



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Graphic Communications Arts High School**

**High School 625  
439 West 49<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York  
NY 10019**

**Principal: Mr. Jerod Resnick**

**Dates of review: February 26 - 27, 2007  
Reviewers: Cheryl Baker, Candido DeJesus**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Graphic Communication Arts High School serves 1830 students in grades nine through twelve. This reflects an enrollment decrease of 14% from the previous year. Special education students are 16.7% of the school population while 11% are English language learners. Just over 69% of students are Hispanic, 36% are Black, 2% are White and 3% are from Asian or other backgrounds. The school is Title I eligible with the percent of qualifying students exceeding the City average. Attendance at the school averages 75%, which is below the average for City schools.

The principal is in his fourth year at the school and has reorganized it into five academies specializing in print media, visual arts, journalism, photography and law enforcement. Each academy has an identified student body, which is supported by its own administrative team. This structure was developed to support student learning within smaller learning communities that provide a career focus.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The academy structure provides a focus for students' career goals and fosters a sense of community within the small learning communities.
- There are good practices in place to validate and celebrate the successes of individual students.
- The school has succeeded in making systemic changes, which ensure a safe, calm, supportive environment for teaching and learning.
- The principal sets clear expectations for teachers' professional conduct and holds them accountable for increasing students' achievement.
- The school continues to increase the number of collaborative team teaching classes to support students with identified needs who are placed in the least restrictive learning environment.
- The governance structure engenders collaborative problem solving among the administrative staff.
- The redesign and delivery of the mathematics program has resulted in marked increases in students' achievement in the subject.
- The school is making steady progress in improving its graduation rate.
- The structure of the school's professional development program provides a range of routes for teachers to improve their instructional skills.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to improve instruction through the development of standards-based curricula in all disciplines and regular assessments.
- Use periodic assessments to provide teachers with additional diagnostic information on students' individual learning needs.
- Provide teachers with training in instructional techniques to meet individual learning needs of students.
- Institute structures for academy-based academic intervention services to more efficiently identify and serve students who need additional help and support.
- Continue to foster high expectations for students' academic achievement among staff, students and parents.
- Continue to explore and institute incentives, interventions and rewards to improve students' attendance.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The principal has increased staff attendance and set high expectations for professional conduct. Safety is improved, the graduation rate is rising and there is increased achievement in mathematics. He has fostered the use of data to drive instruction and continues to lead positively the transition from a large traditional high school to one encompassing five small learning communities.

The school's use of data continues to develop as does assessment and instruction. Professional development supports improvements well. The success of the initiative to improve achievement in mathematics provides a model for the school to use across the curriculum.

The school continues to strive to improve attendance in the face of several differing challenges. The school's self-evaluation indicates a high level of reflection on its strengths and areas for improvement.

### 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 proficient.**

The school has a clear philosophy and well-developed systems at administrative level that use data to drive decision making and inform instruction. The principal and assistant principals routinely evaluate the data to track students' academic performance, their progress towards graduation and attendance. Scholarship reports are routinely used to review students' progress and compare the impact of teachers of the same subject. The school plans to improve the use of data by academy coordinators and teachers.

The school carries out regular assessments of students' progress in mathematics and social studies to measure the effectiveness of instruction and guide revisions where learning has been insufficient. The project-based courses in the career and technical area provide teachers with concrete on-going evidence of students' acquisition of skills. These practices remain a goal for other departments.

The school is aware of the relative performance of racial and ethnic groups and of male and female students, but detailed analysis of this data is not undertaken routinely. The school uses assessments included in instructional programs to check the progress of English language learners and special education students. It uses the resulting information to plan adjustments to instruction, programs or student placement.

The school is keenly aware of its progress over time and compared to schools that have undergone similar restructuring into small learning communities. The school is highly focused on the urgent need to demonstrate significant improvement in students' achievement overall, especially in mathematics. Recent results of State tests indicate that

good progress is being made in mathematics and in the school's graduation rate. Steady, but less dramatic improvements are evident in other areas.

**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.**

The school leadership team uses statistical and survey data to create the Comprehensive Education Plan. The plan expresses annual targets for increased student performance by department and serves as a general guide for activities during the school year. The principal's annual goals to improve the school's yearly progress and its Regent's examination scores support the Comprehensive Education Plan. The focus on the long-range goals for the school is evident in the plans for the use of the extended day, improved safety and the assistant principal's annual goals.

Because of chronic low performance, the school developed an improvement plan to restructure the school into small learning communities and place particular emphasis on improving instruction and learning in mathematics. This improvement plan details the specific goals aimed for and the actions, timelines and people responsible for achieving them. The plan has clear incremental measures of success and is improving achievement. New relationships with relevant businesses in the community support the increasing success of the career academy.

The school's grading policy sets out explicit requirements for the evidence-based evaluation through which students demonstrate their learning. Students are identified for intervention support through the analysis of their grades and test scores. Those in greatest need of improvement are helped through programs for homework support, recovery of missed credits and Regents at Saturday academies. As a result, the school has increased the graduation rate by fourteen percentage points.

The pupil personnel team considers the interventions that are needed for students who exhibit challenging barriers to learning. The team is currently structured to address students across all five academies and is hard pressed to manage the volume of identified students in a timely fashion.

The performance of special education students and English language learners has improved more in mathematics than in other subjects and is in line with their counterparts across the City. English language learners receive mandated services through push-in and pull-out instruction. To increase rigor and provide greater access to the tested curriculum, most special education students receive instruction through collaborative team teaching. These adjustments to their programs routinely involve parents and students in the discussions about decisions.

Progress reports and report cards are used to communicate the students' achievement. Their successes are celebrated through the honor roll and the principal's "Students That Shine" program. This recognizes individual students who have been nominated by teachers for exemplary conduct. It is a particular goal of the principal to instill the belief in staff, students and parents that all students can achieve at high levels.

**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 proficient.**

The school’s curriculum follows the requirements of the Regents examination program. Mathematics and social studies departments have made good progress in producing common standard-based curricula for all of their courses. These include regular departmental examinations. Other academic departments are less well structured. Curricula in the career and technical areas take account industry standards and increasingly by requirements for licensure and endorsements.

The teachers are striving to differentiate instruction based on students’ individual needs, but with mixed success. They are accountable for improving their instruction and students’ outcomes through regular administrative checks on students’ progress using the school’s many data sources. Further evidence of the quality of teaching and learning comes from report card grades, lesson planning, and observations of instructional practice.

The school’s plan for restructuring into small learning communities is underpinned by budget allocations, staffing decisions and the scheduling of student and staff time. For example, the academy structure required the creation of the coordinator’s position to provide support for assistant principals with new departmental responsibilities. To address poor performance in mathematics, greater consideration was given to assigning staff to teach in their areas of greatest strength. The instruction schedule is designed to meet the needs of the lower achieving students at grade 9. It also addresses the need for students to take courses in their career focus as well as in general academic subjects.

Instruction generally engages students, especially in non-academic subjects. Students appreciate the expertise that many of their teachers bring to the classroom from experience in relevant industries. They feel that for the most part, the teachers display respect for students. They feel very well supported and respected by the principal and appreciate the calm and structure he has brought to the school. Those interviewed could all identify a supportive adult among the school community in whom they could confide.

Students’ attendance is a high priority and the school has good structures in place to identify patterns of absence and address them promptly. In spite of numerous incentives and constant efforts, the school has not been able to increase attendance substantially.

**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.**

A strong, focused leadership by the principal has ensured good progress in bringing order and stability to what had been a struggling institution. The school now runs smoothly. The principal has been courageous in setting high expectations for staff, removing those unwilling or unable to embrace the challenges of improvement. Approximately half of the administrative and instructional staff is newly hired. Criteria for candidates include high expectations of students’ performance, a willingness to work hard to achieve school goals and the capacity to use data to drive instruction. In addition to visiting classrooms, the principal communicates his expectations for instruction, grading and other matters through

a weekly bulletin. He also invites constructive criticism of his leadership and makes adjustments in practices and style if warranted.

Professional development provided by mathematics and literacy consultants supports the teachers and administrators well. Further assistance comes from a range of on-site and off-site courses and study groups. All teachers take part in at least one study group addressing one of the many topics on improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The focus for these meetings is determined from 'walk-throughs' conducted by administrators, coordinators and consultants. Teachers do not routinely observe one another teaching.

Common planning-time also supports collaborative decision making within academic departments and among academy members. The administration models collaborative leadership through its routine of meeting each morning to address short-term issues and to monitor progress on long-term goals.

The school benefits from numerous alliances with youth development and support services that routinely assist in achieving academic goals.

**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 overall direction of school planning provides a suitable context for the realignment of practices and resources to improve instruction and students' achievement. The main plans express annual improvement goals but do not sufficiently address the interim goals and diagnostic measures needed to gauge progress. The three-year plan is an exception, where specific incremental measures of progress have guided the school's evolution to small learning communities. Emerging data for mathematics and graduation rates show that this project is proving effective.

Comparisons of students' progress within and across classes are informed by statistical information. Administrators are keenly aware of how students' progress relates to different instructors. Departmental assessments in mathematics and social studies shed light on students' progress and the analysis of their performance is used to adjust curricular plans and instruction. Capacity to analyze progress in the other academic areas is restricted because the curricula lack a sufficiently rigorous structure and regime of assessments.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Graphic Communication Arts High School (HS 625)</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	