



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**High School for Media and Communications**

**High School 463**

**549 Audubon Avenue  
New York  
NY 10040**

**Principal: Janet Saraceno**

**Dates of review: January 7 - 9, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Cheryl Baker**

## **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

The High School for Media and Communications is a high school with 664 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 5% Black, 93% Hispanic students, and 2% Asian and others. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 85.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 83% eligibility.

The school shares a campus with three other small high schools and one middle school. Some staff, such as administrators for special education and physical education, are shared among schools. Students share facilities such as the gymnasium, cafeteria, dance studio, and auditorium. Students from the high schools join together on athletic teams, fostering good relationships among the campus population.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides clear leadership for a compassionate, supportive learning environment that focuses on continued improvement in student achievement.
- The school is showing good progress in closing the achievement gap for Hispanic students and English language learners.
- School personnel use a wide range of information effectively to understand and address the social and emotional needs of students and support their capacity to learn.
- The administration is increasing opportunities for teachers to collaborate and participate in shared decision-making.
- The curriculum continues to be refined to address changes in City and State standards as well as to expand the theme of the school.
- The school has extended instructional time in English language arts and math resulting in improved student achievement.
- A variety of instructive programs successfully assist parents in understanding the high school program and their role in helping their children to succeed.
- Student leaders contribute to the school's overall efforts to support student achievement through their inclusion on grade-level teams.

### What the school needs to improve

- Streamline training, support mechanisms and structures for the analysis of available data by teachers to further improve their use of this to inform instructional planning.
- Provide training in techniques for the differentiation of instruction based on increased understanding of students' discrete learning needs.
- Use results from periodic and diagnostic assessments to increase understanding of students' incremental progress.
- Implement systems that enable parents to exchange information regularly with the school about their children's learning needs and strengths.
- Ensure that all whole-school plans are shared with teachers, parents and students to increase the school's capacity to enlist full support for its initiatives.
- Increase the practice of recognizing and celebrating achievement through displays of students' work.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Progress made since the last review

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

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

The current principal has led the High School for Media and Communications since its founding in 1999. In that time the school has made strides academically and socially. The school effectively gathers, analyses and distributes a wide range of statistical and anecdotal data regarding students' academic, social and emotional successes and needs. The school is well focused on the particular needs of its Hispanic students and English language learners, who are showing good progress. Teachers and administrators also demonstrate a deep concern for the students at the school. Students feel safe and well-cared for because each is well known personally, beyond the quantitative data revealed by tests. An array of interventions is in place to address academic and social needs.

The curriculum is well aligned to State and City standards and is revised as necessary. New courses supporting the school's theme and adding interdisciplinary challenge are under development. Instruction is, for the most part, varied and engaging. Differentiation is largely by program, however, rather than individualized. Not all classrooms display examples of students' good work so opportunities are lost to celebrate their achievement and inspire others. Teachers receive good support through advisement and professional development and these are helping them to improve the quality of their instruction. The school is improving its planning by setting three-year growth targets in a number of vital areas. Whole-school plans, however, are not fully shared with all members of the school community.

Progress since the last Quality Review includes increased sharing across departments, better disaggregation of data and improved long-term planning. The inquiry team is making acceptable progress towards identifying root causes for student success.

### 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 well developed.**

School leaders are efficient in organizing and analyzing data. They disseminate it to academic and support personnel who then share the information with their respective teams. Updates and new sources of information are shared routinely resulting in a staff that is well informed as to students' overall progress. Teachers in academic departments effectively use quizzes, tests, writing samples, performance tasks, examinations and results of Regents practice tests to round out their understanding of their students. The progress of special education students and English language learners are further carefully monitored through their individual education plans and regular mandated testing. Increasingly, general education teachers also have access to these sources of data.

Specialists and generalists monitor special education students in co-taught classes. The staff at large is developing a better understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners. This has led to instructional modifications and improved student performance. The school has increased its disaggregation of student performance by gender and ethnicity. Some minor disparities have been noted between the performance of boys and girls and the school is exploring appropriate interventions. The school charts the performance of its higher achieving students through Scholastic Achievement Test scores and advanced placement scores, and the outcomes are used to inform subsequent instructional planning.

The school is keenly aware of its progress over time and in comparison to similar and neighboring schools. There is appropriate pride in the school's success in closing the achievement gap for its Hispanic students and English language learners. The school is also aware of disparities in overall performance in academic subjects and these are being addressed at department level. The administrative team utilizes scholarship reports to monitor the progress of classrooms and subject areas and is vigilant in monitoring whether students are on track to graduate. Often, the principal takes it upon herself to review all freshman transcripts to determine the relative progress of all of her students. The school has adequate management systems and structures to support teachers' use of data, and plans to develop these further. It awaits access to technology and periodic assessments tools.

**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 well developed.**

The school conducted a recent collaborative planning retreat where administrators and teachers worked to lay the ground for an effective long-range school improvement plan. This draft plan incorporates the format of a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) but exceeds it in scope and reach, thoroughly addressing topics such as data analysis by staff, school climate, graduation rates, interdisciplinary courses and reaching all learners. However, the school has not shared the plan with all members of the school community and this limits the ability of those not included to support the school's plans for improvement. The retreat also spawned immediate interventions. The effective 'freshman enrichment' pilot evolved into the creation of grade-level teams that include teachers and students. Teams are charged with supporting students' academic, emotional and social development and are already having an impact on behavior and attendance. This initiative supplements the very effective support students receive through tutoring, credit recovery Saturday school, Regents preparation and other programs. Special interventions for special education students and English language learners are successfully supporting these students' learning, resulting in improved progress. The school's particular focus on English language learners and students coming from non-English speaking homes is helping to close the achievement gap.

The school's handbooks, mission and vision statements communicate high expectations for achievement to parents and students. The school has raised its Regents expectations above those of the City. Parents receive a variety of helpful information from the school through print, phone and electronic communications. Very informative workshops have been provided to help parents address the particular needs of high school students. Strong leadership from the parent coordinator has served to increase parental involvement and the school is working to provide more avenues for parents to exchange information with the school about their children's needs and strengths.

**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 well developed.**

The core curriculum is well aligned to the Regents examinations and teachers are guided in its delivery through effective pacing guides and calendars. When standards are changed, academic departments efficiently revise their materials and instruction to meet the new expectations. The curriculum provides a good level of challenge for high achievers through advanced placement courses. Enriching experiences such as trips and in-house musical and theatre presentations engage student interest and help to focus on the school’s media and communications theme, as do elective courses on such topics as journalism and graphic design. Teachers are devising interdisciplinary courses to support student engagement and foster the school’s theme. Administrators hold teachers accountable through frequent reviews of scholarship reports, Regents results and routine classroom visits.

The needs of lower-achieving students are carefully addressed. Co-taught classes include special education and regular education students. English language learners are increasingly being successfully included in general education settings. Differentiation for special education students is effectively guided by their individual plans. Teachers are becoming more skilled in differentiation of instruction for English language learners. Lessons often provide whole group instruction followed by small group practice. Less differentiation is based on students’ individual learning needs. Classrooms are generally neat and orderly, although many do not display examples of students’ good work to celebrate their achievement and inspire others.

The principal and her administrative team are astute at making budgetary, staffing and scheduling decisions based carefully on student data and goals. Significantly, the overall deficit in skills that incoming freshmen bring in English language arts and math led to the decision to double class-time in these subjects through, at least, grade10. This has led to improved achievement in these areas.

Students see the school as a safe haven within a community that poses some level of threat. Good and trusting relationships exist among students and their teachers, deans and administrators. The adults in the building demonstrate compassion and commitment to provide students with the necessary personal and academic support. The school has clearly-stated and well-understood attendance policy and procedures. Guidance personnel, well supported by a full-time attendance officer and the members of the grade-level teams, play a significant role in addressing student absence. Because of these measures, attendance at the school generally averages between 85% and 86%, well above the City average of 78%.

**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 well developed.**

Administrators regularly visit classrooms during learning walks, informal visits and formal observations of instruction. Teachers receive very helpful feedback from administrators regarding their instruction. Teachers new to the school and the profession feel that they are well supported during their induction. Teachers also have opportunities to visit one

another's classrooms to share good practices. Collaboration and shared decision-making is well supported through frequent departmental planning and grade-level team meetings. Professional development topics are regularly identified through the results of classroom observations, surveys of teachers, City mandates and emerging initiatives. , The subsequent training is very effective in developing teachers' skills and addressing their interests. The interest in developing more interdisciplinary courses that emerged from last year's retreat, for instance, led to the prompt identification of experts in curriculum mapping as a first step towards interdisciplinary planning.

The school is well organized and policies and procedures are clearly set forth in student, teacher and parent handbooks. Administrators and deans are very successful in setting an orderly business-like tone for the building. Students benefit from several avenues of good support to help them meet their academic and social goals. A well-staffed guidance department, along with attendance staff, provides advice, tracks credit accrual and provides outreach to other social service agencies. The school houses a clinic, staffed by a local hospital, where students can receive necessary treatments. The college office provides useful resources for students' future planning. Further, partnerships with outside agencies provide valuable opportunities for students to enhance their experience in the arts, leadership, and career exploration.

**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 well developed.**

The school's plans evidence suitable interim goals and measures of success. Plans for improving teacher outcomes include regular observations of instruction to identify areas for development. Teachers are strongly supported in making improvements by administrators and mentors and are afforded reasonable time to increase their skills. Specialists use formal and informal assessments to measure progress towards goals of students in key areas, such as special education or English language learners, and adjust interventions accordingly. The achievements of the many students that come from non-English speaking homes are similarly very carefully monitored, and instructional programs modified, to ensure their continued progress. In general, teachers effectively measure students' progress periodically through quizzes, tests, and examinations. Teachers also make good use of the analysis of departmental examinations and Regents exams to shed light on the overall effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and to inform curricular and instructional adjustments.

Administrators meet together routinely and are prudent in acting on the information revealed by all manner of data. For example, the results of freshmen diagnostics are used to place students at the appropriate entry level in math. The principal's analysis of freshman transcripts led to a concerted effort to support this population in credit accrual. Analysis of the effect of this initiative led to the formation of grade-level teams to provide increased support for all students. The principal's belief that educators are "morally obligated" to provide the best for their students underpins her effective leadership. The principal and her team have a deep commitment to their students, to the school's mission, and to the school's continuing improvement. They have considerable capacity to continue to drive the school forward.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME:</b> High School for Media and Communications (M463)	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>					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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					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 make 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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X