



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Performing Arts and Technology High School**

**High School 507  
400 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11207**

**Principal: Lottie Almonte**

**Dates of review: February 27 - 28, 2007**

**Reviewer: Renee Middleton**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Performing Arts and Technology High School is a small coeducational school engaged in its first year as an empowerment school. The school is growing incrementally and now has 307 students in grades 9 through 11. The proportion of students known to be eligible for Title 1 funding (67.1%) is well above the City and similar school averages.

Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds although the greatest proportion are African American (78.83%), 17.59% are Hispanic, 0.33% White, 0.98% American Indian and 2.28% come from other backgrounds. The number of students who are identified as English language learners is small (2.6%). The number of special education students has grown significantly this academic year to 8.7%, represented mainly by the new intake of grade 9 students.

The first year of reporting attendance data in this school (2005) shows that attendance was at 83.6%, above figures for similar schools, but below the City average. The school's attendance rate has continued to improve in 2006 to 88%.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The strategies developed by the principal, in collaboration with her senior and teaching staff, have been successful in establishing effective data systems.
- There is effective use of diagnostic and periodic assessments alongside action research which improves the quality of teaching and learning.
- There is a strong sense of empowerment within the school, reflected by the very purposeful atmosphere and whole school goals of 'no excuses; excellence and achievement expected.'
- Staff plan and work collaboratively with a high level of commitment to the school and students to raise their achievement.
- The school has created a stimulating learning environment through a curriculum that explores the arts and provides first hand experience.
- There is high quality instructional practice which motivates and engages students in their learning.
- The school's programs and guidance for staff's professional development clearly link to whole-school priorities.
- The school has established connectivity between the core curriculum, college links, the extended day, and additional after-school programs to provide a continuum of learning opportunities for students.
- There is effective support for students with a range of needs including challenge for high achievers.
- Students work hard, behave well, and are proud of their school.

### What the school needs to improve

- Persist with the monitoring and challenge for students with the low attendance rates.
- Support the work of the advisory teachers in monitoring the progress and achievement of students.
- Enhance teachers' professional development and their use of data to improve instruction.
- Develop subject and skill-specific rubrics to inform assessment and to impact on teachers' planning and differentiated work.
- Share goals and plans across the school community informed by formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning to sustain high expectations.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school with well-developed features.**

The Performing Arts and Technology High School has come a long way in a relatively short time. The school's culture is one of high expectations with an engaging and challenging curriculum that fosters the talents of its students.

The small school environment is used effectively to ensure that students, staff, and parents feel known, valued, and encouraged. Adults and students speak highly of the principal's ability to share her vision for the school and teachers are inspired by the collaborative decision making and supportive approach which enables them to develop professionally.

Students speak enthusiastically about the focus upon the performing arts and technology and are engaged and motivated by the opportunities offered. The specialized arts curriculum is embedded within a rigorous academic program. Professional development, to enable all staff to teach well across the curriculum, is an ongoing element of the school's work.

The principal has a clear and coherent view of the steps the school needs to take to develop further. The school is keen to enrich the curriculum with a growing range of performing arts programs that persuade students to use a wide range of skills linked between subject areas such as music and technology.

The use of data and analysis is well established amongst the school's leaders, however some areas understandably need more time to be fully developed, be embedded across the school and used effectively by all staff.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The strategies developed by the principal, in collaboration with her senior staff, have been successful in establishing effective data systems. The school has a comprehensive collection of performance and progress data for all students and grades. The school has taken valuable steps towards creating useful systems to collate data, analyze it, and monitor progress. The school has developed systematic generation and analysis of students' performance data by grade level and for individual students, including establishing longitudinal tracking, also gathering data relating to the performance of students by gender. This is exemplified by recent data gathered on the low performance of a small group of boys which has informed a new initiative to target learning support to address their learning and social needs. The school generates its own data to enable some comparison with other schools in addition to those in its empowerment network.

Most teachers effectively use diagnostic and periodic assessments to inform their planning and understanding of each student's academic performance. All staff assess their students' achievements through State and City tests and as well as through their own assessments such as unit tests to check students' progress and achievement. The school generates its own data relating to the academic performance of specific groups of students such as those students with special educational needs and amongst English language learners. The school has become more efficient this year in tracking specific categories of interest such as students' entries to college-linked courses and whole school student attendance which provides an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of students.

Further systems are being developed to improve subject area rubrics and to enhance disaggregation and analysis of subject area not informed by standardized test results, such as dance and music. The school does not currently track the performance and progress of ethnic groups of students. However, as the population of the school grows, the school has recognized the need to collect and consider data about all ethnic groups and its emerging new cohorts of students.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

There is a strong sense of empowerment within the school, reflected by the very purposeful atmosphere and whole school goals of 'no excuses; excellence and achievement expected.' High expectations are clearly conveyed to the whole school community through effective actions taken to improve student achievement. For example, guided by the assistant principal and lead teachers, specific staff are targeted for support, including teachers new to the profession. Staff plan and work collaboratively with a high level of commitment to the school and students to raise their achievement. All teachers regularly meet formally with their subject departments, or at grade level to discuss data and assessment outcomes. Strategies include sharing lesson plans, grouping students informed by periodic assessments and ongoing subject area testing.

The analysis and use of data to develop plans and interventions for individual students and for groups is a highly collaborative process within the school. In turn, the information gathered is effectively shared to support and provide services for those students in need of academic interventions. With the recent admission of a higher number of special education students, teachers have set about identifying and assessing their needs to enable the appropriate intervention and support to be provided. Interventions for identified groups include the extended day, curriculum tutoring, college-linked programs, and a flexible curriculum that assists students' access to accelerate their learning.

Goals and plans shared across the school community are well informed by formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning to sustain high expectations within the whole school community. Most students are fully aware of expectations for their progress and the support they can expect to receive. There are whole-school strategies focused on the developing the role of the advisory teachers to support individual student more fully. The school has set a goal to improve the communication of student goals and progress amongst the advisory teachers, students, and parent to further understanding of what students can achieve and to raise expectations.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed**

The school has created a stimulating learning environment through a curriculum that explores the arts and offers rich and challenging programs that actively engage students and support learning while fostering students’ creativity and performing arts talents. The mandated curriculum is well integrated with technology through subject areas such as instrumental music, music ensemble, classical ballet, and modern dance. The school has established connectivity between the core curriculum, college links, the extended day, and additional after-school programs to provide a continuum of learning opportunities for students. Through the performing arts, students are given the opportunities to express themselves and explore their creativity. Students further participate in fieldwork that gives them first hand experience in science, social studies, and other subject areas.

There is high quality instructional practice which motivates and engages students in their learning. Teachers are held accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student’s and group of students’ outcomes. For example, they calibrate samples of students’ written work to target English language arts support for those students identified with deficits in their tested essay writing skills. Teachers effectively use English language arts rubrics which inform teachers’ own assessment outside of standardized and benchmark testing. The school is developing rubrics in other subjects to better inform their planning and grouping of students.

Teachers know their students well. They work flexibly and collaboratively in revising plans for individuals and groups in response to data, assessment and observation. Training continues to promote teachers’ modification and differentiation of lesson plans to meet the varied academic needs of their students such adjusting groupings of students based on informed assessments. Students state that they are challenged to work hard and aim to achieve well. Mutual respect is formed between staff, parents, and students.

The principal uses the budget efficiently in response to what data reveals. For example, from the analysis of data and periodic assessments, there has been a focus on improving students’ problem solving and extended writing composition with positive impact on student learning and their Regents results. There are effective staffing and scheduling decisions made to improve student outcomes. Effective resourcing of teaching and learning is a whole school priority evident in well resourced subject areas’ apparatus and textbooks.

The school has set up rigorous structures to help it improve attendance. It has begun to closely track the attendance of those students who fall below the 79% attendance average to improve their chances of completing graduation credits and passing the Regents.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The principal and key staff have been proactive in selecting staff based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment. Staff are selected for their capacity to use data, analytical skills, and in their ability to compare student performance. Teachers assist in drawing up criteria for new appointments and watch applicants' demonstration lessons. This actively engages staff in the development and support of new colleagues.

The school leaders guide and provide professional development based on priorities identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan, such as improving their effective disaggregation, analysis, and use of data and periodic assessments. There are further opportunities for peer observations and collaborative calibration of student work. Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. In turn, information is used to drive improvement. These processes have built capacity amongst teachers, in particular, to accelerate the learning of students across all subject areas.

Professional development is embedded within the school's culture of open discussion and collaborative planning. Discrete weekly sessions focus on expressed staff needs arising from data and observation. Coaching and 'turnkey' strategies for sharing good practice are well established to impact on whole school development and in raising student achievement. The principal and assistant principal regularly visit classroom formally. These are followed by focused strategy meetings with teachers to improve their instruction. Staff meetings are structured so they are valuable in providing opportunities for mutual support and to ensure the rigor and effectiveness of the drive towards improvement. Teachers, whether experienced or new to the profession, are becoming reflective practitioners.

There are partnerships with national and local performing arts programs such as the American Ballet Theater, Lincoln Center and VH1-Save the Music program that make a valuable contribution to the education of students in the school. The school leaders consistently monitor and evaluate the impact of the partnership programs in which students participate.

The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis with ample staff to monitor the movement of students around the building, act proactively, and ensure the safety of students. The principal is highly respected and supportive to both staff and students. She works strategically and has a coherent approach to the development needs of the school.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan is implemented through the extensive involvement of staff. To inform and set priorities, analysis and use of this data is shared with all staff to enable them to focus on specific areas of improvement. The plan's priorities are formulated with identified responsibilities for the implementation of actions set against well defined objectives which are clearly quantifiable, tasks specific, and time related. The plan is close monitored and evaluated as to whether it is being effectively implemented to reach the stated goals. The school has developed a successful approach to action research to

inform and improve the quality of teaching and learning and the use of data across the school.

The use of periodic and diagnostic assessments of progress informs the actions and interventions to be taken to address set goals. The role of the advisory teachers is being developed to further impact on these processes. The school leaders have increased calibration of students' work and use of generic rubrics which have made an impact on teachers' planning and students' academic outcomes in English language arts. Informed by these successes, action plans reflect the intent to increase the use of rubrics in other subject areas.

The school gradually makes changes to the plan in response to information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required. These actions are yet to fully impact on realigning the Comprehensive Education Plan's priorities and goals. In a short period of time, the school has developed strategically and has made improvements in the education of its students. The structures and systems developed are making a positive impact on the learning opportunities it provides for its students.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Performing Arts and Technology High School (HS 507)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			X

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	