

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**High School for Construction Trades, Engineering and  
Architecture**

**High School 650  
94-06 104th Street  
Queens  
NY 11416**

**Principal: Quintin Cedeno**

**Dates of review: December 1 – 2 , 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Alvin Jeffs**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

PS650 is a high school with 610 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 12% Black, 42% Hispanic, 17% White, and 29% Asian students. The student body includes 0.5% English language learners and 0% special education students. Boys account for 66% of the students enrolled and girls account for 34%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 95.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 55.8% eligibility.

The school is in its third year of existence and the principal has been involved since the school's inception. As a career and technical education (CTE) school, it combines the usual academic curriculum with "trade" courses relating to architecture, construction and engineering.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

Since 2006, the principal has been an inspirational presence at the school. He has seen his vision adopted by all staff. This vision is one of empowering students in their learning, while placing a similar emphasis on personal qualities that will prepare students for work and life in society. Interim data and discussions with students indicate that both of these aspects are developing well.

There are robust procedures in place that keep attendance high, ensure mature behavior and assist teachers in fulfilling the high expectations they have for each and every student. The principal and his senior colleagues model very rigorous ways of using data to evaluate progress. For students this means that learning targets and one-on-one discussions are a daily part of school life. For staff it means that the professional development program is adapted to meet the needs of individual teachers.

The school is characterized by the significant elements of trade education alongside the usual academic curriculum. This means that faculty comprises teachers of core subjects together alongside colleagues from industrial and commercial backgrounds. The school has been particularly successful in bringing these teachers together and providing them with a common sense of purpose. It has done this through a strong emphasis upon, for example, literacy and numeracy skills within every class. In addition, an advisory strand to the curriculum sees all teachers working with students on technical projects that become the vehicles for detailed discussions relating to each one's personal and academic progress.

Partly because the school is new and partly because many members of staff are still becoming familiar with its culture and practices, the impact of the imaginative curriculum is not yet fully evidenced in assessment results. The emphasis on student responsibility for identifying personal learning goals is developing very well. However, it is not yet fully embedded in all subjects for all teachers. Although strong on technology, the school correctly sees room for development in the use of systems that provide teachers with the full range of data and the means to analyze it. It is also still developing electronic access to data for parents and students that assist their involvement in individual learning goals

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is inspirational in his ability to develop and resource a range of initiatives that assist students in meeting the high expectations the school has for them.
- The school has in place a strong set of procedures that ensures the regular monitoring of the progress of individual classes and students.
- Close collaboration between all staff means that there is a very good exchange of expertise and information at all levels.
- A strong professional development program is assisting staff in incorporating differentiation into their lesson planning, classroom questioning and grouping.
- Parents value the school as a safe place where students are respected, known and supported by all members of staff.
- Students are glad to be at a school that “asks our views from every aspect” and where every student follows a “very rich curriculum”.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue the development of assessment and target-setting procedures in social studies and science that match those in English language arts and math.
- Build on the good procedures for data distribution and implement the newly devised training plan to enable all teachers to make the best use of this information.
- Ensure that all staff use differentiation within their planning and teaching.
- Develop each student’s ability to self-assess and devise their own personal learning targets.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Very talented administrators collect and analyze a wide range of data. They bring together information on academic performance, classroom behavior and attendance to form an in-depth picture of each grade and student. Increasingly, this analysis has allowed them to look at trends and subgroups. Thus, there is a sharp focus on students attaining levels 1 and 2 in English language arts. This has prompted the development of support structures, such as credit recovery classes, the close collaboration between special and general education teachers and the Saturday academy. Interim data indicates that these initiatives have been effective in raising both language and study skills. One significant subgroup comprises female students. Data analysis has allowed the school to monitor closely the relevance of the curriculum and their academic success.

The administration's very good modeling of data analysis and its emphasis on student learning goals have meant that teachers are willing and able to use the many rich sources of data available. This data now forms the basis of all grade meetings and professional development interviews. Within the student handbook there are detailed descriptions of short-, medium- and long-term goals and students demonstrate a good understanding of these concepts. Parents and students regularly use the on-line grade books and these enrich the many parent-teacher meetings. Procedures, such as the issuing of progress reports ahead of the record cards, also mean that parents are able to conduct an informed discussion.

Strategically, senior staff members use data very well to check on the success of classes, grades and curriculum initiatives. At classroom level, not all teachers are yet using data to its fullest effect in planning lessons and analyzing academic results. However, a strong professional development program and the good example set by grade leaders indicate that this is being effectively and rapidly addressed.

**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.**

This is a school that places a high priority on collaboration and goal-setting to accelerate progress. The school's Comprehensive Education Plan draws upon a wide range of data and many "constituencies" within and outside the school for advice in this. It relies on these processes to identify what has worked and what has still to be accomplished. Currently, this is most evident in the goals established to develop curriculum maps and rubrics for every subject area. Not only are these measurable with a clear timeframe for implementation, they also inform all meetings that take place within the school. The

principal and assistant principals incorporate these into the feedback rising from lesson observations and group leaders have this as their “hidden agenda” for every meeting.

The fact that there is an excellent culture of collaboration within the school means that teaching increasingly reflects this model and the push for improvement in academic achievement in day-to-day classroom practices. Students attest to the fact that most teachers have regular one-on-one discussions with them. These meetings identify clear goals and agree a timeframe for their achievement. This means that a high achieving student within an architecture class will have challenging goals in the development of “AutoCAD”, while another, less successful student, may be focusing on basic technology or report writing skills.

All staff are able to communicate their high expectations to students whatever their attainment levels. The high expectations are also apparent in the emphasis placed on college ambitions. Many learning goals relate to skills relevant to higher levels of study. This, in turn, is a major emphasis within the universal emphasis on “core value” goals. Thus, learning targets relating to cooperation and respect are part of the discussions that all students have with teachers as well as in the daily advisory lessons.

Target-setting and classroom conferences are well established within English language arts and math. They are developing well in science and social studies. It is as yet too early to assess the impact of these, but there is sufficient interim data to suggest that the benefits of wider use throughout the department. There are many very imaginative procedures for using data for grouping and student target-setting in science.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The impressive progress made by the school in such a short time is largely attributable to the very focused and strategic way that resources have been allocated. Budget allocations have been made to ensure the effective development of science labs and resources to stock them. Scheduling has been well thought through to allow the development of 72-minute subject periods. This has allowed time for increased conferencing and goal-setting within lessons. Staffing levels and scheduling have assisted key developments, such as the role of grade leader and common planning time.

The greatest resource the school has is its culture of trust. This stems from the reciprocal respect shown by the principal and faculty. The real attention shown to the personal and professional growth of teachers is reflected in their own interest in the development of relationships and skills in students. The focus on student achievement, in turn, encourages a love of learning in students and a wish to succeed in all subjects. All staff are good motivators and their positive feedback to students encourages them to set aspirational goals and have high expectations for themselves.

Most teachers have developed ways in which their regular classroom assessments contribute effectively to matching tasks to students within lessons. This is demonstrated in the way teachers plan groups within their classes and how they use questions, taking into account student needs and comprehension levels. However, there is not yet consistency in differentiating planning and teaching in all classes and this is an area the school is working to improve.

The curriculum emphasizes and encourages high performance and mature personal skills. All courses are aligned to State standards. Subject departments ensure that uniform assessments and common planning time provide opportunities for staff to discuss ways in which each unit of study is developed further. The curriculum is broad with all core subjects addressed alongside “trades” and career courses. At this stage of the school’s life, with no 12th grade, not all curriculum components are fully in place. Advanced courses for higher achieving students have just been introduced, along with others such as algebra, geometry and “college now”. The Drop Everything and Teach (DEAT) advisory courses provide valuable opportunities for students to develop interpersonal and teamwork skills. Classes supporting English language learners are effective in raising literacy and spoken language levels for these students. Students are given good opportunities to take part in the running of the school through the system of student government.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The principal’s avowed aim is to “grow a school”. Through his strategic use of professional development, he is doing this very well indeed. Regular classroom observations and walkthroughs are conducted rigorously. Each one, formal and informal, is followed by a structured debrief. Within these feedback sessions, experienced staff assist colleagues in the identification and development of classroom management and differentiation skills. This process has been so successful that teachers themselves now make regular intervisitations, using well-structured observation rubrics. The intervisitations and the following discussions within grade and department meetings ensure a regular and dynamic exchange of good practice.

Professional development plays a strong role in implementing the school’s strategic goals, such as classroom grouping. In addition there is also close attention to teachers’ personal and professional ambitions. The principal and his cabinet are well aware that the school’s steady growth necessitates the development of leadership skills. As with the grade leader role, every effort is made to assist talented and experienced teachers develop as trainers and leaders.

The inquiry team process has made a significant contribution to the professional development of all teachers. For 2008–09, the school has built on the previous year’s successful work in the use of qualitative data to assist lower-achieving students set goals and make progress in literacy skills. It has expanded the number of inquiry teams and developed a strong focus on comprehension skills. While the teams are comparatively new and some, such as the special education team, that supports a small number of students without individual educational plans, are only just being formed, the interim data indicates that there will be a similar success this year. As the result of work sharply focused on different levels of comprehension, the global history team is already seeing significant improvements in student performance. Through the inquiry team process, teachers and students are becoming more reflective of and responsive to the power of self-assessment and learning development.

A major factor in the school’s success is its Advisory Board. This comprises a very wide range of representatives from outside the school, from the Mayor’s Office to the National

Academic Foundation. The group has been very powerful with curriculum review, particularly relating to trade subjects. In addition, they provide high level external expertise in receiving and assessing student presentations. Scholarships and internships are already developing through close links with commerce and colleges. This experience of “real world” values and expectations, has added a richness and rigor to students’ work.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 principal’s vision of “a new form of CTE school” is now firmly ascribed to by all staff. Leaders within the school recognize the value of the students’ increased role in setting their own goals. Every teacher ensures that they develop personal qualities are hand in hand with academic and technical skills. Students, parents and faculty all understand the power of data, formal and informal, to ensure a clearer focus on what needs to be done. All of these aspects are modeled well by the cabinet who see themselves just as accountable for each student’s success as classroom teachers.

The use of data is a very powerful tool in the accountability process. The school’s self-evaluation, the principal’s performance review and the current Comprehensive Educational Plan are all built upon the most up-to-date facts, collected following the widest possible consultation. Teachers are now more confident and adept in the use of results and observations to inform their discussions with students. Every meeting, from one-on-ones to full faculty have a sharp focus on the school’s strategic goals and the way in which they can be mobilized to move students on. Interim goals are central to this process. Just as the cabinet reviews attendance, the development of curriculum maps and individual professional development plans are also reviewed on a regular basis, so teachers use periodic assessments to analyze and accelerate student progress.

It is typical of the school that collaboration itself has goals. The principal is well aware that as the school grows communication and teamwork could suffer. To ensure that both develop in parallel, the new role of grade leader and the effectiveness of this role are planned to be the subject of careful monitoring throughout the year. The “extended leadership” model supported by the administration means that more and more staff are contributing to the school’s steady progress. This is a powerful way to “grow” the school. Above all, it is one that transfers well to students, who feel “well prepared for work and leadership”.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: The High School for Construction Trades, Engineering and Architecture</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				<b>X</b>
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				<b>X</b>
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				<b>X</b>
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				<b>X</b>
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

### DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DY0, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.</b>							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X			
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X				
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X			
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				X			
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X				
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed