



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Performance and Accountability
2010-2011**

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Crotona Academy High School

X321

639-55 Saint Ann's Avenue

Bronx

NY 10455

Principal: Anthony Harris

Dates of review: March 2-3, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Elyse Doti

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Crotona Academy is a transfer high school with 132 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 44% Black, 52% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 7.5% special education students. Boys account for 37% of the students enrolled and girls account for 63%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 56.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

- The administration makes strategic and thoughtful organizational and structural decisions around student needs, which foster a supportive environment for faculty and students.
 - Each student at Croton Academy has an individualized program that meets their specific class and schedule needs. As a result students are taking classes that directly prepare them to meet their graduation requirements and are able to make up credits faster than they would in a traditional high school.
 - Due to budget cuts, the school is no longer able to sustain their Saturday program and PM School. Strategically, the Diploma Plus Graduation Portfolio was abandoned in order to make room in the schedule for regents prep classes. As a result, students are able to get the regents preparation they need and regents pass rates increased during the January 2011 administration.
- The principal and faculty has worked hard to develop and maintain a safe, nurturing, and respectful environment in which students' needs are known and learning can take place.
 - The school recently changed their intake procedures to include a “whole child” approach include a lengthily interview in which the students must explain why they feel they we benefit from attending the school. As a result the students that are enrolling better understand the expectations of Croton Academy and in turn the school has a comprehensive understanding of the supports each students will need in order to be successful.
 - Students at the school feel like the school is “family.” The teachers “make you want to learn” because they “truly care about you.” One student explained that “They treat us like young adults.” As a result students feel safe and nurtured as they work towards graduation. They feel comfortable asking teachers questions and going to the counselors, school administrators and teachers when then need help.
- The principal and assistant principal make use of school wide level data to closely monitor student cohorts in order to proactively address student needs.
 - The school's leaders gather and analyze a range of summative data including credit accumulation, regents pass rates, attendance statistics, and transcript information in order to gain an overview of the needs of their student population. Teachers use mock regents' exams to measure student growth during the course of the year. All of this information leads to informed decisions around course offerings and programming. As a result the school was removed from the School In Need of Improvement list this past year.
- The school has established a common instructional focus and a clear school vision that is supported by the majority of faculty.

- The Essential Elements of Instruction serve as the model for effective instruction at the school. There is evidence of an instructional objective and often an essential question to guide units of study. Teachers across the classrooms understand the social and emotional needs of their students, creating a coherent culture of support for students.
- The administration is keenly aware of teachers that are successful in helping their students make academic gains. Teachers develop SMART goals at the start of the year and self assess to determine their areas for further development. The school offers a range of professional development opportunities to meet the various needs of their diverse staff including peer inter-visitations, in house professional development, Network professional development and conferences. As a result, teachers feel supported by the administration and their colleagues in meeting the needs of their students.
- Student support services and collaborations provide students with a range of opportunities to grow academically and socially in order to be prepared for the challenge they will encounter in college and in the workforce.
 - Over the course of the last year the school has made a special effort to increase professional learning opportunities for teachers around the social and emotional needs of their students. Issues including teen pregnancy and gang affiliation were addressed. With the guidance of a social worker, advisory teachers brought these hot topics into the classroom for students to discuss. As a result overall attendance in the school during the months of November and December increased and students expressed in letters to their teachers that they were feeling “better” and “supported” at school.
 - SoBRO is a community based organization that has a full time presence at Crotona Academy. The partnership exists to support the school’s mission in assisting over-age, under credited students in overcoming obstacles that impede their progress in earning a high school diploma and developing a post-secondary educational and career plan. The organization offers a wide range of services including the Learning to Work Program, an in-depth job readiness and career exploration program which provides real life work experience and a stipend for students. The program also provides a part time social worker and helps the school with home visits around attendance issues. Students and parents feel that these opportunities help motivate students to come to school and better imagine a meaningful future.

Areas for improvement

- Further support curricular modifications in order to evolve instruction to meet the very diverse learning needs of students.
 - The majority of tasks that students were working did not require higher order thinking. In several classes students explained that the content they were learning was not anything they did not already know. In general students were completing low level tasks in the classroom. By not consistently providing tasks that require students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills there is a lost opportunity to engage and challenge each student in the classroom .

- Strengthen the school community's understanding of differentiated instruction to provide tailored learning experiences for students.
 - Despite the small class size, in the majority of the classrooms all students were expected to complete the same task. Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently offered differentiated learning opportunities for students which then led to uneven levels of student engagement and thinking. The school currently uses the same tasks, methodologies and assessments with all students, limiting the opportunity to truly understand each student's capabilities and push them to their full potential.

- Develop teachers' capacity to use formative classroom assessment data to understand students' skill deficits and strengths in order to plan and support targeted instruction that fosters stronger task engagement.
 - The strategies shared at teacher team meeting are heavily focused on the social and emotional needs of students. Teachers thoughtfully share ways in which they are able to connect with particular students. Formative assessment data is not discussed regularly at teacher team meetings. There is no clear data analysis to identify trends or strengths within student subgroups. As a result teachers are not able to plan targeted instruction for groups of students they work with and student are often exposed to the same generic lesson.

- Ensure that school wide goals and teacher team goals for subgroups include precise short- and long-term measurable outcomes to monitor students' progress effectively.
 - The school has clearly articulated set of school wide goals to be met by June. Teachers using conferencing to set goals for individual students. The school is not able to articulate short term benchmarks for their goals. The principal reported that as of January, the school had met its school wide goals for the year. As a result of not having established benchmarks, the school and individual teachers are not able to monitor and adjust goals along the way in response to student performance. As a result, the school is not consistently pushing the work they are doing to ensure that expectations are high and all students are held to the highest standards.

- Create a system to evaluate the distributive leadership and professional development activities to ensure that they appropriately support effective professional collaborations in order to impact student achievement.
 - While the school has been successful in meeting its goals regarding student performance on state exams the school is not able to clearly articulate the impact the teacher teams or the professional development provided has had on student performance. There is no clear structure to develop teacher leaders on the teacher teams as there is no identified leader of the teams. There is no system in place to evaluate the effectiveness of leadership development opportunities and the impact that distributive leadership has had on the overall running of the school. In the absence of these systems, the school does not have teacher leaders to push the work of the school and no strategic plan to assess the leadership opportunities for teachers.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Crotona Academy H.S.	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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		

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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		

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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		

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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			

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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