



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

High School of Graphic Communication Arts

**High School 625
439 West 49 Street
Manhattan
NY 10019**

Principal: Jerod Resnick

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Lead Reviewer: Barbara Kwiecinski

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

High School of Graphic Communication Arts is a high school with 1819 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 37% Black, 58% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 70%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 75% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's drive, determination and clarity of vision have resulted in students moving forward both academically and personally.
- The administration work very collaboratively and positively support teachers to improve and share practice.
- Students enjoy the curriculum breadth, are proud of the learning community they belong to and the relevance of their academy focus to their future career.
- The collaborative team teaching positively enhances the progress of the students with the greatest need.
- Staff work in partnership with students setting high behavioral expectations which results in students working in calm, caring atmosphere.
- The professional development team effectively supports teachers, resulting in them reflecting and refining their practice.
- High quality study groups in departments and academies, using research and investigation, result in good interdisciplinary work and sharing of practice.
- The school uses many data sources to track students' individual progress and group them accordingly.
- The mentor program gives good support to new teachers who receive further support from colleagues and administration.
- The school has many positive partnerships with business and industry, which gives another dimension to students' learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the use of data further to inform teachers planning to meet the needs of all students.
- Continue to work positively with parents in order that they may further support students' learning.
- Continue to support teachers to improve the quality of instruction so there is less variation of practice.
- Continue to address attendance and lateness before class and between classes.
- Ensure that consistently high expectations are set in all lessons including clear objectives with learning outcomes.

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 proficient.

The High School of Graphic Communication Arts provides a broad curriculum for its students. The academy structure is comprised of five distinct learning communities, each with a specific focus. This results in students considering their career options. An assistant principal, supported by an academy coordinator, leads each academy. This leads to the development of collaborative, cohesive teams who are always discussing ways to support students' needs. Students speak positively about their academy choice and welcome the flexibility to change their initial option if they prefer another course. The principal clearly sets the direction for the school and leads by example, setting clear expectations of both staff and students. Since his appointment, the behavior of students has improved dramatically and the school is now a safe, caring, learning environment. Results are improving, as are graduation rates. Systems and structures are now in place to support both the higher-performing students and those with the greatest need. The school has many groups who work collaboratively to track students' progress. The cabinet meets daily and there are clear lines of communication between all formalized meetings. The assistant principals have departmental responsibilities and serve as academy directors. Members of the administration carry out joint observations to ensure consistency. This aspect of responsibility is developing, as there presently is an inconsistency of teaching quality. There are examples of good teaching where teachers follow school guidance. Where this is the case, students' work is of high quality as are their portfolios. However, in some instances, expectations are too low and teachers do not differentiate instruction to meet every student's need.

The school tracks the progress of individual students carefully and makes good use of data to group students appropriately. It has defined the role of the inquiry team and the use of ARIS and Acuity. The school has addressed all areas identified in the previous Quality Review and the mentor program for new teachers is particularly good. Attendance remains an issue but the school is working very creatively to address this and many new positive initiatives are in place.

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.

The principal and the assistant principals form a very cohesive team who look at data on a daily basis. The school tracks the progress of each student carefully and this results in appropriate student groupings. Over the last two years student progress has improved. The introduction of advanced placement classes in English language arts, math and social

studies results in effective challenge for students. In addition, honors classes, college now classes and advanced placement classes show year on year improvement of the high achieving students. The school tracks the progress of special education students' progress constantly. The increase in the number of collaborative team teaching classes results in students with the greatest need making significant progress. English language learners receive support based on their eighth grade scores. They receive support for academic and personal progress. Students speak very positively about the bilingual guidance counselor who works closely with the specialist teachers. As a result, programs receive continual revision to meet individual needs. The academy structure of five small learning communities led by an assistant principal, supported by an academy coordinator, provides an effective vehicle to compare and contrast students' progress. At academy meetings, staff look at progress across departments, within and across grades, and between gender and ethnic groups. This gives all teachers an accurate picture of each student's progress. Where discrepancies exist, sharing of effective practice takes place. Before deciding to create the small learning communities, the school visited model academies in order to make comparisons, share good practice and agree on the most appropriate structure to support the students. It is the school's intention to track its performance against other academy schools as well as similar schools. The professional development team supports teachers to use data to inform instruction and the present focus is on "effective practices in the delivery of instruction."

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 proficient.

The school sees the Comprehensive Education Plan as a working document and departments use it to set goals. In addition, the cabinet has a clear understanding of the performance and progress of students within and across departments and in different subgroups. It shares all information on student achievement at academy and department meetings. This process results in teachers understanding and sharing in the goal setting process. Teachers speak very positively about the support they receive from the assistant principals as directors of the five academies. The structure results in meetings that are collaborative and small enough to give teachers the opportunity to be more personally involved in the goal setting process. All teachers are aware of school, class, grade, department and academy goals. Goals are set for annual assessment improvement using uniform mid-term, final and Regents examinations. The school identifies percentage increases for each class using the previous year's data. It constantly reviews performance and progress towards these goals and the principal holds teachers accountable for progress toward challenging goals.

Parents say that communication has improved dramatically since the principal's appointment and welcome the letters regarding poor performance. They say, "There is always someone to talk to and it is better to know about underperformance early, rather than wait for a report card." The school communicates with parents in many different ways. These include monthly calendars and *The Graphic Weekly*, which always contains the "principal's message." The school sends home high-quality academy newsletters but at present does not translate them into other languages. This results in students being proud of the academy focus and celebrating success but excludes parents whose first language is not English. Teachers identify the lack of parental involvement as a weakness. They would welcome increased parental involvement in students' education. The school is working hard to rectify this and the home school coordinator offers a

comprehensive range of workshops including “understanding your child’s report card and transcript.” It now holds meetings at uptown locations, targeting specific students who live in the area. This has resulted in the doubling of meeting attendees. The school hopes that through its creative work, more parents will involve themselves in their student’s learning journey.

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 proficient.

The High School of Graphic Communication Arts is a Career and Technology High School. This gives students the opportunity to choose a career program such as printing, commercial arts or photography. Students speak very positively about the vocational aspects of the curriculum. They like the practical nature of these classes and realize that by gaining additional credits they can enter industry immediately after leaving school. The success of students in vocational subjects receives recognition citywide and in 2007, students received awards for digital photography and graphic arts. The graphic literacy magazine, *Open Minds* contains student writing and illustrations of high quality and the Georgia Scholastic Press Association rates this as excellent. Students’ artwork is also of high quality and students enjoy using technology to enhance their digital photography. Ninety percent of freshmen enter the school with low levels in English language arts and math and consequently receive additional classes in these subjects in order to speed their progress. Effective motivational strategies are in place. In a grade 10 English language arts lesson, a teacher gave students Indian sweets to help them understand the culture of their text. There are examples of good teaching but at present, there is too much variation of practice. Students like challenge. However, in some lessons, the pace is too slow and students complete their work quickly and spend time with nothing to do. As a result, valuable learning time is wasted. The principal and assistant principals know where the strengths and weaknesses are within the school and there is a steady move for teachers to set consistently high standards and use data to plan their lessons to meet all students’ needs. There are examples of high-quality graded student work. However, some of the displayed science work contains inaccuracies. Where relationships are positive, students demonstrate a good level of engagement and celebrate their success. In a good science lesson, students understood the need to complete their labs and this positive reinforcement acts as a motivator. When students are not positively encouraged they miss labs and find it difficult to be motivated to complete the required number.

Attendance remains a problem. The school has introduced many positive awards, for example a “student who shines program” where students are rewarded for attitude, motivation and academic achievement. Despite this, attendance percentages are still below City and State averages.

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.

Professional development has a high priority and takes place in many different ways. The United Federation of Teachers’ teacher center provides a hub of professional support for all. New teachers meet weekly and speak positively of this formal support, which ranges

from topics such as classroom management, scaffolding instruction, to learning styles and learning intelligence. This results in new teachers' delivering well structured lessons with a variety of activities. Teachers receive very positive support from two consultants from the New York math and writing projects on a daily basis. Lesson modeling and coaching is undertaken. As a result, teachers are more reflective about students' learning. The principal and the assistant principals undertake lesson observations on a daily basis. Teachers welcome this positive support. In a good advanced placement class students received suitable challenge and could identify different ways to incorporate quotes into text. At present, the staff receive development on learning styles and matching work to individual student need. The administration is aware of the inconsistency in the way in which teachers incorporate this into lesson planning. It is working hard to address the issue and move to greater consistency. Collaborative team teaching is strength of the school and rapidly increasing numbers of special education students integrate into mainstream classes. Professional development opportunities and time for collaborative planning has resulted in teachers working as teams. In the best lessons, it is difficult to tell who the special education teacher is and as a result, students with the greatest need are making better progress. The assistant principal with responsibility for pupil personnel services works closely with his team of counselors who deal with students' emotional needs. In addition, the guidance department works with students to help them meet their promotional and graduation requirements. The principal views the school as a constantly learning community. All teachers are involved in study groups at both department and academy level. Each group carries out, publishes and shares educational research. This is of high quality and has had a positive influence on interdisciplinary work. The many positive external partnerships open students' horizons an Educational Talent Search improve college awareness across all grades.

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 proficient.

The school's strategic planning is developing and there are clear goals in place with quantifiable timeframes for academies, grades and departments. The constant review of movement towards goals results in teachers being aware of progress. There is still an inconsistency in the assessment of students' work and some students do not know what they have to do to improve their performance. Attendance is well below City and State averages. At present there is not a strategic plan in place with success measures to address this. Teacher accountability is improving as is teacher attendance however all teachers do not put the school's expectations into practice. In the best lessons, teachers clearly display "aims and do now" and students rise to teacher expectations. Periodic assessment data goals are set and ongoing periodic assessments using quizzes and homework allow students to challenge themselves and be competitive. The establishment of clear expectations for both staff and students results in a safe learning community. The principal demonstrates drive, determination and clarity of vision. He and the cabinet are working very hard to make sure that effective systems are in place to support all students' learning. They are very proud of their results and continually implement the school's mission and vision.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: High School of Graphic Communication Arts	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 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		