New York City Department of Education
Regulatory Task Force Report on Academic Policy

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Regulatory Task Force on Academic Policy

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The Regulatory Task Force on Academic Policy was formed in August 2015 to help ensure that schools implement State and City regulations with fidelity. Effective policy implementation supports the goal of preparing all students for college and career by ensuring that they have access to the academic programs to which they are entitled. The Task Force drives this work by shaping the expansion of oversight, training, and support strategies to build schools' capacity to understand and apply these policies. The Task Force also helps inform the development and revision of local academic policy to further support high quality academic programs across the New York City Department of Education (DOE). The DOE's Office of Academic Policy and Systems (OAPS) within the Division of Teaching and Learning oversees these policies. This report describes OAPS's strategies for reinforcing high-quality policy implementation across the DOE throughout the 2016-17 school year.

Oversight

In 2016-17, OAPS reviewed student data for alignment to academic policy and identified schools for targeted outreach based on specific data patterns.

- For each policy area selected for oversight, OAPS designed selection criteria to identify specific school behaviors that were observed throughout oversight efforts in 2015-16. The schools selected using these criteria underwent a review process conducted by Field Support Centers (FSCs) in order to gain insight into the school's practices.
- Through the review process, FSCs and OAPS evaluated documentation and other information provided by the school.
- In cases where the review process revealed implementation challenges, these findings were used to design targeted interventions to improve schools' practices.

Support and Intervention

In 2016-17, OAPS expanded upon structures to provide schools with individualized support and intervention in cases where there are potentially concerning patterns:

- For each school receiving support with academic policy implementation, OAPS provided FSCs with customized workbooks. These workbooks described tasks for FSCs to complete with their schools and provided resources for each task, including training materials, policy documents, and reports. FSCs used the workbooks to guide school visits and discussions.
- Intervention tasks were consolidated into two semester-long cycles so that FSCs could address challenges across multiple areas holistically. OAPS and FSCs discussed schools' progress at several checkpoints within each cycle in order to problem-solve for any implementation issues.

Professional Development

In 2016-17, OAPS continued to require all principals to complete academic policy trainings. These trainings were designed to ensure that principals have current information about key academic policy and any policy updates.

- To build upon the training program implemented in 2015-16, the content was differentiated as follows:
  - o Returning high school principals participated in two online trainings.

- o New high school principals participated in the same two online trainings, plus one additional training designed to build foundational knowledge.
  - o Elementary and middle school principals participated in one training.
- To provide more flexibility and to facilitate knowledge transfer between principals and their staff, the trainings were implemented through an online platform. The platform required principals to view the content, which was shareable with other school staff upon completion.
- Completion was tracked through the DOE's Compliance Checklist.

Policy and Systems Assessment

In 2016-17, OAPS identified opportunities to enhance student information systems to further reinforce key academic policies and support schools in maintaining high quality data. These include the following:

- OAPS developed and launched seven STARS Action Items. Action Items are real-time notifications on the STARS homepage designed to support schools in accurately capturing their academic programming practices in STARS.
- OAPS launched an online eligibility tool for credit recovery to support school staff in implementing the policies and tracking individual student participation. This tool replaces paper-based, student-level approval forms and allows for more efficient data collection.

Recommendations for 2017-18

In 2017-18, OAPS should continue to expand upon the systems and structures established in 2016-17 in the following ways:

- Expand or modify the criteria used to select schools for oversight based on findings from the 2016-17 school year in order to identify practices that may not be readily apparent in the course of routine data reviews.
- Continue to build the capacity of FSCs to review and evaluate schools' academic policy implementation through professional development and resources. FSC staff have developed proficiency in academic policy and systems, and providing them with tools and structures to independently assess their schools' policy implementation will further improve their work. Regular check-ins with FSCs will also continue to provide OAPS timely feedback to identify policy areas requiring clarification.
- Building upon the credit recovery online eligibility tool and STARS Action Items, identify additional opportunities to enhance student information systems in ways that support improved school-based practices.