Quality Review Report

2009-2010

Academy for Careers in Television and Film

High School 301

36-41 28th Street
Queens
NY 11106

Principal: Mark Dunetz

Dates of review: February 8 – 9, 2010
Lead Reviewer: Sheryl L. Watkins

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Academy for Careers in Television and Film is a high school with 220 students from grade 9 through grade 10. The school population comprises 22% Black, 51% Hispanic, 18% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 94.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The Academy for Careers in Television and Film is led by a dynamic principal who works diligently with his staff to dispel the belief that "just passing classes is enough". Using an extensive variety of very focused data to develop a clear understanding of performance and progress of individual students and groups, the staff works collaboratively to inform practices, monitor and revise teaching, and effect coherence of instruction by making modifications to pedagogy that promote student progress. Students generate goals in subject areas and, in addition, the school pays attention to the development of strong work habits. However, these goals are sometimes not based in the analysis of data, nor do they include benchmarks to provide students with the ability to monitor their own progress over time in order to assure the mastery of these goals.

Collaboration is the driving force behind growing the school. Teachers report that this "helps us to get the students to be where they need to be". Targeted instruction, delivered consistently across all subject areas, grounded in the application of rubrics for student work, supports the ongoing development of skills and next steps to reach greater achievement. Parents appreciate the "feeling of being at home in the school" and the opportunities provided to them to become involved in supporting the development and future expansion of the school. They report being a part of the decision-making process that will continue to build the school. Their ability to access the wealth of information contained in an on-line system of course requirements, homework assignments, and academic accomplishments and challenges assures "no surprises" and "respect for each other and learning".

Wise use of the school budget allows for small class size, where each student is well known by all members of the faculty. In addition, an advisory period, programmed daily, assures the consistent focus on students meeting the challenging needs of instruction in both academics and the study of television and film production. Tutoring is provided for those needing additional support. The school has established strong systems to review, evaluate, and revise many elements of its practice. In spite of this, differentiation of instruction does not yet promote the accelerated progress of the higher-achieving students.

Very strong systems and structures are in place to assure a calm and nurturing school culture, where learning and student success is of paramount importance. Students report that they feel safe and supported. This allows them to focus on their achievement, and celebrate their academic successes, as they prepare for careers in the exciting world of television and film.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Staff gather and analyze a wide range of very relevant data across all subjects, which gives them a clear understanding of individual student performance and progress, and students' learning needs.

  o Extremely well-developed data systems, updated at least weekly, allow for a transparent view of students' academic achievement across all subject areas. This provides all staff with the ability to analyze the accomplishments and challenges for all students, promoting the school's cross-content focus on areas in need of further progress.

  o A formal rubric of industry aptitude supports the focus of providing students with knowledge of the television and film industries. Coursework addresses both the writing and production ends of the work. The analysis of video productions by teams of students provides staff with the ability to assure that students have a solid background of the industry competencies, allowing them to make an informed choice of area specialty and pursue careers that are well matched to their strengths.

- The school works closely with parents and students and shares up-to-date information with them to encourage academic achievement with a focus on college readiness and/or a career in television and film.

  o The school provides parents, staff, and students with access to an on-line data system that shares course syllabi, student performance, course assignments, and completion information as well as attendance data. This allows for ongoing monitoring of the competencies that students need to be successful, next learning steps, and for students to reflect on their own accomplishments. It also encourages parents to support the work of the school, as they are able to monitor their child's' performance consistently.

  o Narrative progress reports are uploaded into the vast data system and sent home to parents about a month prior to the end of the semester. These reports provide an analysis of student performance, attendance, and lateness information. This leads to immediate action being taken in order to prevent barriers to successful completion of coursework.

- The school routinely analyzes formative and summative information to identify trends in student performance in order to review, evaluate, and modify curriculum and instruction when necessary.

  o Item analysis of all summative assessments and unit tests identifies areas of challenge for students, resulting in modifications to curriculum. The schools' data system enables this information to be reviewed by staff in order to modify student groupings. Using a Regents format, a concentration on writing and the vocabulary of content in all subject areas, the results of high-stakes examinations demonstrate that over 86%

of students have passed the Living Environment Regents and over 76% have passed Integrated Algebra.

- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teacher practices and goals to meet the needs of its students.

  o Teachers generate personal goals in both instructional and non-instructional areas. These include the data source that led to each goal, how they plan to monitor their own progress, as well as an end-of-year reflection. Formal observations are conducted using a low-inference format, and address those areas that have been identified. This allows for focused professional development and collaborations between staff members to ensure growth in pedagogy, which results in improved student outcomes.

  o With the addition of an additional class of incoming students each September, the school recognizes the importance of supporting new members of the faculty. Therefore, the assignment of buddy teachers, mentors, and required participation in grade and team meetings assures their seamless integration into the life of the school. As a result, new staff quickly embrace the "team approach" to promoting student progress.

- The school environment supports very high expectations for attendance, learning, and behavior that are effectively shared with parents and students.

  o Recognizing their students' challenges in producing written responses, the school initiated cross-subject focused instruction in the use of documents, the organization of responses, and the mechanics of writing. The work is based on core competencies that are aligned with scoring rubrics for Regents exams. As a result, students' writing ability has steadily increased based on the rubric-centered competencies.

  o In an effort to sustain the extremely high rate of student attendance, systems have been put in place to contact families when absences have not been called in. In addition, participation in industry projects, such as producing videos for the Department of Education, related to the television and film focus is contingent upon continued high rates of attendance and academic performance.

- Teachers work collaboratively in teams to share promising practices, develop tools, analyze data, and plan curriculum and instruction that best meet their students' needs.

  o In addition to regularly scheduled grade and team meetings, the school is programmed for a shortened day on Wednesdays. This allows for whole-school meetings, targeted time for supporting new staff, and deep inquiry into student learning with high levels of participation where teachers cast a focused eye on assuring continued student achievement. As a result, over 97% of tenth grade students have earned 15 credits or more and 96% of current ninth graders have earned at least five credits to date.

- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and greatly appreciate the supports they receive for their personal and academic development.

- Advisory groups are a regular part of the daily schedules for staff and students. Each teacher bears the responsibility for a small group of students, where they consistently conference with each student to assure they are meeting expectations in all subjects.

- The principal, who knows each student by name, encourages students to excel. What is termed his "sincere and gentle manner" is welcomed by students as he "encourages and keeps on" them. His belief that "passing is not enough" is championed by the parents and students, and is a belief that is firmly embedded in the school community. As a result, students reach for higher attainment, and several students have re-sat for Regents exams when they were unsatisfied with their original scores. For the most part, they have increased their proficiency.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the differentiation of instruction so that lessons engage all students and offer suitable challenges at their level.

  - Small-group instruction exists in most subject areas. However, these groupings do not effectively support those students at the higher levels and a lack of challenge sometimes inhibits their ability to do the very best they can.

  - The school provides after-school tutoring for students who are at-risk, or for those struggling with content. This has proven to be effective in meeting their learning needs, but enrichment in content area subjects is not in place for higher-performing students.

- Build upon the strong professional learning communities that currently exist in order to deepen the analysis and focus on the link between teacher practice and student achievement.

  - While grade and subject teams meet regularly, there is often a lack of focus on the link between teaching and learning and the analysis of impediments to student progress. This is because meetings are more focused on student achievement than on what teachers could do differently. This barrier inhibits these teams from building upon each other's knowledge to share efficient strategies in overcoming challenges in student achievement in both academic and production courses.

- Refine and deepen the goal-setting process for students to include precise short- and long-term measurable outcomes enabling them to monitor their own progress and take ownership and responsibility for their own learning.

  - Students develop both work habits and goals in core subject areas at the beginning of each semester, enabling them to strengthen their learning. Progress reports, in narrative form, are issued once during the term. Although these provide direction for students to improve, no short-term objectives are included. This prevents students from knowing whether they are on track to meeting their goals, and stifles their growth as independent learners.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Academy for Careers in Television & Film	Δ	➤	✓	+
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.

To what extent does the school regularly…	Δ	➤	✓	+
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.

To what extent does the school …	Δ	➤	✓	+
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.				
To what extent does the school …	Δ	➢	✓	+
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.				
To what extent does the school…	Δ	➢	✓	+
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.				
To what extent does the school…	Δ	➢	✓	+
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							
Δ	**Underdeveloped**	➢	**Underdeveloped with Proficient Features**	✓	**Proficient**	+	**Well Developed**