



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**High School of Telecommunication Arts and
Technology**

High School 485

**350 67 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11220**

Principal: Philip Weinberg

Dates of review: November 19 - 21, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Joy Stopher

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

Progress made since the last review

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

High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology is a high school with 1246 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 18% Black, 55% Hispanic, 18% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 3.2% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 89.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66.4% eligibility.

Ninth and tenth grade students are organized into two Small Learning Communities. The school was built in the early part of the twentieth century for 700 students. It currently has over 1200 students.

The school has placements for District 75 students who experience difficulty in attending school. It also hosts a region-wide LYFE program, which provides day care for young mothers who want to attend school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides excellent leadership for the school and empowers staff to be creative and innovative.
- The school has very high expectations and a highly academic, successful, college-aware school culture.
- Adults consistently treat students with kindness and respect, and relationships are excellent throughout the school.
- Teachers and administrators are constantly seeking ways to improve instruction and are eager to share ideas and practice.
- All staff work tirelessly to support students who need the most help academically and personally.
- There are exceptional systems in place to support new teachers.
- The school has developed excellent systems to collect and analyze data, and uses it very successfully to inform decision-making.
- Excellent use is made of technology to accelerate learning and ensure the school and students know what they need to do to improve.
- The successful ninth and tenth grades Small Learning Communities are an outcome of the school's highly effective systems for self-evaluation and enable teachers to work well together to improve student progress.
- Communication with parents is excellent and highly effective.

What the school needs to improve

- Help teachers to develop a common language to improve writing across the curriculum.
- Continue to extend the arts program.
- Further develop interdisciplinary planning and teaching.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is outstanding.

The High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology was rightly described by a parent as an “undercover jewel”. What makes it an outstanding and successful school is the combination of a number of factors. The result is a school with an excellent climate for learning, the highest expectations for every student both academically and personally, and a staff team who refuse to give up on any student. As one student commented, “It’s really hard to fail”. The principal provides excellent, empowering leadership. He and many other staff have been at the school in different roles for some time and a few teachers are former students. In this respect, the staff have “grown” together, resulting in a very high level of consistency in the way in which all adults in the school help students to do their best.

The school has developed its own exceptionally comprehensive systems to collect and analyze data. Very good use is made of this to inform decision-making at many levels. An excellent school website facilitates a high level of communication between teachers, students and their parents. However, the highly developed technology systems take second place to what happens in the classroom and the continual emphasis on improving teaching and learning. Perhaps a reason why the school appears to be an “undercover jewel” is the lack of complacency resulting in a constant focus on improvement and the very high standards it sets itself. Teachers and administrators talk constantly about student progress and ways of improving instruction. The successful ninth and tenth grade learning communities resulted from this kind of self-evaluation. Plans are already underway to improve writing across the curriculum, expand the arts curriculum and extend the effective interdisciplinary planning and teaching that is already happening in some areas.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has developed a clearer and more coherent approach to new teacher training and an extensive graduation program database. There has been an increase in the members of the school community who now contribute to the school’s future direction. The inquiry team has begun to focus on improving expository writing skills. Plans are in place for the team to work with Baruch College from January 2008 so that there is an opportunity for teachers in the team to earn credits. This is an excellent example of how the school aligns its activities with its goals and maximizes the opportunities to enhance teacher development and improve student learning. An outstanding school committed to becoming even better!

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

This is a school very rich in data, which has designed and developed its own system, Data-cation, to collect and analyze a whole spectrum of data. Excellent use is made of it to monitor student progress in an exceptionally detailed way and use the results to improve performance and outcomes. The system has three categories, the NCLB program, the Graduation program and the school website. The NCLB program enables the school to know where students are at any given time and analyze by any subgroup it selects. Within seconds, the data programmers are able to drill down to any specific combinations the school wishes to look at in more detail. Teachers can create their own groups to make comparisons and there is a full progress report for each student. The school is even able to measure anticipated performance and likely progress for the future. The Graduation program provides individual information about whether a student is on track to graduate. Recognizing the importance of early intervention, the school sets tracking for younger students to monitor individual progress from the outset. The school's own website provides a means of collecting a whole range of quantitative and qualitative data for each student through an interchange between teachers, students and parents. Progress reports contain data, for example, about attendance and behavior as well as academic progress. Staff are currently in the midst of a full analysis, studying peer group schools and those who are performing at a similar level. Very good systems are in place to support staff in using and developing their understanding of data. There is recognition that teachers are at many different levels and there is much sharing of ideas and expertise. A considerable number of teachers use hand-held computers in the classroom to assess work and provide immediate feedback on grades and progress.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

The rich array of data and highly effective use of technology for communication and goal setting means that the school demonstrates highly effective practice in this area. Goals come from the classroom. The administration uses data to identify trends and pinpoint where performance needs to be improved. The assistant principals facilitate the sharing of data and goals across subjects and grades. A particular strength is the consistent guidance approach to working with students. Grade advisors and counselors receive a student failure report to highlight the students who have failed in two or more classes in one marking period, for example. Teachers use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The creation of the ninth and tenth grade learning communities has been very successful in enabling the staff to meet together three times a week to talk about students and how to accelerate learning. The Graduation program database identifies what a student needs to do to achieve the minimum but also shows what higher functioning students need to do to get the very highest grades. This has resulted in very high overall achievement within the school. The school has the highest

expectations for every student and all adults show a commendable determination to “never give up”. Students too are getting in on the act and are in the process of setting up a student-to-student mentoring program. The school’s high expectations for its students centers round its goal of getting students into college. The support given to students in this respect is extensive and not limited to the academic. This year the school undertook to collect a significant amount of data to track high achieving students who had not applied to college and to establish whether student choices were realistic. The very extensive website includes a whole range of links to support students, including scholarship and financial advice as well as academic. The detailed calendar contains a small task to do each day, even using a false deadline as a checker to keep students on their toes!

Communication with parents is highly effective. Teachers share progress reports every few weeks, via the website, and call home regularly. Students and their parents can access information or have a dialogue with teachers at any point. Information and progress is shared and stored. Teachers post homework on the website. Prospective parents are encouraged to take a ‘walkthrough’ of the school during the day and any parent can phone to request this at any time.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is outstanding.

The climate of the school is outstanding throughout. Adults treat students not only with kindness and respect but also with total consistency. Students have a very strong sense of what is right and wrong and know how to mediate with each other to resolve issues. Students and staff are very clear that the school “is a great place to be” and this has a tremendous impact on the success of the school. The open door policy throughout encourages open dialogue and debate about what needs to happen next.

The school puts a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy and is constantly seeking ways to improve. Staff became increasingly aware of the need to develop a common language to improve writing across the curriculum. This began with an observation of a student obviously confused by getting seemingly different messages from different departments. Curriculum decisions, as well as flexible, innovative scheduling and programming, enhance student progress. The school uses a ninth grade placement exam to program freshmen in math and foreign language, and school diagnostic exams and the Burns and Roe exam for literacy students. The school reviews data at the end of each semester to adjust student programs. Teachers are able to target their instruction more specifically because of the grouping of students. Interdisciplinary planning and teaching in the smaller learning communities has been very effective in raising achievement and the school is eager to develop this further. Teachers know their students very well.

Despite the restrictions of the building, the school offers a broad curriculum including art, theatre and musical theatre as well as after school athletics and dance. Chorus is a recent addition and students are showing real enthusiasm and enjoyment. The school has recognized the importance and potential benefits of extending the arts program.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

The extent to which teachers and administrators share ideas and engage in constant discussion about ways to accelerate learning is the key to the school's success in this area. Administrators engage in on-going discussions and respond very effectively to opportunities to build capacity related to achieving whole school goals. Recently, the principal and assistant principals have been observing classes together so they can develop consistency and a common language in identifying goals for further improvement. Teachers have regular and structured opportunities to observe and share best practice through a well-embedded program of intervisitation. Interdisciplinary team meetings make the links. New teachers are highly appreciative of the support the school provides for them, particularly through the new teacher mentor program. High quality observation and feedback skills resulted in a new teacher commenting that "I get immediate feedback, it is very valuable and my mentor knows me and my kids". The principal and assistant principal have a strong commitment to this aspect of the school's work. Staff are exceptionally consistent in the way they treat students and reinforce whole school expectations and goals. The way in which senior students are beginning to model this behavior to support younger students can be no better testimony to the promotion of learning, respect and trust which pervades the climate of the school.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

The principal sets the tone for the school and provides excellent leadership. He has created a staff team who feel secure in contributing to the development of the school in a creative and innovative way. Much of this is to do with the constant dialogue about student progress and revisiting and modifying plans and goals for improvement. At the heart of this is the school's capacity to use and re-order data to provide information for strategic decision-making. The school is able to drill data to identify which interventions are more successful than others. The sophomore grade analysis, following the tenth grade initiative, compared grades with the prior year and the score of the current tenth grade to start to assess the success of the program. The end-of-year process invites staff to consider what is happening, what needs to happen and encourages feedback. Planning is "looped". Administration meets on a weekly basis. Each department does the same and information passes backwards and forwards. There is a continual modification of practice in response to quantitative and qualitative data. This is very evident in terms of immediate response but also in developing the next stage of whole-school goal setting. The school carried out a summer school grade comparison to see if using its own teachers made any difference, for example. There are highly effective structures in place to effect change which engage staff across the school. Work on the writing initiative has already started. Each department has a discussion and contributes two members to a committee who are responsible for planning. The school has excellent systems in place to monitor every student and the capacity and willingness to effect change in response to their needs to achieve individual and whole school goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: High School for Telecommunication, Arts and Technology	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score					X
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.					
To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?					X
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?					X
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?					X
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?					X
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?					X
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?					X
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1					X
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.					
To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?					X
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?					X
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?					X
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?					X
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2					X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?					X
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?					X
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?					X
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3					X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?					X
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					X
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?					X
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?					X
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?					X
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?					X
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?					X
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?					X
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?					X
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?					X
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X