



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**School of Communication Technology**

**Community Intermediate School 339**

**1600 Webster Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10457**

**Principal: Jason Levy**

**Dates of review: October 16 – 17, 2006**

**Reviewer: Linda Murgatroyd**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The School of Communication Technology (CIS 339) is a middle school with 930 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The majority (64%) of students are Hispanic, 34% are Black, and a range of other groups makes up the remaining small number. Approximately 87% are eligible for Title 1 funding which is above the average for similar schools. The school has a very high proportion (21%) of special education students. There are over 200 English language learners (23%), of whom a slightly lower proportion than in City-wide schools are newly arrived in the country. These students come mainly from the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Ghana. Attendance at 89% is slightly below the average for similar schools.

The school is undergoing a period of change. The recent past has been challenging, but the school now has a stable staff. Many faculty are at the start of their careers as teachers and are inexperienced. Staff and students have been organized into teams to provide support for teachers and to ensure that every student is well known to a group of staff. There has been a high level of investment in computers and other new technology to fulfill the school's designation as a school for communication technology. The students benefit from a range of partnerships with community-based organizations, such as Turnaround for Children, SCAN NY and Publicolor.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides excellent leadership and has very effectively shared his vision of the school with an enthusiastic and dedicated staff group.
- As a result, this is a rapidly improving school.
- The organization of teachers into teams is resulting in collaborative working among staff and allows all staff to participate in decision-making.
- The many new systems recently put into place to improve organization and to develop a clear focus on learning are beginning to have a positive impact on the school.
- Staff respect students, who are confident that they will receive help with their work when needed.
- There is well documented support for those students most in need.
- New systems for organization have improved the school's tone, and the school is generally calm and orderly.
- Good practice in assessment and the use of standards-based portfolios is developing.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop teachers' skills in the use of data, including standards-based assessments, to plan the next steps for individuals and groups of students.
- Build on the team structure to support teachers in developing consistent strategies for classroom management and differentiated learning, to increase student engagement.
- Provide further opportunities for teachers to learn from each other through more focused discussions in teams and inter-visitations.
- Share expectations, goals and the outcomes of assessments with students, so that they become more involved in their own learning.
- Continue the work with parents to engage them as partners in their children's education and improve their attendance and punctuality.
- Develop formats for action plans which clearly show timeframes and who will be responsible, to increase the ease with which progress towards goals can be monitored.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is currently an undeveloped school, with some proficient features.**

Over the past two years since the arrival of the principal, the school has undergone a period of significant change. School organization has improved, and the school is now calm and orderly. The principal has initiated a structure of participatory leadership, which is beginning to be successful in involving all staff in decision-making. Many teachers are relatively inexperienced, and the supportive culture among staff is highly valued. For example, of 12 teachers who started their career in the school last year, all have stayed on. The organization of teachers into teams provides a good forum for sharing ideas and practice, and ensures that all students are well known to a core group of staff.

Data is effectively used by school leaders in assessing how well the school is doing. There is some good practice in assessment and its use to guide instruction and plan the next steps in learning for students, but this is not yet consistent practice across the school. Many new systems have been introduced, and are beginning to take hold, but it is too soon to see their impact on student achievement. The task now is to share the existing good practice in the school more widely. Because of the strong leadership of the principal and the commitment of staff, the school is well placed to build on the new systems for further 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 collects and analyzes a satisfactory range of data to build a picture of how well individuals and groups of students achieve. This is effectively used by school leaders to compare performance with other schools, across grades and how well students do from year to year. The data include information from standardized tests, internal tests and continuous assessment during lessons. An example of the effective use of comparative data was demonstrated by the principal in his comparison of the life chances of young people in the Bronx and a more affluent zip code as part of his introductory presentation to staff at the start of the school year.

Special education staff keep detailed records of the progress of their students, from the gathering of information for referral through reviews of individual education plans. This information is well used to ensure that students receive the help they need, and the proportion that move from part-time special education to general education is higher than that found in similar schools. School leaders compare the progress of students in each subject, class by class and grade by grade, and this is beginning to be used to ensure that teaching and learning are equally effective for all students. Its use is not yet spread widely across the school.

Data gathered from learning walks are analyzed to provide a clear picture of where support is needed. Staff surveys are well used to identify areas needing improvement, and action is taken as a result. For example, a survey on the administration resulted in the production of a very thorough staff handbook, which sets out very clearly routines and expectations for organization and instruction. This data collection and analysis has begun to have an impact on student achievement in English language arts and social studies, where students' performance in State tests is rising.

**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 undeveloped, with some proficient features.**

Over the past year, the principal has been successful in focusing the faculty on the need to improve instruction and raise achievement, and the school now has collaboratively set goals and targets for improvement. These are supported by action plans for the shorter-term, but not all of these have timeframes. There is a sense of urgency among school leaders, but this is not yet fully appreciated by the whole staff, possibly because of their relative inexperience. However, all staff are committed to improving students' learning, and much has already been achieved.

School leaders have made a good start with the analysis of data to track the progress of individual students and to set targets for them. Data is shared with staff, and they are beginning to analyze the information to understand what their students know and can do. In some cases, this leads to the setting of goals for groups of students, but this is not yet common practice. Those students who are most at risk are carefully identified and monitored with detailed tracking systems in order to reduce the number of students held over to repeat grades. This evidence shows that when interventions are early, students make good progress.

Most classrooms display expectations about behavior and some have prompts for students linked with, for example, writing workshops, but there is little display of rubrics or standards-based criteria for success. Overall, specific expectations about the levels at which students are working or what they need to do to achieve more are not routinely shared with them.

Teachers make good efforts to contact parents to share expectations and plans, but many parents are difficult to reach. The school as a whole works hard to engage parents, and there are more parents who view the school in a positive light than in previous years, but the sharing of specific goals with parents is still at an early stage.

**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 undeveloped, with some proficient features.**

The curriculum is mainly mandated by external tests and expectations from the district. The school uses data effectively to decide upon additional programs for students in need of support. At present the curriculum is not used well enough to generate data in all

content areas to guide instruction with precision. There is some developing good practice, particularly in literacy and mathematics, but this is not yet common across other content areas, and it is too soon to see an impact on students' progress.

The principal, assistant principals and coaches carry out learning walks and scrutinize teachers' planning to determine where the strengths and areas for development in instruction are, and feedback is given with suggestions of where to go to see good practice. They use the information gathered to analyze the varying performance of teachers in relation to their students' results in tests and assessments, but this is not fully shared with staff. Teachers themselves are beginning to use data in determining what needs to be taught and how, but the principal's own monitoring shows that the majority of teachers do not plan differentiated learning for their students, and there is not yet a common understanding of how this might look in practice.

Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are all based on documented student needs. For example, the principal has prioritized the hiring of effective mathematics teachers in the light of poor results in the subject. Staff strengths are capitalized on; the expanded cabinet is drawn from existing teachers who know students well and have made a commitment to the school.

Attendance is actively pursued, and is improving. However, a significant number of students arrive late, and this is not always actively followed up by classroom teachers. Some staff are explicitly employed to pursue poor attendance or lateness, and this is beginning to have an impact. Staff treat students with respect, and in most cases this is reciprocated. Students are confident that they can bring concerns to members of staff. Although there have been improvements in students' behavior during this academic year, the school does not yet have a consistent approach to promote good behavior in classrooms. There is low level disruption in many classes which is not consistently dealt with, nor are expectations always shared among staff. Despite the improvements already made, there is still work to do in fully engaging students in their learning. School leaders in particular are aware that the development of a more consistent approach, with differentiation so that students are given work with the right degree of challenge, is needed to improve students' attitudes to learning.

**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.**

The school has recruited a large number of young and inexperienced staff in the last two years, but they have been carefully chosen by their willingness to make a commitment to the school, form positive relationships and be open to constructive feedback. This has been successful in building a highly supportive staff team which is developing its skills and is ready to take the school forward. There is some good teaching, which promotes learning successfully, and staff are beginning to use the team structure to learn from one another. The newly formed expanded cabinet is a good forum for decision-making, where plans are discussed and revised.

Professional development is firmly based on the need to improve student achievement. Expectations are clearly set out in the staff handbook, and any professional development from outside the school is designed to improve instruction. Discussion in teams is beginning to provide a forum for looking at data, sharing ideas and planning interventions

and strategies. The principal regularly observes teaching and gives feedback, and knows his staff well. However, teachers would like more opportunities for peer observations to build their capacity. There are clear procedures for dealing with any staff underperformance.

The school has made very good progress in establishing calm after a challenging year, and movement around the school is generally orderly, although there is some low level disruption in classrooms, especially where expectations are not consistent. The principal provides excellent, insightful leadership, and he and other school leaders are highly respected. They have ambitious goals for the school, know what needs to be done and have introduced an impressive range of procedures and systems to raise student achievement. These systems are as yet too new to have had a significant impact on students' progress, although there are encouraging signs, particularly in English language arts and social studies. There are productive partnerships with a range of community-based services, particularly to assist those students and families needing additional support. For example, Publicolor is working with students to decorate the interior of the school building, to increase students' sense of ownership 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 undeveloped, with some proficient features.**

The school has set itself challenging goals for improvement, based on data from assessments and other forms of research such as staff surveys. These are regularly reviewed by the school cabinet, and action taken where possible to remedy weaknesses. For example, the principal's evaluation of the classroom learning environments was shared with teachers, both the general messages and more specific feedback to individuals. Subsequent monitoring showed improvement as a result of the feedback in the majority of classes. The use of data in planning whole-school developments is mainly proficient, although the formats of action plans do not always show who will lead the development, or set out the timeframes, making progress difficult to measure accurately.

Although staff are beginning to assume responsibility for assessing and analyzing students' progress and for planning, evaluating and revising interventions and initiatives according to need, this is not yet consistent practice. The detailed setting, monitoring and revision of goals at student level is an important area for development, and is recognized as such by the school leaders.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The School of Communication Technology (CIS 339)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>	<b>X</b>		

<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>		<b>X</b>	

\* 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>	<b>X</b>		

<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>	Ø	✓	+
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>	<b>X</b>		
<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>	Ø	✓	+
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>		<b>X</b>	
<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>	Ø	✓	+
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>	<b>X</b>		