



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

High School of Computers and Technology

High School 275

**800 East Gun Hill Road
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Bruce Abramowitz

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School of Computers and Technology is a high school with 452 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 39% Black, 53% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 76% of the students enrolled and girls account for 24%. The average attendance is 87%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79% eligibility.

The school is a Career and Technical Education school dedicated to computer repair and maintenance. It shares a campus and facilities with a large host school and five small ones. Construction work has been on-going and at the time of the review, science classrooms were out of use so science was taught in ordinary classrooms without specialist equipment. This is the first year that the school will have had a graduating class.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an inspirational leader who has the full loyalty of his staff and students and through his honest appraisal, knows his school very well.
- The cabinet shares the principal's passion for education and his very high expectations.
- A very strong culture of care and support for students is appreciated by them and their parents and contributes very effectively to their learning.
- A wealth of data, collected electronically, is used to drive school improvement.
- Data shows that students have made very good progress in academic development since the school opened.
- Staff, students and parents share the principal's vision for the school and staff work excellently as a team to achieve it.
- Students are prepared well for employment and college.
- Grade team meetings support professional development well and have a strong focus on student achievement.
- The school meets its aims as a specialist technology high school and computers enhance learning for all.
- Students, parents and staff are proud of their school and regard it as a supportive family.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement the plans to strengthen the leadership team so that responsibilities for managing the school are shared.
- Make teaching consistent across the school by ensuring a strong learning environment in every classroom that engages all students at all times of the day.
- Continue with professional development into the use of data to differentiate instruction so that the teaching for all students meets their learning needs.
- Involve all teams in the production of a written long term plan for the school that has goals and time frames and used it as a basis for discussion at all meetings.
- Continue to tackle persistent tardiness.

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 school has made an excellent start over the past three years and has had great successes with its students. This is because the principal is uncompromising over the vision for the school and always works with integrity and honesty to realize it. This approach is shared by the whole staff who also work tirelessly on behalf of the students. All are committed to ensuring that every student is valued and does his or her best. The success of the first three years can be seen in the growth made by students in the current grade 12. Ninety percent of them entered school below grade level and the school's data shows that 90% are on track to graduate, over a third of them at the higher Regents Diploma. This is very good progress and is due to the use of data to guide students to appropriate courses. Grade team meetings provide good opportunities to discuss the achievement of students and the discussion supports professional development well.

Currently, the principal carries many of the responsibilities of leadership, but this year has started to share them with the relatively new cabinet. The cabinet is developing very well as a result. An area identified for growth by the team is the use of data to guide instruction which is currently inconsistent. As the school has grown, there is inconsistency in teachers' confidence in handling data so in many lessons, students find the work either too easy or too difficult as teaching does not reflect the findings of assessment. All teachers are clear about the goals of the school as these are frequently discussed at a wide range of meetings. However, the goals, timeframes and criteria for their success are not formalized into an accessible document. This was entirely appropriate when the school was small, but as it has grown, the increased number of staff makes this approach uncertain.

Since the last Quality Review, more data has been collected and used to determine areas of strength and improvement. Staff's confidence with computers has increased significantly. Technology is used very well to support students' progress and teachers have rapidly become skilled in its use because of the support from technology teachers. Excellent links with an external technology group are used to broaden students' understanding of computers. Much work has gone into increasing teachers' knowledge of how to use data to differentiate instruction and this work continues because of the increased staffing as the school has grown. The inquiry team is working on raising achievement of seniors in the Regents history examination. Different strategies are being tried and it is planned to evaluate these later in the year.

The school now has four grades, the first of which is about to graduate. A solid foundation has been built over the past three years, based on a very strong community ethos. Parents and students are proud of their school. The school is now poised to sharpen its instruction and management practices and, given the excellent teamwork, is in a very strong position to reach its goals.

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 school has a wealth of data that is used very well by leaders to gain an overview of the progress made by each student. The data is collected electronically and is disaggregated to show progress by groups, classes, grades, subjects and teacher. The progress of special education students has been identified as a concern and resources have been pulled in to tackle this. A discrepancy in the performance of subjects, particularly history where achievement is lower than other subjects, is the focus of the inquiry team.

The data shows that there is little difference between other groups of students although girls do better as they are seen to be more motivated than boys are. Computers are used to motivate boys along with courses such as car maintenance. Differences in the learning styles of boys have not been fully explored by all teachers. There are few students at early stages of learning English as a new language and their progress is mapped carefully. There is little difference in their achievement but numbers are too small to make valid comparisons. As this is the first year with a graduating class, it has not been possible to compare performance year on year. However, the numbers on track for graduation in each grade are analyzed and compared. The principal is alert to graduation rates of schools with similar populations and compares the projected graduation rates with these schools. Although tentative, the rate looks to be higher. Grade team meetings discuss what data is showing them and the new assistant principal for instruction has the responsibility of developing teachers' knowledge of how to use data. This has been identified as a continuing area for development to take account of the number of relatively new teachers and the increasing use of technology to record and evaluate the data.

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 principal introduced learning surveys early on in the school's development and these are used to identify goals for improvement. The Comprehensive Education Plan has not been updated this year, so new goals are not set out. However, each grade team identifies goals for their grade and cabinet is made aware of them. Cabinet therefore maintains an overview of the school. When the school was small, this informal approach was successful. The school is now larger and the informal methods are therefore not as successful.

Grade team meetings focus very well on individual students, quickly picking up those who need support. The caliber of discussion about students' growth is very high. In one example, teachers in grade 11 were discussing which students would benefit from honors classes. The discussion was well focused on the students' performance across a range of subjects and drew well upon data and teachers' own knowledge of the students. Students who are not on track receive a range of additional support such as after school classes, push in and pull out support, team teaching or one on one teaching.

A significant number of students have emotional difficulties and guidance counselors work effectively alongside teachers to overcome these. One of the high expectations of the

school is that all students will graduate. Students are left in no doubt that if they want to succeed, teachers will do everything they can to see that this happens. Parents and students are part of the leadership team so are very aware of the school's high expectations for students. Regular and well-attended meetings between parents and teachers help parents to support their children.

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 curriculum is well developed and covers all that is needed to gain credits for graduation. There is a very strong focus on computers and their use, such as students making videos and using digital photography. All curriculum areas take account of the reading and writing demands of their subjects and technology threads through all subjects. Students have the opportunity to gain extra credits through attendance at partner institutions. For those who are at risk of not graduating, after school and Saturday classes and summer schools are available. These strategies are effective, as indicated by the numbers projected to graduate.

Computers are used in all subjects and students have opportunities to make videos that sharpen their skills in technology and increase their understanding of the arts. Students, many of whom have difficulty with literacy, are encouraged to develop their skills in all subjects. A popular subject is robotics which is run with the support of New Visions. Industry assessments are part of the certification process. All grade 12 students are found an internship that successfully prepares them for work.

Teachers are held accountable for their work through the bulletin boards that display students' work with teachers' comments and through sharing of test results with all teachers. Bulletin boards are regularly used as part of walk-throughs, the administrative team using them to compare teachers' work and to learn from one another. The comments recognize what the student has done well, but do not always suggest how the work might be improved. Results of tests are shared as part of accountability. Students are often engaged in their learning, helped by the use of technology. However, in many classes, students are passive as they do not engage with the lesson. Differentiation is achieved mainly by grouping of classes. Many lessons do not use information from assessment to ensure that work is appropriate for each student. This leads to boredom or frustration and to more passivity.

The school uses data very well for strategic planning of resources, including the appointment of staff. An assistant principal was appointed to lead instruction based on comparison of subject data. Data on special education students was used to appoint two additional specialist teachers. A car driving course is being introduced to reflect the interest of the students.

Safety is of paramount importance and the school works closely with its neighboring schools on the same site to ensure a consistent practice. All students must gain 100% in an assessment on the safe use of computers before they are allowed to use them. The excellent environment of mutual respect stems from the principal playing to the strengths of his staff and to the autonomy they are given. Students are valued a young adults

Attendance is above that of similar schools although the school has not yet successfully tackled the problem of tardiness despite much vigilance. A number of approaches have been tried and this is an area that the school is still working on.

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.

The principal is thoughtfully introducing a system of professional development that takes good account of the range of experiences of his team and the monitoring by the administrative team. Weekly professional development for all is appropriately supported by external courses. An excellent and innovative strategy is the use of bulletin boards that display assessed work. Teachers are invited to look at these and learn from colleagues. Each grade team has their own board so they are used at grade and inter-grade level. Subject teachers meet monthly to discuss specific curriculum issues. The focus for the inquiry team and the themes for this year's professional development have come from the rigorous analysis of data. Performance in social studies is weaker than other subjects. Teachers visit one another's classrooms three times a year; one in their own discipline, one in their grade team and another of their own choice. This has led to informed professional discussion and to teachers changing their practices in the light of their observations and discussion. Team meetings are used well for professional development and the discussion is reflective and analytical. The school has a relatively inexperienced staff and teachers are supported effectively by a summer orientation, the cabinet and colleagues.

There is a very strong focus on personal development and students know that teachers will go the extra mile for them. Grade 9 students have a guidance program, there are courses on anger management and becoming a good citizen and peer mediators support students. The robotics program is an intrinsic part of this and is thoroughly enjoyed by all.

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 has a very clear vision that, up to now, has been shared excellently by parents, teachers and students. This is that students will develop skills for employment or college and that they will become good citizens. The first three years have seen the school well on its way to achieving the vision. As yet, the vision is not written down as the small size of the school has meant it can be reinforced and revisited easily. Now that the school is at full size, the increased number of staff and students risks the vision being dissipated.

At student level, monitoring and revision is very strong. Regular assessments keep track of those who are succeeding or likely to fail and interventions are quickly put into place. Honors classes have been developed in response to information from assessment. The administrative team uses data to monitor the school and adapts plans should the need arise. For example, a driving course is being developed to give students the opportunity to add more credits and the school day was moved in an effort to combat tardiness. Teachers know their students very well and intervene when necessary.

The school has come a very long way in three years. It has excellent capacity to reach its goals of using data to differentiate instruction and to formalize its management systems.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: High School of Computers and Technolgy 275	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		