



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

High School of Applied Communication

High School 267

**30 - 20 Thomson Avenue
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Mary Ellen Kociszewski

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Lead Reviewer: Roy Storrs

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The High School of Applied Communication is a high school with 330 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 13% Black, 53% Hispanic, 19% White, 13% Asian students and 2% other. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 91.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 62% eligibility.

The school is one of four high schools located in the Queens Atrium Building in Long Island City. It shares some facilities with another school in the building, such as the cafeteria, art room and music room.

The school has grown from its initial complement of 120 students in September 2005 to its current number, with the expectation that it will expand to 450 students by September 2008. Half of the staff joined the school in September 2007,

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's focused and empowering leadership is effectively moving the school towards achieving its vision, which is universally supported.
- The recently appointed assistant principals give enthusiastic support to the principal and bring valuable pedagogic expertise to the school.
- Meticulous data collection ensures the school can set students appropriate learning goals and monitor their performance rigorously.
- The teachers work flexibly and collegially as a mutually supportive team.
- Much of the teaching engages students' interest and ensures they are actively involved in their learning.
- Administration's regular formal and informal classroom observations constantly monitor and help improve the quality of instruction.
- Close working relationships between faculty, guidance counselor and social worker positively enhance students' academic and personal development.
- Students enjoy school, attend well and benefit from trusting relationships with their teachers, which generate a lively, but industrious, working atmosphere.
- Clear procedures and high expectations ensure the school runs smoothly and efficiently.
- Strong and beneficial communications between home and school guarantee regular transfer of information about students' progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to provide training in use of data for less confident and new teachers to ensure they all use data effectively.
- Spread the good practice of using an electronic format for recording and analyzing data which allows students to follow their progress on line.
- Provide more opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from the best examples of differentiated instruction in the school.
- Further develop induction procedures in view of the large proportion of new teachers being hired each year.

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 well developed.

The school has made considerable progress in its three years' existence. This has much to do with the experienced principal's vision, inspired leadership and commitment to her students. Two capable and enthusiastic assistant principals, both of whom are expert coaches, and the open-minded, flexible staff complete the strong team. The school's rigorous approach to data collection and analysis enables it identify the unique qualities and achievements of each student. This information enables the administration and staff to plan effectively, allocate students to appropriate courses or support strategies, to set learning goals and monitor progress. Not all teachers are fully confident in using data in electronic form, so further training is planned. High expectations are evident throughout the school, students are fully aware of what is expected of them and most strive to achieve well. As an America's Choice school, the curriculum focuses on students developing lifelong learning skills through cooperative activities, which students enjoy. Much of the teaching is lively, interactive, engages the students' interest and meets their needs, but there is room to extend the incidence of differentiated instruction more widely. A thorough professional development program extends teachers' knowledge and skills, although there are too few opportunities for them to learn from observing the best instructional practice in the school. Teachers relate well to their students who appreciate the level and quality of support and guidance they receive, enabling them to take full advantage of their life in school.

Following the previous review, the school converted the recommendations to goals which it has addressed religiously. Data collection, goal setting and monitoring are well established, professional development is well focused and strong partnerships established with a range of outside agencies. Differentiation is more in evidence, but remains a point for development as the faculty increases in size. The inquiry team has taken an innovative approach. It is reviewing closely 15 students from the bottom third of grade 11, as they will be the school's first graduating class, who are successful in class but not achieving in Regents examinations. Data analysis has revealed that reading, especially limited vocabulary is the main issue and this is being addressed.

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.

Under the principal's clear guidance, the school is meticulous in collecting a wealth of invaluable data through which it understands the performance and progress of every single student. Data from the middle schools, other external and internal test data, related services, test modifications and attendance patterns are stored electronically with supplementary records such as attendance patterns. An assistant principal uses her mathematical and computer skills to analyze the data and present it in different graph formats. These include performance comparison by gender and ethnicity in every subject, thus identifying clearly which students need help. Other important elements of data are the "Teacher Assessment Notebook" (TAN) and the "Student's Source Book". The TAN provides an invaluable, constantly increasing, on-going record of each student's achievement. Students have a source book for every subject, with a table of contents for easy reference, which collates their work and enables them to revise easily.

With this wealth of information teachers, guidance counselor and social worker build an accurate picture of each student's attainment, progress, attitude and attendance. In this way, all students, including English language learners and those with special needs are allocated to appropriate courses or tightly focused intervention programs. With a small student population, the principal takes justifiable pride in knowing each student and their program. This detailed knowledge enables the administration to compare the school's performance over time, showing that results have improved progressively. The principal also keeps a close check on the performance of similar schools, but benefits more from strong links with other principals in her network. While the administration and many teachers are skilled in using data, the principal plans to provide training in the use of data for less confident teachers and those new to the school to ensure they all use data effectively.

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.

A culture of goal setting is firmly established stemming from the principal's whole school goals to assistant principals' personal goals which are reflected in the goals set by every teacher each semester. Common planning time promotes consistent teamwork within departments to promote joint planning and goal setting based on detailed data analysis. All teachers conduct one-to-one conferences with students and complete a "Teacher Assessment Notebook" for every class they take. These procedures provide invaluable information, track student progress and help teachers set learning goals with and for their students. One teacher is making very effective use of an electronic system to record data, check progress and set learning goals for the students she teaches. The system also enables students to access their achievement profile on line at any time. Students use this facility regularly and find it extremely motivating. They would like the same opportunity in every subject they study.

Whole school goals and high expectations are made explicit in the school handbook which all parents receive and are mirrored in the profile given to every student. Students know what is expected of them and most rise to the challenge. Using numerous means, including letters, e-mail and telephone conversations, the school has developed strong and beneficial links with parents. Parents are kept fully informed about school activities and their children's progress and are encouraged to provide teachers with important information which might help their children's education. Being conscious of families'

home circumstances, the parent coordinator ensures that newsletters are sent to parents in their home language so that parents are not disadvantaged. At consultation evenings, translators are on hand to make parent/teacher conferences more profitable. Parents greatly appreciate these considerate services.

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.

As an America’s Choice school, the curriculum focuses on students developing lifelong learning skills. Lessons follow the same format with emphasis upon cooperative activities, which students respond to positively. Strong emphasis on improving literacy, especially students’ reading and writing skills, recognizes this subject’s importance across the curriculum and is having the desired impact upon raising achievement in all subjects. To support their vocational aspirations, the school has arranged for some students to attend afternoon classes in early childhood care, food preparation and auto mechanics in another school. The “College Now” program enables higher achieving students to gain college credits in a range of subjects. The core curriculum is enriched by a variety of interesting electives and extra-curricular activities in art, music, dance, journalism, science and sport, plus visits to museums and galleries which students appreciate. Teachers are aware of their accountability. Much of the teaching is suitably differentiated, engages students’ interest and ensures they are actively involved in their learning in keeping with the school’s philosophy. There remain a few teachers whose skills are less well developed.

Budget, staffing and resource decisions are driven by data and student needs. As a growing school, these are daily considerations. While astute in her own right, the principal has hired two part-time “F status” experienced retired principals who are providing valuable support in these demanding tasks. A friendly but purposeful ambiance permeates the whole school. Students benefit from trusting relationships with their teachers and other staff, which results in a lively, but industrious working atmosphere in classes. Because students enjoy school, attendance is high. Nevertheless, the school has rigorous procedures for monitoring attendance and lateness, effectively managed by the social worker.

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.

In the early days, the principal was the only administrator making regular and scrupulous formal classroom observations to monitor instruction constantly. The recently appointed assistant principals give enthusiastic support to the principal generally and in this specific task. They also bring valuable pedagogic expertise to the school having been successful teachers and coaches. Detailed follow-up letters clearly identify teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and thus help improve the quality of instruction. Informal walkthroughs and scrutiny of students’ work provide additional valuable evidence of the quality of teaching. This links to the professional development program which is

substantial and finely balanced between meeting whole school and individual teacher needs. A significant element is the training provided by the America's Choice instructional specialists who help teachers put into practice the principals of their approach. Teachers have few opportunities to visit other classrooms. The examples of skilled teaching evident within the school provide ideal models for other less confident teachers to observe and learn from.

The teachers, half of whom joined the school in September, 2007, work collegially as a mutually supportive team. In such a small school, they adopt multiple roles which illustrate their flexibility and dedication which students recognize and appreciate. Although sound induction procedures embrace new teachers, the principal is aware that procedures need to be developed further in view of the large proportion of new teachers being hired each year. The new guidance counselor has made an immediate impact and is well regarded by students. Close working relationships with faculty, experienced dean and social worker ensure strong support for individual students. Advisory classes for 9th & 10th graders and newly introduced peer mediation arrangements further help students through their teenage years. The student government's active involvement illustrates the mature and responsible attitudes of most students. The building is beautifully presented and operates in an orderly fashion due to high expectations and clear procedures.

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.

Monitoring is seamlessly linked to data collection, planning and goal setting. Rigorous procedures enable the school to measure its success and adjust its program, which it does constantly as the school expands. These systems, developed by the school leaders and faculty, are wide ranging. Detailed knowledge of the students, gained through data analysis, teachers assessment notebooks, students source books and consideration of their behavior, attitudes and attendance ensure that programs are appropriate, effective, and adjusted if necessary.

The focused principal has extremely high expectations of herself and her staff whom she empowers to do their job and to be an integral part of the rigorous monitoring regime. The collegial teachers are fully aware of their personal accountability and appreciate that classroom observations by the administration constantly monitor their effectiveness. Teachers make good use of the information they gain to gauge the impact of their work and to revise plans accordingly. In the context of this professional culture, leaders and faculty are able to move forward with assurance for the benefit of their students.

The whole school community supports the principal's clearly and succinctly articulated vision. The rigorous monitoring procedures aimed at achieving this vision ensure the ever-improving effectiveness of the school. The confidence and determination of many students show that the school is well on its way to being an establishment "where tomorrow's leaders are developed today".

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: High School of Applied Communication	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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				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

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped