



INTEGRATING CAREER PATHWAYS
IN HIGH SCHOOLS

Making Time

Optimizing Partner and Student Schedules

LEARNING BRIEF #8



INTRODUCTION

Transfer schools in the Transfer 2 Career Collaborative (T2C) deploy a wide range of strategies to engage students in career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities, from surveying students about their interests to incentivizing internship and training opportunities with stipends. A common barrier to participation is students' availability as they balance school with other priorities, including family and job responsibilities. While scheduling the school day and career readiness opportunities to maximize student participation can be daunting, some solutions may be easier than they appear. At transfer schools, credit accumulation and graduation are of utmost importance, so it is critical that career pathways operate in tandem with that goal.

This brief describes how one T2C partnership—between Voyages Preparatory High School and Queens Community House—has optimized students' schedules to facilitate career exploration and development in hospitality and culinary, and to help students earn food handler's certifications.

T2C AT VOYAGES PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL

Voyages Preparatory High School has been partnering with Queens Community House since the school's founding. T2C expanded this partnership by bringing in Queens Connect, the community house's youth workforce training team, to the school as well. Through this extra capacity provided by the T2C initiative, Voyages Prep has been able to: identify practices in its advisory structure that were already aligned with New York's career development and occupational studies (CDOS) standards,¹ making future implementation of CDOS programming a closer goal; take inventory of its career readiness offerings and assess the root causes of low completion rates; develop a partnership in the food sector with Queens Connect, which provides more intensive food service training and certification opportunities; and expand its workforce training programs with corporate partners—such as Starbucks—through introductions from Queens Connect and another T2C workforce partner, LaGuardia Community College.

Given these extra resources and increased capacity, the T2C School Design Team² then needed to answer the question: **How can we ensure that we are optimizing time and resources for our students?**

T2C LEARNING:

OPTIMIZING STUDENTS' SCHEDULES

VOYAGES PRINCIPAL NICHOLAS MERCHANT-BLEIBERG RECALLED THAT THE INITIAL PLANS FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THROUGH T2C NEEDED TO BE REFINED SO THAT RESOURCES, INCLUDING TIME, WERE BEING SPENT MORE EFFICIENTLY.

"It was tough math for us," said Merchant-Bleiberg. "We asked ourselves, 'How many meetings [are there], how many staff [are there], how many kids are going how many places, resulting in only one student completing a course?'"

It was at this time that the School Design Team reevaluated how scheduling workforce trainings after school or even as an extra "8th period" was prohibitive on two levels: (1) students were not inclined to stay for a longer school day due to other personal and family obligations, even if they would receive a stipend, and (2) scheduling the trainings as an add-on meant they were being facilitated by external instructors with less school oversight, which affected buy-in among school staff.

When only one student completed the first training cycle, the School Design Team decided to make the following changes to course scheduling and marketing:

- Offer the training course(s) during the school day. This helped ensure that students no longer needed to stay later or come in outside of school time. It also meant that school staff had more oversight through a dedicated staff person facilitating the course, which

yielded increased buy-in from teachers and students, who now perceived the course as part of the larger curriculum. This met the T2C vision of truly embedding career development into the school day for all students, rather than offering it as an after-school opportunity for only some.

- Make the class a mandatory elective requirement. With the second cycle of students, the School Design Team decided that all students would take the course in a cohort model and that it would satisfy an elective course requirement toward a diploma, along with putting them on the path to industry certification. *"For many of our students, class credit has more currency than the certification,"* said Principal Merchant-Bleiberg. The team acknowledged that these students may also not be aware of the value or requirements of certain certifications during this early stage of career exploration.


- Condense the class into a six-week intensive course, culminating in the certification exam. When it was originally rolled out, the course was held biweekly over the span of a trimester. This led to discontinuity in learning for students, who required more review to refresh their knowledge. *“Condensing the course means*

that students can gain ground, instead of always catching up,” said Katherine Martinez, assistant principal at Voyages Prep. Students were more motivated to complete the course over a six-week span, as opposed to needing to commit over a season.




LESSONS LEARNED

Principal Merchant-Bleiberg and Assistant Principal Martinez agreed that the first year of the partnership was focused on learning, and they recommend the following considerations for other transfer schools exploring similar workforce development opportunities:



“Think long and hard about who is working on it from your school.” Schools should consider what their institutional goals are and should commit team members who can see the full scope of impact. It is also important to get staff on the School Design Team who are committed to student career preparation. Schools should ask, **What’s the footprint of this initiative in your school? What are you trying to grow?**



“If you don’t create consistency, it’s never going to take off.” Schools should ensure that all programming is scheduled with outcomes in mind. If they are trying to ensure training completion, they should understand that students need clear and consistent communication and should run sessions on a regular cadence. They should also align all of their offerings with the same structure to build familiarity and trust.

ABOUT T2C PARTNERS



VOYAGES PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL is a collaboration between the New York City Department of Education and Queens Community House. 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.



QUEENS COMMUNITY HOUSE is a multisite, multiservice settlement house that serves the diverse neighborhoods of Queens. It offers a broad network of services at 34 sites in 14 neighborhoods. Queens Community House recognizes the interconnected relationship between housing, health, employment, education, self-esteem, and financial well-being, and seeks to ensure that all participants in its programs have access to a full range of resources to help them achieve wellness and lifelong security.

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.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The CDOS credential is a certification showing that a student meets foundational career readiness standards. To earn the credential, a student must have successfully completed a minimum of 216 hours of coursework that meets CDOS standards, including at least 54 hours of work-based learning activities. Earning a CDOS credential results in a diploma endorsement for all students. It can also replace a Regents exam, which provides students an alternative pathway to graduation.
- 2 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.

