

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

The High School of Applied Communication

**High School 267
30-20 Thomson Avenue
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Dan Korb

Dates of review: February 8-9, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Cheryl C. Jones

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The High School of Applied Communication is a high school with 368 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 11% Black, 56% Hispanic, 19% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 90%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The High School of Communication is a caring, spirited school that promotes a positive learning environment so that its students feel safe, supported, and respected. The principal is a knowledgeable, exemplary role model who provides effective leadership, strong academic direction, and a clear vision with an emphasis on improving student achievement and accelerating progress. School leaders communicate high expectations, which are shared by parents and students, thereby promoting their active involvement in the school community and in decision-making. All constituents agree the principal's leadership and vision are responsible for increased rates of progress, and recommendations from the previous Quality Review are evident in classroom observations and goals for raising student achievement.

The school adapts its curriculum to match precisely articulated and focused school-wide goals in order to support and inform student learning and inject rigor. Students and parents are eager to share their passion for the school's current emphasis on student achievement and the challenging curriculum. Students have enthusiastically welcomed the addition of Advanced Placements classes and an art program, which has led increased engagement and involvement in school from previous years. Partnerships with Bard High School Early College and LaGuardia College further support student learning and instructional rigor. However, teachers have not yet realized the full potential of the improved curriculum because benchmarks and rubrics are not used consistently to assess student work in all classes or identify next steps to ensure students are involved in self-assessment and know how to improve their work.

The school leadership is making informed decisions on school-wide and departmental goal setting, analyzing and examining data to support and inform student learning. This has led to the defining and replicating of effective instructional practices and strategies responsible for some significant achievement gains. Instructional staff benefit from the direction of administrators, who provide regular opportunities for teams and teachers to meet. However, leaders have yet to provide additional opportunities for interdepartmental and school-wide sharing of best practices and differentiation strategies necessary for sustained professional growth and the achievement of school-wide initiatives.

The school has not established ways to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and professional collaborations in order to ensure a strategic plan that increases school capacity and leads to successful student outcomes. Teacher and teams of teachers meet and reflect on interim data analysis and teaching strategies. However, the participation of limited numbers of teachers in inquiry-based action research along with a lack of utilization of a broader database and refined goals currently weakens the collaborative inquiry process.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school climate is nurturing, respectful and warm contributing to a positive learning environment so students feel safe, supported and respected.
 - o Students are excited and proud of their school and express their enthusiasm for its positive learning environment enhanced by the art curriculum introduced. Students said the infusion of art throughout makes them feel “better about their school and more interested in learning”. The recommendation by parents, staff and students for the art curriculum has made all constituents feel their voices are considered resulting in greater participation in school-wide activities.
 - o Students and parents agree that the “strict but accessible principal” has changed the atmosphere of the school. The principal’s emphasis on rituals and routines has made a real difference to student behavior resulting in a 50% decrease in superintendent’s suspensions from the previous year. Both parents and students appreciate the safe, family atmosphere and believe that all teachers know their students very well.
- The principal is a knowledgeable, exemplary role model who provides effective leadership, strong academic direction, and a clear vision with an emphasis on improving student achievement and progress.
 - o The principal has established clear expectations for teachers and meets with each one individually to set explicit short and long-term goals resulting in agendas, standards, rubrics, student work and subject goals being prominently displayed. These goals along with school and department goals from part of all observation reports resulting in a shared vision thereby maximizing the ability to impact student progress.
 - o The Comprehensive Educational Plan collaboratively developed by administrators, teachers, and the school leadership team delineates achievable measurable goals consistent with improving student achievement and instructional practice. Each goal is characterized by assessments, timeframes, and clear outcomes designed to complement the school-wide goals resulting in gains in student achievement in social studies and English language arts.
- A wide range of systems enables administrators and faculty to effectively use data to monitor and evaluate student progress in all subject areas, thereby supporting the achievement of school-wide and department goals.
 - o Administrators and teachers effectively use cumulative Regents data to guide improvements in math by identifying areas in need of additional skill building through item analysis. This has led to teachers requiring both arithmetic and written explanations in equation problem solving. Additionally, scrutiny of assessments recently enabled teachers to accurately identify a group of at risk students who are now receiving academic and guidance intervention.
- Staff benefit from the administration’s instructional direction, which provides opportunities for teams and teachers to meet regularly and additional resources to improve practice and raise student achievement.

- o The principal adjusted the schedule to accommodate weekly meetings resulting in greater teacher and team collaboration. The administrators and instructional specialist assist in lesson planning, analyzing data, and spreading good practice so staff feels supported and increasingly confident. Teachers engage in more in open discussions and are willing “to try something new even if it is not successful” which is contributing to increased collaboration and student improvement.
- o The introduction of the teacher assessment notebook has enabled teachers, collaboratively and individually, use the information in the notebook to identify and address the learning needs of individuals and groups of students. As a result, students needing academic intervention are identified by class and subject and receive targeted small group instruction and tutoring. Teacher assessments reviewed each marking period show evidence of progress for the targeted students.
- The school adapts its curriculum to match precisely articulated and focused school-wide goals to support and inform student learning and rigor.
 - o Curriculum offerings include the addition of three Advanced Placement classes providing students with additional learning opportunities and increased rigor. The school leadership has established partnerships with Bard High School Early College, LaGuardia College and Devry Institute expanding opportunities for growth and academic challenge resulting in increased student preparedness for college and higher-level activities.
 - o An analysis of the integrated algebra exam has revealed skill deficiencies in problem solving and interpretation so the inquiry team is examining and brainstorming instructional strategies to improve student achievement. The result of this collaboration has led to an improvement in student outcomes on mock Regents’ exercises.
- School leaders communicate high expectations, which are shared by parents and students promoting active involvement in the school community.
 - o The school effectively communicates with parents about credit accumulation, Regents requirements, attendance, and student progress through workshops, mail and phone communication, which has positively affected parental involvement and responsiveness. Parents say administrators and teachers are respectful, caring, and attentive and “makes you feel special”. A workshop teaching English to Spanish speaking parents provided them with tools to communicate to staff leading to an increase in the Hispanic parental involvement. The introduction of the art curriculum, recommended by parents, staff, and students has made all constituents feel their voices are considered.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the collaborative inquiry process to include interim revisions, enhanced data analysis, and broader participation to enhance classroom effectiveness and improve learning outcomes.
 - o The school's newly formed inquiry team is limited in its use of assessment data to formulate planning and has not identified criteria to measure progress. Because the team is not yet using additional data, such as student work, test scores, and teacher assessments it is difficult to ensure that key decisions

affecting student learning and progress are strategically planned and progress in all content areas.

- o The inquiry team has limited membership and does not provide sufficient opportunities for staff collaboration or increased teacher empowerment.
- Refine and replicate successful instructional strategies so that teachers can share best practices and implement effective differentiation strategies consistently across all subject areas.
 - o Thoughtful data review and analysis have provided administrators with successful strategies used by the social studies department to increase student achievement. However, these practices are not yet embedded throughout the school, which leads to uneven levels of student achievement across subjects. Teacher practices that promote higher order thinking skills and differentiated instruction are not evident in all classrooms or subjects.
 - o Levels of student engagement and commitment are not consistent across classrooms. For example, a geometry project requiring creativity and rigor was successfully reflected in the products produced by students, but similar high quality student work is not evident in other subject areas.
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and professional collaborations in order to ensure a strategic plan that increases school capacity and leads to successful student outcomes.
 - o The administration is effective in providing teams with resources and time, but has not provided additional structure and direction that is necessary to maximize effectiveness. Teams meet on a weekly basis to discuss the results of items analysis data and recommend instructional strategies. However, since the review of student work is not systematic or coordinated, there is no way to determine which strategies have a positive impact on student learning. This means that the team cannot make informed decisions or recommendations.
 - o While an assistant principal provides enthusiastic and supportive leadership on the inquiry team, there is little evidence of faculty engagement in reflective practices and refinement of instructional practices. In addition, the department teams lack an agenda and defined instructional objectives resulting in open-ended discussions limiting their impact on improving student achievement.
- Expand the practice of using benchmarks and rubrics to assess student work in all classes and identify next steps to ensure students are involved in self-assessment and know how to improve their work.
 - o Rubrics are evident in most classrooms, although they vary in clarity, challenge, and consistency. As a result, students often are unclear on steps for improvement and unable to determine the criteria for evaluation. The teacher assessment notebook used to record assessment data and student progress does not yet include rubric and benchmark assessments that could create opportunities to develop student self-assessments and next steps.
 - o Evidence of student goals is well documented in Sourcebooks and students can clearly articulate what they are aiming for but few can identify next steps, ways to improve, or how to engage in self-assessments.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The High School of Applied Communication	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
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?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
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.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

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.							
<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				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
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.							
<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				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X					
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.							
<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					
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed