

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Crotona Academy High School

High School 321

**639 St. Ann's Avenue
Bronx
NY10455**

Principal: Anthony Harris

Dates of review: May 24 - 25, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Lori Bennett

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Crotona High School is a transfer school with 138 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 46% Black, 50% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 37% of the students enrolled and girls account for 63%. Attendance data is not available.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Crotona High School as a transfer high school uses the Diploma Plus model and a competency-based approach to shape instruction, assess student learning, and specify what students need to learn in order to graduate from high school. The competencies emphasize habits of mind and the critical thinking skills that students need to use and master as they develop content knowledge in different academic areas. However, the school does not yet have good processes in place to suitably refine practices to ensure their programs meet the needs of the students.

The school has a strong commitment and sets school-wide and individual student goals that support academic achievement and personal growth. It has been successful in reengaging students who have not had success in the traditional high school setting. Students arrive at the school with varying needs and the focus of the staff and school community is to support students in accruing credits thus meeting graduation requirements. Youth development service providers, and effective partners, are very involved in supporting the emotional needs of students and provide guidance for the college admissions process and postsecondary plans. The climate in the school is one of mutual support and trust. However, parents are not yet involved to a level that would provide additional support to help their children.

Various sources of data are collected and carefully reviewed to understand the performance and progress of students, classes, and subjects. However, the school does not sufficiently disaggregate the data by all student subgroups in order to understand their specific needs. Teachers utilize data to monitor student performance however, not all teachers are using data to differentiate classroom instruction.

The principal is an effective leader who encourages collaboration among all faculty members to improve student outcomes. The small campus environment allows administrators frequent opportunities to meet informally and have daily conversations centered on students' needs and school programs. Professional development is encouraged and teachers participate in frequent inter-class visitations. They also select outside professional development to attend with the understanding that they will turnkey the information to their peers. A dedicated staff, clear procedures, and a desire to succeed, help the school to run smoothly.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's partnerships build both external and internal capacity that support students' academic, social and emotional needs.
 - A linkage with the community-based South Bronx Overall Development Corporation provides effective programs for developing students personal, social, and community skills, and offers opportunities for career exploration. Parents and students agree that the Learning to Work component, which provides internships matched to students' interests, has had beneficial effect in introducing real-world work experiences to help with future career planning.
 - Ramapo for Children provides teachers with focused workshops on active intervention, effective coaching, and building relationships, to help them develop effective strategies to deal with adolescent development contributing to positive interactions between teachers and students.
- The school collects, records, and analyzes a wide range of data to understand student performance and progress.
 - School leaders gather a wide range of school generated, State and periodic assessment data and use it to gauge students' strengths and needs against 'Diploma Plus' competencies in all subject areas. Diploma Plus rubrics, used in all classrooms, provide school leaders and teachers with a uniform measure to assess student progress and to identify what the school needs to focus on to improve student academic performance.
- The teachers' efficient use of time enables them to observe each other's classrooms, evaluate instruction, share effective practices, and participate in meaningful professional development.
 - The school uses a well-designed intervisitation model focusing on instruction, methodology, and student teacher relationships. This results in the alignment of professional development to meet the needs of individual teachers and builds consistency and coherence in teaching and learning. Peers observe lessons and strategies in action to see how a student in one teacher's class performs in another. As a result, teachers have widened their instructional repertoire and become more proficient in their teaching. A reflection log noted, "I really learned a lot during this visitation. Watching my colleague work with students gave me some good ideas for how I might be able to help my students focus more on their work."
- The curriculum in all subject areas is aligned to standards and Diploma Plus competencies and is flexible to meet the needs of individual and groups of students.
 - Teachers utilize common lesson plan templates, which outline competencies, skills, learning strategies and content vocabulary. Within small subject teams, teachers select curriculum content, plan units of

study and create common assessments. This structure has created a common framework for planning and consistent instructional language.

- The overarching theme, which drives all members of the school, is to ensure that students graduate from high school with a meaningful post-secondary plan. The semester-long leadership class, and required portfolio assignments that include a wide range of student work, including writing samples, work plans, and resume with cover letter, ensures that students are prepared with the requisite skills for attainment their goals.
- Leaders make informed and effective organizational, staffing, and budgetary decisions that align with school instructional goals and support efforts toward improved student learning.
 - Transcript analysis revealed that students consistently required additional English and social studies credits upon entry to the school. This necessitated hiring additional teachers in the license area in order to fulfill student credit requirements. Students' Regents' results in Global and US History show substantial gains.
 - Budgeting acumen has enabled the principal to place Smart boards in all classrooms. The good use of technology has increased the development of students' skills and provided them with additional interest and engagement in their learning. Students now use technology with confidence to present and improve their work, especially the detailed portfolios created in the graphic design and leadership classes.
- The achievement and success of students is a central focus of the whole school community.
 - School-level goal setting for all students responds to identified needs. Students meet with school and partnership counselors to discuss academic and personal goals, using a student goal-setting sheet designed to ascertain learning styles and academic challenges. They review their work, and thereby raise awareness of how they best learn and what is needed to move toward greater independence.
 - All constituencies are involved with the development and ongoing review of the Comprehensive Educational Plan's school-wide goals. Recent decisions in response to second-term budget reductions necessitated the elimination of the school's advisory program and onsite professional development for teachers.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the process of data analysis across all subgroups to provide a more accurate picture of individual and groups of students' needs.
 - The school uses transcript evaluations, scholarship records, progress, and report cards to place students and determine their performance and progress towards graduation. However, data linked to subgroups representative of the student body is not systematically gathered and disaggregated. The school does not focus in on relevant subgroups, such as non-attendees, and therefore does not set sufficient goals for them.

- Refine plans so that they contain interim goals to support effective monitoring, evaluation, revision, and celebration of programs and services.
 - Currently the school has many plans for continued success, but does not yet use a formal process or clearly defined interim benchmarks to monitor and assess the impact of school-wide programs. The school describes its process as informal and does not have regularly scheduled administrative cabinet meetings to evaluate the effectiveness of its initiatives thus limiting the ability to deepen its understanding of patterns and trends in order to refine or memorialize for future planning.

- Extend and expand communication and collaboration with parents to increase their capacity to assist in their children's learning and enable them to track progress toward attaining goals.
 - The schools' parent coordinator is constantly seeking new ways to extend the home school partnership and has scheduled numerous workshops relating to graduation requirements, and health education and concerns around support for parents. However, the school does not sufficiently involve parents in an open exchange of information, or training on ARIS connect, and as a result parents are not fully informed of how they may work at home to support initiatives aimed at improving the academic performance of their child.

- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level, including effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning.
 - Teachers are able to articulate the behavior patterns, learning styles and general needs of the students in their classes. They are also beginning to use data analysis to differentiate instruction although not consistently across the school. However, teachers do not yet utilize this information to select the instructional strategies that they should use for different individuals or groups of students during the lessons. As a result, most teachers present generic lessons and students show very uneven levels of engagement in classroom activities.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Crotona Academy High School	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.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	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.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	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.							
<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