

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2009-2010**

**High School of Graphic Communication Arts**

**High School 625**  
**439 West 49<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**New York**  
**NY 10019**

**Principal: Jerod Resnick**

**Dates of review: March 22 - 24, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Elaine Gorman**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The High School for Graphic Communication Arts is a high school with 1747 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 33% Black, 62% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 75.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.**

The High School of Communications Arts is a comprehensive high school that offers career and technology programming through five academies. The school's organization provides for daily meetings by academy staff for professional development, inquiry teams, and collaboration about students in need of assistance. Assistant principals, along with teacher coordinators, lead the work of the academies under the supervision of the accessible principal. He meets with the leadership team daily and holds regular meetings with the academy coordinators, as well as with the union chapter leader. Parents on the school leadership team believe that they are active members and their opinions influence school decisions. While members of the school community point to areas of improvement in student outcomes, they are keenly aware of persistently low attendance and graduation rates. Teachers focus on passing Regents and graduating in four years. They also recognize the need to graduate prepared for post-secondary education and the workforce, but most curricular documents do not support 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations of either.

The five academies are the epicenter of work in the school. Goals determined for the school inform the goals and action plans in the academies. State and local accountability measures, including progress reports, environmental surveys, and the Quality Review, inform goal setting, but data analysis is insufficiently rigorous to identify the underlying patterns and trends of low performance among all students and for the relevant sub-groups. The resulting goals lack the specificity and benchmarking necessary to monitor, revise, and evaluate progress, thus limiting the impact of actions.

The academies are the center for professional developmental and teacher collaboration, supported by a teacher center from the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). The support to academy teachers, as well as new teachers, aligns to school goals and efforts to differentiate instruction. Teachers willingly implement new strategies and work with colleagues, including intervisitations, but practices to engage students in the production of high quality work are highly uneven between departments and classrooms.

The caring staff works before, during, and after school to find ways to help students needing additional assistance to recover credit. A grade 9 initiative and revisions to the grading systems allow more students to pass courses. An extensive collaborative team teaching program provides support to a large special education population. Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, College Now, new advanced placement courses, and internships provide additional opportunities for students in order to widen their educational experiences.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Professional collaboration is a high priority, and the faculty welcomes multifaceted professional development, and academy and content area inquiry teams, to strengthen instruction and raise learning outcomes.
  - o The school aligns professional development to teacher needs through academy and department study groups and workshops facilitated by consultants and the school's intermediary. The UFT Teacher Center runs weekly new teacher meetings and provides teachers with weekly professional development on improving student writing. Most teachers are practicing the strategies learned to strengthen their instruction.
  - o Each of five career academies has at least one inquiry team, which meets weekly. Students in the bottom third are most frequently the target population. Strategies selected include vocabulary development, note taking, graphic organizers, analysis of visuals, and multiple-choice questions. This work is supporting teachers in improving their planning to increase student achievement.
- The school community makes and revises organizational decisions that support developing improvement in teaching and learning.
  - o An assistant principal director and a teacher coordinator lead each career academy. By allowing teachers to select where they would like to teach, a vast majority of teachers reside in only one academy. This results in programming to maximize teacher and student time for instruction, academic support, and teacher teaming. Student programming closely focuses on maximizing their learning.
  - o A grade 9 initiative to program students with the same group of teachers is resulting in greater credit accumulation. Additionally, students who seek more challenging coursework can take a growing number of advanced placement courses. An extensive collaborative team teaching program provides most special education students the advantage of content and special education certified teachers, leading to greater course pass rates.
- An accessible and trusted principal, along with a collaborative leadership cabinet, review accountability reports to develop school-wide goals that inform academy goals and action plans.
  - o The principal and assistant principals have set six goals. The goals align to staff and student needs, based on a careful review of State and local accountability reports, particularly for the bottom one-third of students. Through regular verbal and written communications, all constituents know that course and Regents passing are primary school goals, resulting in an agreed mission and vision. Academy action plans provide agreed implementation steps towards achievement of this mission.
  - o The principal's daily meetings with assistant principals and regular meetings with academy coordinators, union chapter leader, and other support staff and partners include monitoring of progress toward school

goals. The school leadership team is an active body and plays a clear role in making budgetary decisions to support achievement of school goals.

- Effective support services and external partnerships provide students with a wide range of opportunities to explore post-secondary options and to develop socially.
  - o The school has an active Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program that presently enrolls approximately 120 students. The program has a 100% graduation rate for students who stay in the program for four years, in comparison to approximately 50% four-year graduation rate for the school overall, as commitment and high expectations are prioritized.
  - o Teachers and counselors organize external opportunities to enhance the educational process, such as College Now classes through John Jay College, and an internship program that placed 72 students last year on job sites.
- The school has implemented a grading initiative to promote greater student success toward class expectations, and a system of communications to keep students and parents informed on progress.
  - o The staff published 'Grading for Success', a collection of strategies on grading for mastery of content and skills, intended to promote student accountability for their own learning and higher first-time credit earning. There are indications that these practices are positively influencing credit accumulation.
  - o The staff provides regular progress reports between report cards to inform students and parents of current grades and missing assignments. Some teachers use computer systems in addition to those available through ARIS. ARIS training is available for parents, although only small groups attend. The school holds additional parent association meetings and notices are in English and Spanish. Although attendance is minimal, there are parents attending who would otherwise not participate in school activities.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Deepen systems to organize, analyze, and respond to multiple data sources, including patterns and trends of all students and relevant sub-groups at the team and classroom level, in order to take timely actions.
  - o Content and academy teams look at data from various sources, including recently developed common assessments and student work. However, teacher teams do not yet sufficiently analyze patterns and trends, and do not sufficiently focus on root causes of student deficiencies. As a result, the impact on curriculum and instructional practice is still limited.
  - o Teachers use ARIS results of grade 8 testing to identify students at the bottom third in both English language arts and math. However, the school does not yet use tools effectively to analyze trends in student performance based on Regents results and authentic student work. This limits the interventions offered to students around skill development.

- Build on current standards-based curriculum maps and samples of integrated units to emphasize rigorous habits and further the alignment of concepts and skills across grades and content areas.
  - o Curriculum maps align to State standards and indicators, but most student objectives limit learning and application to fact retention rather than development of thinking skills. As a result, student learning is too narrow.
  - o Although there are examples of integrated units, currently most differ in format and limit concept and skill development across grades and content. The writing rubric is emerging as a promising practice, but as yet, only English teachers use it widely so students are not clear about how to improve their work in other subjects.
- Deepen current efforts to differentiate instruction so that all lessons actively engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level, including effective questioning to elicit higher-order thinking to extend learning.
  - o Teachers are working hard to practice strategies introduced in professional development, and there are examples of meaningful grouping and tiered assignments. However, the implementation of differentiation in content, product and process is not consistent across the school.
  - o Teachers recognize the need for students to be actively engaged in their learning. However, class lessons are mainly lectures and include questioning at the literal level, therefore not allowing students time to work collaboratively or to respond to higher order activities.
- Refine all goals to ensure that they include precise short- and long-term measurable outcomes to monitor students' progress effectively, and to reinforce ownership and accountability.
  - o Goals identify major areas in need of improvement, such as improving the pass rate on the English language arts Regents. The target percentage increase is however incremental, and not strategic or grounded within a long-term theory of action. Additionally, the number of students impacted by the percentage increase is insufficiently rigorous to make a real difference to student outcomes. Teachers' use of academy-wide common assessments is not a consistent practice, and does not track progress for student sub-groups.
- Develop benchmarks for all action plans so that progress is measured, readjustments made, and success evaluated.
  - o Promising practices by teams of teachers measure progress toward interim goals for targeted individuals and groups of students, however these show few examples of revisions. Although school leaders annually evaluate achievement of school goals, interim progress is not monitored in order to make necessary mid-year adjustments.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

<b>School name: High School of Graphic Communication Arts</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		<b>X</b>		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?		<b>X</b>		
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?		<b>X</b>		
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		<b>X</b>		

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		X					
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>