



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Astor Collegiate High School

**High School 299
925 Astor Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Richard Cintron

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Reviewer: David King

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This small high school opened four years ago within the Christopher Columbus Campus in the North Bronx. The school began with 75 students and a very small teaching staff, all of whom have since left the school to move onto other positions. The school has now grown to 389 and a number of new young teachers have been appointed to the school. The main focus is on business and technology, supported by a curriculum in which the students take three years of mandated business classes. The school also has strong links with Lehman College.

The student population is 50% Hispanic and 40% Black, with the remainder of students being White, including a number of Albanians. Approximately 9% of the school roll are special education students while 7% are English language learners. Approximately 86% are Title 1 eligible, which is higher than both similar schools and the City average. Attendance is 90.2% which is higher than both the average for similar schools and the City average.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear and imaginative vision for the school.
- Instructional leaders use data well to get a clear picture of individual students' achievement and to make comparisons of students' progress over time.
- The school has established strong links with outside institutions for the students' benefit.
- Teachers meet together to devise prompt intervention strategies for students at risk of failure.
- Instructional leaders make creative use of available time and campus facilities to provide additional instruction.
- The principal has a thorough knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of his teaching staff.
- The school monitors attendance well, contacting parents immediately when there is a problem, and relating attendance to academic achievement.
- The school does an outstanding job in supporting special education students.
- Teachers and instructional leaders imaginatively tailor the curriculum to the school's central purpose.
- The school provides a professional development program that effectively meets the needs of an inexperienced yet highly motivated and energetic teaching staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Explore more effective ways to differentiate classroom instruction and learning objectives.
- Strengthen support for English language learners.
- Ensure all staff are aware of the requirements for graduation and how to enable students to succeed in the Regents examinations.
- Provide better and more frequent opportunities for teachers to observe best practice.
- Establish manageable numbers for each intake of new students by capping numbers to prevent overcrowding.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with many well developed features.

The school is led by a principal who combines vision and commitment to the success of all students. The school has many successful programs and initiatives, and expects well over 90% of current seniors to graduate in 2007. Teachers are mostly inexperienced but are enthusiastic about their work, are dedicated to the school's vision, and are committed to the school's focus on business and technology. The students are very orderly and ambitious, and demonstrate remarkable maturity and a commendable concern for others.

The principal maintains a high profile around the school, while his assistant principal has the lead role in the day-to-day management of the school, a job she does very competently. Senior staff know their students well and make a clear connection between attendance and academic performance, which is reinforced to both students and parents. Data is used well to monitor students' progress and the needs of the special education students are identified from a very early stage.

The school has built up a strong relationship with Lehman College, business partners and the other schools on the campus. These partnerships enable students to receive specialist teaching on a regular basis. This has helped to ensure the needs of all students are met.

Parents are very happy with the communication they receive from the school and they are confident that the school is dealing promptly with any issues that may arise with their children.

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 regularly collects data on the performance and progress of each student. Assessments are carried out at regular points during the year and the data produced is analyzed in order to identify appropriate intervention and support programs. The principal makes use of the data to monitor teachers' performance. The school uses data to predict performance of cohorts and currently 91% of the 2007 students and 93% of 2008 students are on track to succeed. For those falling behind the expected rate of progress there are a range of options including summer school, afternoon sessions and lunchtime tutoring, all of which are generally well attended. The 2007 cohort achieved very high levels of success in the Regents exams in all subjects with the pass rate standing at around 90% in each, which compares very favorably with other schools.

Data is used to identify students at risk of academic failure and to help them get back on track. The staff regularly engage in grade-level conferences to analyze students' progress and implement intervention programs.

The school is targeting students with attendance rates between 60% and 75%, identifying this as the group who the school could help most to succeed. By making a link between attendance and academic performance, the school is pointing out how important good attendance is in order to achieve success. Parents have been contacted and intervention programs introduced such as sessions at Lehman College to support students with attendance problems.

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 well developed.

The school is fully aware of the performance of its students and is setting challenging goals for them. Each cohort has a target of credits to be achieved by the end of the year. The target is challenging and has been met by the vast majority of students in cohorts 2007/8/9. The performance of special education students and English language learners students is monitored with particular care. Similar targets are set for Regents exams and the data again shows that a very high percentage of students are achieving a level of performance above 65% in all subjects.

Reporting to parents is excellent and they are kept informed of their child's progress and are involved in any interventions where necessary.

Any incidences of student failure over a course are followed up with case conferences at which all the factors are discussed that may have contributed to poor performance and new schedules are arranged. Teachers hold regular grade-level conferences during which data is shared and progress discussed.

The principal keeps up-to-date records of teachers' performance, using assessment data available in conjunction with the observation schedule, which is proving very powerful in maintaining high expectations in the classroom.

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 follows the New York Standards curriculum, but teachers use their discretion in deciding how to present it. The teaching is largely driven by a focus on the Regents exams, although some teachers do try to be more creative in their delivery.

The school has an intervention program which includes lunchtime tutoring and a schedule for each grade which takes into consideration Regents exams, student maturity and the need to catch students at a point when they are most likely to succeed. An example of this is the program at Lehmann College for 11th grade students. The aim is to provide students with the chance to be successful during the school day and in a range of locations without putting too much pressure on them to attend the after-school program.

Senior students, who have passed the Regents in Math A and English with 75% or higher, have the opportunity to take free college classes at Lehman College. There are also independent study assignments in English, History and Science. Programs can be altered to support credit accumulation and Regent's preparation.

Creativity in the curriculum is also evident in the 'English in Industry' module and the Soap Company project which has effective links with science. Both of these activities reflect the business and technology theme of the school. Opportunities for music instruction are limited, but plans are in place to provide a 'Music through Technology' course.

The principal is aware of a need to make special provision for English language learners. The extra number of freshmen does not generate enough funding for more than 0.2 teachers so this group of students is taught in regular classes and their needs are not completely met at present.

The students enjoy school and say they learn best where lessons offer a 'hands-on' and inclusive approach. They feel that the teachers prepare well and they are encouraged to work to their full potential. They enjoy the pace of their learning and the chances they get to link with business. Any absences are followed up immediately and parents contacted where necessary. The distance of the school from some students' homes results in a steady drift into school of late arrivals during first lesson. Procedures for recording late arrivals are efficient.

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 proficient.

Staff at this school are generally young and most have limited teaching experience. The principal was keen to hire young teachers so that they could be trained in the way that he

wanted and because they would be easier to mould to meet the new school vision. A regular program of professional development has been established to support the staff. Topics include the use of data to differentiate instruction and when setting goals, parent teacher conferences, reporting, and lesson planning.

The principal frequently observes teachers and provides them with prompt feedback for improvement. He revisits classes to ensure the areas for improvement are being followed through. There are limitations to teachers observing each other because of their lack of experience, but there are plans for them to visit teachers in other schools. Although the size of the school strictly limits the schools' ability to offer certain subjects such as music, an art teacher has been hired who can deliver a small amount of music to the younger students, so that some music is available in 9th grade and art is taught throughout the school.

Teachers find it easy to share ideas on curriculum development and many of them work collaboratively on electives. Teachers also participate in a number of formal and informal meetings and case conferences. Some teachers have also been engaged to act as mentors. For example, a science assistant principal is helping to mentor an inexperienced science team.

The principal has a clear view of where teachers' strengths and weaknesses lie. He is well respected by the staff, has high standards, and is approachable. The school runs smoothly and routines are understood by staff and students.

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 principal and his staff are constantly striving to raise achievement and help students to achieve the business vision of the school. Many decisions are reached collaboratively and always with the needs of the students in mind. The staff have a thorough knowledge of student's progress and engage in regular discussion about it. Effective tracking of each cohort's progress is used to reassess targets and to implement any required changes.

The principal has a detailed Comprehensive Education Plan and there is a clear schedule for implementation and monitoring. Plans are also revised when new information comes to light and student schedules are being continually re-evaluated.

The school is creative in its approach to scheduling and learning is organized to respond to the needs of students. This is effective in the support for the high achievers and for those in need of extra help. A critical mass of students is challenged by the teaching and the atmosphere in the school is very positive.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Astor Collegiate High School (HS 229)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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"> each student, classroom, grade level, 			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"> ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 			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"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		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.

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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	