

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**Port Richmond High School**

**High School 445**

**85 St. Josephs Avenue  
Staten Island  
NY 10302**

**Principal: Timothy M. Gannon**

**Dates of review: January 13 – 15, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Richard D. D'Auria**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Port Richmond High School is a high school with 2,356 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 35% Hispanic, 29% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 84%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

Personalized, thematic houses and a pilot small learning community in culinary arts enhance the school's rigorous Regents curriculum. The houses include medical technology, Gateway and collegiate honors academies, business virtual enterprise and Junior ROTC. Vibrant partnership organizations support each program, providing students with personalized, interest based learning experiences. Leadership closely monitors and adjusts strategic organizational decisions, such as the piloting of the small learning community and pairing teachers of content area with those teaching English as a second language. The cohesive community shares a common vision, supported through collaborative school-wide goal setting and planning, enabling the school to move forward as it constantly strives toward continual improvement. Parents and students appreciate the school's safe, friendly environment. Students have input into school policies through the School Leadership Team and an effective student government. Acts of student kindness are recognized and rewarded through the "Raider of the Month" award. The school proudly displays student work, art and trophies in its corridors. While many teachers use some strategies to differentiate instruction, they do not yet flexibly group students based upon specific skill requirements. School leadership and teachers analyze a broad range of data effectively, using a variety of tools, as the basis for instructional planning and decisions. Teachers engage parents through progress reports, goal monitoring and increasing use of web-based grade books and blogs to disseminate information. The school effectively supports parents through a variety of workshops, and advises them well in the college application process and about financial resources to enable their children to go to college. School goals include improved attendance, graduation rate and credit accumulation and leaders implement strategies to address these areas effectively. While all students develop learning goals, few are skill specific, such as improved essay writing or inferring from text. Teachers engage in meaningful professional development and collaborative inquiry to analyze data, identify trends and share strategies. They are empowered to determine what works and to make adjustments accordingly. Distributed leadership enables the school to accelerate student progress, evidenced by recent student performance data. Teachers do not currently use graded student work routinely as an instructional tool, and observation of classroom teaching does not focus upon student work products. There is a resulting lack of school wide coherence and the school does not presently have an effective structure to evaluate systems for assessing the quality of student work through the consistent use of standards based rubrics with constructive feedback. However, there are effective structures to continually monitor and evaluate curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, and the school dynamically adjusts and monitors results accordingly.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The dedicated principal's personalized approach facilitates team building and leadership, fostering a cohesive community focused on school improvement.
  - The school effectively engages all constituencies in an ongoing collaborative process to develop clearly articulated school wide goals, with detailed action plans to accomplish them. These action plans identify and align resources, include implications for staffing, a realistic schedule for implementation, and indicators of interim progress.
  - The school's cohesive culture permeates conversation with all constituents. The school community lives by the "Raider Spirit". All stakeholders have a meaningful voice, participating in school level planning processes such as the school's self-evaluation and Comprehensive Educational Plan, resulting in a culture where all strive to do their best in a sharing community.
- The school provides a rigorous curriculum, enhanced by thematic houses that increase personalization and student engagement in their learning.
  - The school offers a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. Thematic houses and a pilot culinary arts small learning community enable students to select a niche where they can flourish. The programs enable students to gain experiences that intrinsically motivate them. Multiple advanced placement courses enable students to accelerate and earn college credits.
  - Teachers emphasize questioning to encourage students' thinking and reasoning skills. They frequently ask students to explain their answers. High levels of student engagement are the norm in classrooms, where students usually work in pairs or small groups, often with hands-on activities and high levels of discussion and interaction.
- Teachers engage in collaborative inquiry, sharing ideas and strategies during the common planning time that is strategically built into the school's schedule.
  - All teachers share common time, enabling them to engage in inquiry through effective data analysis, inter-visitation and the sharing and implementation of strategies. This professional collaboration facilitates more coherent curriculum and instruction. Leaders are attuned to the effectiveness of distributed leadership that empowers teachers to find what works best for their students. Teachers intently monitor and address identified students. As a result, students are the ultimate beneficiaries and they know that their teachers share and analyze their performance.
  - Math teachers are refining work on a more functions based approach to teaching algebra. The school's math Regents passing rate increased significantly and correlates with these efforts. Science teachers worked with a museum and another school to revamp the biology curriculum. Results on the living environment Regents similarly indicate significant gains in the number of students meeting and exceeding standards.

- The school is organized and managed effectively, and students have a voice within a safe, secure and positive learning environment.
  - The school provides a welcoming learning environment for all. Strategic organizational decisions such as the house structure and teachers' common planning time ensure that one or more adults know each student well. Students are enthusiastic about the personalization, with the culinary arts small learning community in particular, where dedicated space, teachers, counselor and dean enable familiarity among all. That common planning team also collaborates to develop inter-disciplinary curricular links.
  - A vibrant student government meets weekly with school leadership. Students have voice as they actively participate in school wide decisions. Their rapid response to the recent Haitian earthquake crisis, discussing strategies for fund raising and donations, is one example of the students' mature, altruistic nature. While the school requires a minimum of twenty hours of community service, many students far exceed that.
- School leaders and teachers analyze a broad range of data, using a variety of tracking and analysis tools, enabling them to plan, monitor and revise.
  - School leaders and teachers use a wide variety of assessment tools to track and analyze student performance. Teachers use ARIS and a variety of other sophisticated data analysis tools to identify patterns and trends for student subgroups and individuals. Teachers expertly use design your own, customized and Acuity school-wide periodic assessments along with their own anecdotal data to know their students very well.
  - The school effectively analyzes subgroup performance, particularly with regard to the graduation rate. It also focuses upon meeting State targets for special education students. Analysis and monitoring of student performance drives strategic organizational decisions and adjustments like the house and small learning community structures and key partnerships.
- The school's many vibrant partnerships provide students with a myriad of opportunities to enhance their educational experiences and supports.
  - Key partners support the school's many houses and its culinary arts small learning community. Wagner College supports the collegiate honors academy, providing students with opportunities to team with college students studying the socio-economic challenges of the community.
  - Professional development supports teachers' ability to meet the needs of the whole student. The school's safe environment and respectful culture is a responsibility shared by all staff and evident in their consistent messaging to students. The school's life skills program enables students with children to complete their high school education. Health students carry their robotic infants throughout the school. These sophisticated units monitor the level of care provided to teach students the responsibilities of parenthood.
- The school effectively engages and supports parents and they appreciate the responsiveness of administration and staff in meeting the needs of their children.
  - Parents look forward to the weekly "Raider Blast", a recorded telephone message that updates them on school events. The principal prepares and

shares an annual “State of the School” report that analyzes school data, successes and challenges. Parent Association participation has improved five-fold by incorporating student awards at each meeting. A new Spanish parents’ council effectively encourages their input to meet their needs.

- Teachers regularly share student progress through interim reports each marking period. They also use a variety of methods to track student progress and facilitate student self-reflection. Parents access student performance progress through ARIS Parent Link or through other web-based grade books increasingly used by teachers.

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

- Support teachers’ consistent use of a wider range of differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners more effectively.
  - Although many teachers use a variety of strategies such as general ability grouping, exit tickets and jigsaw reading activities, they do not yet use skill specific assessment data as the basis to flexibly group students. As a result, teachers are not yet able to target instruction as strategically as they could to address areas in need of improved proficiency.
  - Observation reports emphasize seven key focus areas, including questioning skills, to support the development of higher order critical thinking skills. However, current observations and teacher evaluation does not include a focus or clear expectation that lessons incorporate differentiated strategies as a common goal or thread across departments.
- Refine student-learning goals to improve alignment with assessments so they are skill specific and enable more strategic instruction supporting proficiency.
  - Although students and teachers engage in conversations to help students to establish goals, most of the goals are not yet skills specific or based upon recent formative assessment data. Typical goals include improved attendance, passing courses, earning credits and graduating.
  - While teachers use various tools to track and enable students to monitor and evaluate their progress toward goals, this process is less meaningful than it could be because of the broad nature of most of the goals. Students revisit goals at the end of each marking period. However, their current lack of specificity minimizes their significance and implications for daily instruction.
- Evaluate systems for assessing student work using standards based rubrics with critical feedback as an effective instructional tool.
  - The school does not currently have effective systems to evaluate how teachers assess student work. As a result, there is a lack of coherence of policies and practices around how teachers use student work and as a result, they miss opportunities to use such work as an instructional tool. Since teachers do not currently focus on critical feedback on student work, students do not benefit from the insights such feedback could provide about what they need to know and be able to do, or their next learning steps to enable them to learn from each other as they sharpen their skills.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

<b>School name: Port Richmond High School</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>	△	➤	✓	+
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>	△	➤	✓	+
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>	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			
<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>	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			
<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>	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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>