



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Alfred E Smith Career and Technical Education

High School 600

**333 East 151 Street
Bronx
NY 10451**

Principal: Rene Cassanova

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Reviewer: Denis Pittman

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical Education High School is located in South Bronx. From 2004, the school was divided into three small learning communities. The Gateway Academy is designed to provide 9th grade students with academic and emotional support for their transition into high school. The other two 'schools' provide for students interested in careers in construction or the automotive industries. The school has two parts to the physical building. The newer structure, built in the mid-1960's, was attached to the original facility, doubling the capacity of the school. The automotive shops are in the new section.

The school serves approximately 1,243 students from 9th to 12th grade. Of this population 86.6% of the students are male and 13.4% are female. The ethnic composition of the school is 26.3% Hispanic, 34% Black and 3.7% Asian and White. Twenty percent of students receive special education need support. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding. Attendance levels, which are below 90%, are well below those of similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students' performance in standardized tests is improving which is reflected in the higher results of the recent Regents tests.
- The principal has a clear vision for the school which is embodied in the formation of the small learning communities.
- Students enjoy their vocational courses.
- Most staff are hard-working and show a commitment to improving their instructional programs.
- The school's partnership with outside agencies and other groups is very positive leading to enhanced learning and career opportunities for students.
- The Gateway Academy supports and encourages 9th grade students well.
- The extra curricular activities provide a useful and helpful extension to the learning opportunities of students.
- The curriculum has been enhanced by the provision of advanced placement classes.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure a more rigorous cycle of monitoring and evaluation of short and long term planning, by the senior management team.
- Improve the quality of curricular mapping and lesson planning.
- Continue to support teachers in making better use of data to inform their lesson planning.
- Continue to work on strategies for improving attendance levels.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school overall.

The principal has created a learning environment which focuses upon the needs of the student. The learning communities with their orientation towards vocational elements such as construction and automotive courses provide a significant stimulus and interest points for students. Generally, students are cared for and supported well. The commitment to provide an 'academy' for transition of 9th grade students into the school is evidence of this. Day to day administration is normally efficient and students are respected. The challenge now for the school is to get consistency into practice and a greater commitment to the school from certain groups of students. At the moment the school is not making the most effective use of the data it collects to monitor and improve performance. Initiatives to improve literacy are not consistently implemented in classrooms. Activities are not differentiated to meet the needs of individual learners. Teachers are committed to the school and behavior around the school and in classrooms is generally satisfactory. Teachers' expectations of students' academic progress however are far too variable. The impact of initiatives, whether it is a new literacy program or outcomes of a professional development, are not regularly and systematically reviewed and monitored to sustain change and improvement. The work of the senior leadership team needs greater coherence and accountability. The school has shown that it has the capacity to improve student performance through improved test results in the recent Regents examinations. This focused work is the platform to improve its overall performance through a greater coherence in its management and use of data.

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 collates and effectively analyses the results of external data. As a result of this analysis the school is able to identify groups for special support in order to improve their performance. The data is able to identify the relative performance of different ethnic groups. For example the Regents tests provided evidence of the underperformance of black male students particularly in relation to their literacy skills. In response to this identification, a mentoring system was established for these students. The mentoring of this cohort has led to an improvement in performance in the most recent standardized tests. The school also has a number of strategies and procedures for generating its own data about individual students within their specific classes. This is evident in the useful data which is accumulated for English language learners and students with special education needs. The achievement of English language learners has been a particular focus. Through its systematic testing procedures the school monitors progress in language acquisition from the beginning to an advanced stage of competence. It is able to show successful transitions between the respective stages. However in a broader context, the exchange of information within the respective learning communities is not sufficiently systematic to provide an effective overview of student progress within and between grade levels. The school uses data proficiently to monitor its current achievements against past performance. It has sound strategies for providing intervention activities to ensure that

different groups of students will meet the requisite benchmark criteria in Regents examinations. Extra instruction time through evening and Saturday classes have been arranged to provide additional support for these students. In comparison with last year's achievements the school already has collated enough evidence to indicate that achievement in English language arts in particular has improved. This will enable the school to meet its annual yearly progress targets successfully. The school is aware of its overall performance against similar schools and is concerned to maintain its competitive advantage in relation to the 'trade' courses. The school is performing better in English language arts and math when compared with similar schools particularly in the math content area.

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 has a Comprehensive Education Plan which draws on a broad range of data to set goals and timeframes for improvement. These goals however do not focus on individuals or specific groups of students and are often too general to provide an appropriate focus for measuring progress. These goals are not always effectively or consistently implemented within the small learning communities. In addition, the school does not systematically use its data to look at how successfully each small learning community operates. In consequence, the progress of different groups of students is not sufficiently collated. The school has a large population of students who require special educational support. The testing and identification of programs for individual students is secure and effective in the identification of individual need. The provision and implementation of these programs is proficient. However when students are part of the broader general education provision, an absence of detailed knowledge about individualized educational plans adversely affects the breadth of the teachers lesson planning. The school is conscious of its need to improve the competence levels of students in literacy and math for those following vocational courses. The importance of these skills is regularly emphasized through the visits of partnership agencies such as Automotive Youth Education Services. It is a challenge for the school to change the perception of students who joined the school primarily to learn a trade to that of developing academic proficiency in order to support their career aspirations. The school is only partially successful in trying to achieve this aim. Some students are not associating with this goal as is shown by their lack of commitment in lessons. Conversely some are proud of their achievements such as in technology, sports and the trade classes in the automotive school. High expectations of achievement are also conveyed through newsletters and assemblies where student success is celebrated. The parent teacher association is active in promoting the expectations of the school. Efforts are being made to increase parental involvement by offering workshops on areas of the curriculum and issues related to bringing up children in today's society. Most parents seem to be supportive of the drive to standardize the wearing of a school uniform although enthusiasm for it is not shared by the students.

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 follows the mandated curriculum and has a focus on improving the quality of instructional activity, particularly in the English language arts and mathematics. In the context of the small learning communities the vocational elements make a distinct contribution to the education of students, and subsequently the quality of the work in the automotive sections is notably high. The school has set itself the task of integrating the academic and vocational curriculum. As indicated above, a focus for the school has been the reinforcement of literacy competencies and skills in the trade courses. A specific impediment has been the lack of common planning time for curriculum mapping to be explored in any great detail. This lack of provision has been a feature of academic content areas such as social science, as well as between the academic and trade provisions. The absence of some of these mapping discussions is reflected in the inconsistent quality of individual lesson planning by teachers. This inevitably has an adverse effect upon the progress students are able to make. Where the planning takes place, lessons are stimulating and interesting. In consequence, students are able to make appropriate progress and achieve well. The accountability for improving instruction is evident in some lessons but is patently absent in others. It is in this context that the work of the school has not been sufficiently or rigorously monitored. A relatively high proportion of the school's budget is spent on administrative and support staff for the small learning communities. In consequence there is a significant amount of data being generated which should be analyzed to inform decision making to meet the needs of students. This feature is not being managed in a coherent manner. In general the budget is used well to reduce class sizes in order to provide support for the low literacy levels of students. The impact of this provision is being shown in the improving performances of students in English language arts. Staffing decisions appropriately reflect curriculum and student need. The school has strategically contracted the services of consultants to facilitate and support staff in the delivery of literacy based and differentiated instructional programs. The impact has been successful at the individual teacher level. Scheduling decisions and programming are under review to create more shared planning time. The absence of this provision is reflected in the low level of outcomes of some lessons. Active student engagement in lessons is variable and is related to quality of teacher preparation. Where there is adequate planning and assessment, students are confident that teachers know them well and respond accordingly. In general there is an appropriate respect shown between students and teachers. One impact of the differences between teacher expectations and student aspirations is reflected in attendance levels. The school has done a significant amount of work to emphasize and celebrate the importance of high attendance levels. However the outcome of this is not reflected in actual levels of attendance which still remain significantly below that of similar and City schools.

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 with undeveloped features.

In general the drive for most teachers is to provide the best students, however the route to that aim is not been consistently followed. There is a variable capacity to collect and use data effectively to inform planning and outcomes within and across the learning

communities. Professional development is aligned to the expressions of teaching need by staff and the outcomes of issues revealed by external and internal testing. The school is successful in identifying issues and providing an immediate response but is not consistent in its follow-through into the practice within the respective learning communities or to individual classrooms. Senior leaders have adopted different strategies and approaches to improving instructional activity. Arrangements for teachers to undertake team meetings follow a specified pattern but the subsequent action and monitoring of these is undeveloped.

The principal is liked and respected by students and parents. There are indications that staff morale is not as high as it has been because of the issues of scheduling and programming. The principal has a visible presence around the school, knows a number of students by name, and has been instrumental in creating an orderly environment. Day to day administrative procedures are appropriately documented and generally run smoothly. The large number of administrative and support staff has produced a complex communication network which does not always run as effectively as it should. The school has a good partnership with outside agencies to support the needs of 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 undeveloped.

A recurrent theme in this report has been the inefficiencies in the use of existing data and the inconsistencies with the way that the school uses it to inform subsequent planning. The Comprehensive Education Plan identifies medium term goals but there is no diagnostic assessment as to whether those goals have been achieved. In order to make that diagnosis effective, a consistent process of collating the progress of groups of students needs to be in place. The variability in data usage impacts upon the efficacy of decision making. Interventions have been successfully made, such as improving their literacy skills of Black male students but other goals such as improving the achievement of the English language learner students are not sufficiently clearly reviewed. The school has shown that, when it has collected clear evidence and decided upon an action plan which is then evaluated, the outcomes are good. This lack of consistency and coherence in the monitoring is reflected in the variable impacts of the work of the senior leadership team. The principal is aware that clarification of the organization patterns such as the small learning communities will enable the school to respond more flexibly in the use of resources to satisfy the achievement of its goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Name of School Alfred E. Smith CTE High (HS 600)	∅	✓	+
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		