

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Gotham Professional Arts Academy**

**High School 594**

**265 Ralph Avenue**

**Brooklyn**

**NY 11233**

**Principal: Alex White**

**Dates of review: April 2 - 3, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Jill Herman**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Gotham Professional Arts Academy is a high school with 275 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 80% Black, 18% Hispanic, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 77.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Curriculum, with a strong arts component, aligned to key State and Common Core Learning Standards emphasize rigorous habits that will prepare students for postsecondary success. (1.1)
  - As a performance based school, the curriculum, with common core tasks embedded since the inception of the school, is designed with college readiness standards including skills and dispositions such as revising and persistence. Teachers scaffold scope and sequence of carefully selected concepts and skills to accelerate learning and hold students to high levels of achievement.
  - Predominately based on inquiry method, higher order skills and rigorous habits are embedded into classroom tasks and assessments. Rubrics, aligned to standards are given to students and attached to their work. Indicators that include analysis and evidence, structure (including thesis statement), style and tone, conventions, and revision process, insist on students demonstrating their thinking in order to be college ready.
- Organizational decisions are aligned to support the school's goals of improving instruction for all students. (1.3)
  - The greater majority of resources are placed into teaching positions in order to offer rich and robust courses. Therefore, there is ample support for students to graduate with completed performance based assessment tasks that are presented to a committee. In addition to teaching classes, faculty guide students through individual research assignments that show evidence of college readiness and that are clearly aligned to the school's goals and standards.
  - Teacher teams that meet in a variety of ways include grade teams and full staff meetings every two weeks. With a focus on coherence, departments meet weekly, and share common prep on the other days. Weekly meetings center on formalizing consistency of expectations for student work, sharing strategies for writing in order to improve instructional practice, and increase the level of student work products.
- Classroom assessments, including rubrics aligned to curriculum, are used by teachers to inform and strengthen their practice. (2.2)
  - All classroom assessments are modified and aligned to graduation rubrics. In this way, teachers identify gaps in students' skills and knowledge base, and adjust course offerings and expectations as well as classroom practice to provide opportunities for students to accomplish mastery.
  - Working in teams and individually, teachers use frequent classroom assessments to identify students in need of additional support and those who are ready to take on more challenging work. Saturday classes, scheduled near the end of a semester, and during after school lab

classes address the needs of struggling students. Those students identified as higher achievers are programmed for more advanced classes. Additionally, student conferencing and self-assessment provides relevant information enabling teachers to surface needs and adjust lessons to improve student achievement.

- Professional development is supported and strengthened with a clear set of expectations focused on improving student learning outcomes. (4.1)
  - Feedback to teachers, as evidenced in both formal and informal observations, is cohesively aligned to both school's key values and a research based framework, providing doable next steps and demonstrating clear expectations for teachers allowing them to adequately adjust and improve practices.
  - A variety of data including observation, quality of student work, ability to collaborate, and contributions to the school community, are used to assess teacher performance as well as evidence of growth. This has resulted in highly professional and reflective qualities of staff and a tireless effort to improve student learning.
- Student learning is strengthened by the relationships and trust that exists in the school community. (1.4)
  - Advisories meet daily and provide students with the opportunity to set weekly goals and have conference time with their advisor, assigned to them for the duration of their attendance in the school. These meetings focus on attendance and social/emotional issues and address and resolve obstacles to learning thus helping students achieve.
  - Students, who assert that they are strongly supported by the school, contribute to a much improved tone. Last year, in reaction to many fights, students organized town meetings. This year they organized an anti-bullying campaign and an odd-ball club to celebrate differences. Students speak about their desire to go to college and how their work has improved greatly through the guidance and support of teachers who believe they can achieve, thus greatly increasing their self esteem and academic achievement. Several students said they could not write a paragraph when they entered the school and now proudly showed six-page typed papers analyzing and comparing characters.

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

- Ensure that teacher practices, across all classrooms engage students in high level discussions and in producing work products that demonstrate critical thinking. (1.2)
  - English and history teachers provide questioning that surfaces students thinking and understanding, while at the same time providing multiple entry points, however, math and science classes do not always require students to show and explain their work, resulting in missed opportunities for students to comprehend and internalize their learning. This inconsistency in the level of rigor and critical thinking across content areas, impedes advancing student achievement even further.

- Students in a pre-algebra class who were all engaged in solving the same problem were directed to put their answers on the board, but not required to show their work. A lesson on converting decimals to percentages was totally teacher-directed with students advised to move a decimal point over two places, with no discussion or explanation regarding the purpose behind this strategy. One student completed the problem quickly, while another was writing all decimals into percentages incorrectly. Additionally, in a class reviewing for an upcoming exam, students responded yes or no on a sheet if they understood how to do certain problems, but did not address any learning issues. Consequently, unresolved issues of confusion hinder opportunities to accelerate or remediate learning as suitable to support students gaining mastery of subject areas.
- Expand the use of data sources to support the school's ability to identify strengths and weaknesses to gain a clear understanding of the school. (2.1)
  - The Progress Report presented information that was not expected due to the school not examining the impact of relevant State measurements. Additionally, while the school is beginning to develop systems to organize data around school wide achievement trends; there is still inconsistency in data collection and analysis practices. Thus the school's ability to identify and then address serious concerns that impact student achievement is hindered.
  - Incoming ninth graders are given diagnostics in English language arts and math. Classroom level data is reviewed as well. However, the Progress Report reveals a gap of 16% credit accumulation per grade for students in the bottom third for the past three years. Currently, as there is not adequate yearlong alignment of summative and formative data, school practices are not adjusted in timely ways so that students achieve.
- Expand teachers' use of data to examine school wide practices that impact student achievement. (3.3)
  - As a result of the most recent Progress Report, the school is carefully following cohorts of students. Although there was an improvement at the end of the first semester with 92% of ninth graders passing, 75% tenth graders and 70% eleventh graders, the grades in December indicated passing rates between 65% and 75% for ninth through eleventh graders. The school primarily relying on teachers' individual classroom data, limits school wide decision making around improving curriculum and instruction, therefore hindering improved learning for all students.
  - As a result of looking at data, English and history teachers have begun to carefully and intentionally scaffold both expectations and required work products to build coherence across the grades. Although students' progress is monitored, there is minimal evidence that the school's bottom third who have far less credit accumulation, benefit from necessary adjustments in order to be successful.

- Further develop systems and structures that regularly evaluate effectiveness of curricular and instructional decisions in order to impact and increase academic success. (5.1)
  - Yearlong after-school labs, and six Saturdays before the end of each semester, extra learning support for students is offered. However, students and principal acknowledge that many students are not regularly attending the after-school program. Thus, the lack of closely monitoring attendance, performance, and progress, impedes the school's ability to assess the impact of these curricular decisions and use of resources on learning outcomes.
  - A new structure was put in place this year with different levels of classes to better strengthen students' skills to successfully complete their Performance Based Assessments for graduation. Currently, the lack of evaluating a newly established structure limits the school in understanding its impact, therefore hindering the ability to adjust so that the needs of students are met in a timely way.
- Further develop ways in which students are assessed and data is organized in order to strengthen coherence of practice school wide. (5.2)
  - Although content teams share and review students performance-based assessments, teachers each have their own systems and beliefs. Final projects weigh more heavily than other pieces of work. Currently the school does not have conversations and consensus around issues of what constitutes the ability to pass, thus greatly impacting students' ability to achieve, as well as coherence of messaging.
  - Although the school uses an on-line grading system, and the principal examines course passing rates, the Progress Report grade was unexpected. The school does not yet carefully examine various trends, focus consistently on students in the bottom third, or relationships between attendance and failure or success, thus minimizing the opportunity to accurately evaluate, adjust, and align school practices to increase coherence of practice.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Gotham Professional Arts Academy</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			<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>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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</b>	

<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			<b>X</b>				
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>