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, located in the Long Island City neighborhood of Queens, is part of the City University of New York system. A 2017 Stanford University study of economic mobility of US colleges showed that LaGuardia is among the top 1% of 604 two-year colleges nationwide with the greatest success in placing low-income students into good jobs.² The college’s mission is to educate and graduate one of the most diverse student populations in the country to become critical thinkers and socially responsible citizens who help shape a rapidly evolving society.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

JobsFirstNYC and New Visions for Public Schools are spearheading the Transfer 2 Career Collaborative (T2C), an innovative career development strategy for New York City transfer high schools aimed at improving the postsecondary and workforce outcomes of students most at risk of becoming part of the out-of-school, out-of-work population. Working across twelve transfer schools in the New Visions network, T2C integrates sectoral workforce development partners and postsecondary programs to provide sector-specific career pathways for over-age, under-credited students. This learning brief is part of a series describing emergent practices in the T2C initiative that support progress toward student, partnership, institution, and system-level goals.



ABOUT JOBSFIRSTNYC

JobsFirstNYC creates and advances solutions that break down barriers and transform the systems supporting young adults and their communities in the pursuit of economic opportunities. Our innovative approach to developing new partnership models has helped shape public policy, private philanthropic investments, and the best practices of employers, colleges, service providers, high schools, and others. Over the last 14 years, JobsFirstNYC has worked with more than 150 organizations in communities across New York City to build innovative solutions that connect young adults to economic opportunities.



ABOUT NEW VISIONS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

New Visions for Public Schools is a nonprofit organization that has worked to strengthen New York City public schools for more than 30 years. Since 1989, New Visions has designed, created, and sustained great public schools for all New Yorkers, driven by the belief that all of New York City's students deserve public schools that make successful futures possible. It has empowered and equipped everyday visionaries—New York City's educators, students, and families—with the tools and support needed to achieve the future they imagine for themselves. Today, New Visions helps nearly 1,600 public schools plan for the success of nearly a million students citywide.

DEDICATION

We dedicate this report to Julia Forman, Principal Dez-Ann Romain, and all the educators we lost too young and too early in 2020. They dedicated their energy, creativity, and intelligence to building a more equitable, more supportive public school system for all students, but particularly students who have too often been excluded from educational opportunity. We honor their memory by building on their lives' work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

JobsFirstNYC wants to recognize the leaders of the Transfer 2 Career Collaborative (T2C) partner schools, workforce organizations and institutions, and CBOs for their vision, willingness to take risks, and commitment to excellence.

This case study was authored by Jen Sciaca Curry and Therese Workman of Change Impact, Inc, and Amanda B. Rosenblum, JobsFirstNYC, with input from Marjorie Parker, JobsFirstNYC, and New Visions for Public Schools staff, including Julia Forman, Monique Lawrence, Lucinda Mendez, Jefferson Pestronk, Jessica Sasko, Jennie Soler-McIntosh, and Emily Task.

The publication was designed by Tracey Maurer and copy edited by Morgan Stoffregen.

Transfer 2 Career Collaborative has been generously supported by the following foundations: Achelis and Bodman Foundation, The Altman Foundation, Jeffrey H. and Shari L. Aronson Family Foundation, Booth Ferris Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Carl C. Conway Scholarship Foundation, Frances L. and Edwin L. Cummings Memorial Fund, James and Judith K. Dimon Foundation/HERE to HERE, MizuhoUSA Foundation, New York Community Trust, and Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation.

Additional general support for JobsFirstNYC has been provided by the following foundations: Ira W. Decamp Foundation and MUFG Union Bank Foundation. The support of these funders does not imply or express their endorsement of the contents of this publication.



ENDNOTES

- 1 School Design Teams are multi-stakeholder groups that drive T2C's strategy, decision-making, and implementation at the school level. Their members consist of transfer high school leaders, representatives of community-based organizations, representatives of workforce development organizations, and administrators from community colleges.
- 2 City University of New York, "LaGuardia Lifts Poor Students to Lives of Opportunity—Findings from Stanford University Researchers" (October 9, 2018), <http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2018/10/09/laguardia-lifts-poor-students-to-lives-of-opportunity-findings-from-stanford-university-researchers/>.

