

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

High School of Arts and Technology  
High School 494

122 AMSTERDAM AVENUE  
MANHATTAN  
NY 10023

Principal: Anne Geiger

Dates of review: March 06 - 07, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Sarah E. Goodman

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

High School of Arts and Technology is a high school with 618 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 57% Hispanic, 2% White and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 68% of the students enrolled and girls account for 32%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 82.5%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school continues to build upon internal capacity and external partnerships to support students holistically on the path to postsecondary readiness. (4.4)
  - o The students at the High School of Arts and Technology (Arts and Tech) generally feel that the staff helps them as they progress towards graduation, college, and/or careers. The school works with a number of outside organizations including The Door and the Virtual Enterprise Program to provide students with a range of peer-mentoring opportunities, social services, and business experiences that support social/emotional development and build work force skills. Every student assigned to a full period of advisory every day, has that teacher as his/her primary support person within the school. The advisory curriculum includes tasks related to organizational habits to succeed academically, standardized test preparation, understanding the college application process, and preparing for job interviews. Teachers, guidance counselors, the parent coordinator, and other staff, often work with a student's advisor regarding any concerns, thus supporting the student and the school's overall relatively strong graduation rate.
- The faculty involves families in a variety of important activities that offers them an avenue to be involved in the school community and a chance to participate in decision-making. (2.4)
  - o Family involvement efforts at the school are headed by the parent coordinator, who receives high praise from students, teachers, administration, and parents. The parent coordinator strategically co-coordinates the organization of celebratory community events and relevant trainings to maximize parent attendance, resulting in hundreds of participants. The annual mother/daughter fashion show, co-scheduled with a workshop to boost the understanding of ARIS parent-link, offered opportunities that continue to emphasize the work of the school, while supporting students towards graduation. The parent coordinator also works with families to develop workshops relevant to the needs of adults and teens, including recent sessions on drug and alcohol abuse and sexually transmitted diseases. Parents, who are also intricately involved in the work of the school leadership team, have had input into important decisions such as the hiring of an assistant principal and allocation of funds.
- The leadership has structured staff and student time to develop opportunities that promote teacher collaboration and student interventions in support of academic goals. (1.3)
  - o This year, all of the students at Arts and Tech are programmed to eat lunch during period 8. This schedule allows teachers to engage in professional development and meet in teacher teams multiple times a week. Teacher teams are beginning to utilize an inquiry approach to target groups of students and examine the impact of a variety of instructional and other supports. The school utilizes period 10 as a flexible time to offer a range of activities. Some students are programmed for small group instruction, for others, teachers are available for homework or test support, and other students participate in a wide range of school sponsored or student initiated activities and clubs including a dance team, book clubs, and the newly formed Gay Straight Alliance. In addition to these regular offerings during the school day, the school uses staff and budget

allocations to support a Saturday Academy and instructional clinics during school breaks to offer additional small group learning experiences for students struggling to pass the Regents or meet other graduation requirements.

- The school is developing curricula and tasks that are beginning to align with the Common Core Learning Standards and offer opportunities to engage students in rigorous work. (1.1)
  - The curriculum at Arts and Tech, which is guided, by the State curriculum and Regents' requirements, is beginning to integrate the Common Core Learning Standards through interdisciplinary projects that emphasize non-fiction texts, addressing the learning needs of some students. The English curriculum, collaboratively created over the years, offers students a range of reading and writing experiences that tap into their lives and interests while exposing them to a variety of literature. Social studies activities frequently require students to work with difficult texts and analyze historical events, while science classes regularly integrate hands on experiments. Project-based learning and student choice in a variety of subjects and grades across the school lead to work products that require students to be persistent and lead to pride in work when completed.
- The school leaders provide professional development opportunities that develop teacher practice and leadership skills to work towards improving classroom practices. (4.3)
  - The staff comes together multiple times a month to engage in differentiated professional development offerings. New teachers are frequently offered sessions particular to planning and management skill development. Outside consultants and network staff provide sessions for teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators, which cover a range of topics including the Common Core Learning Standards, differentiation, and inquiry work to support the continued dialogue and address the instructional goals of the school.
  - The school is working to develop teacher leaders in a number of content areas and grade teams to lead curriculum development and inquiry work, respectively. The principal also identified and supported key teachers, over the years, to gain their supervisory license, who now serve as assistant principals, leading to culture of reflective leadership practice amongst the administrators.

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

- Revisit the use of classroom observations to more effectively retain and develop teachers by supporting their on-going development of classroom practices. (4.1)
  - The assistant principals and principal's written feedback captures the results of formal observations, particularly focused on staff new to the building or the profession. New teachers are matched with a mentor who offers planning and instructional support. While the school has begun to introduce the staff to four domains from "The Framework for Teaching" developed by Charlotte Danielson, the timing and quality of the verbal or written feedback from informal observations is inconsistently provided and is not yet connected to the specific practices outlined in the rubric. Teachers are not provided via the observation process with a clear sense of their strengths and next steps, limiting the ability to develop a reflective professional community that supports improving instructional practices for all faculty members.

- Develop systems that allow the administration to track progress towards school wide goals to guide school improvements from year to year. (5.3)
  - o The school has identified year-to-year goals that target the improvement of Adequate Yearly Progress for various subgroups in math and English language arts. The faculty has begun to evaluate the alignment between its current curriculum and the requirements of the CCLS, and is planning to have students do math and ELA tasks towards the end of the school year. In addition, although the school stated in their 2010-2011 Comprehensive Educational Plan and their latest Quality Review School Self-Evaluation, that it will use the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, and WICR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, and Reading) strategies in classrooms and during advisory time to help meet their AYP goals, there is limited evidence of school wide implementation of the programs. Currently, as there is no evidence of interim goals or benchmarks that the school is using to measure progress in CCLS, AVID, or WICR, informed decision making to guide instructional and/or organizational processes is hindered.
  
- Align instructional practice to a unified set of beliefs in order to develop opportunities to engage and support all students in rigorous academic work. (1.2)
  - o The administration stated and provided written teacher expectations and professional development documents aligned to a belief in rigorous differentiated instruction within classrooms that utilize mini-lessons, Cornell note-taking, AVID techniques, and guided independent and group practice. However, out of the nine classes observed, only two of them were utilizing Cornell notes and throughout the school very few student notebooks showed evidence of Cornell notes. Although some classrooms showed evidence of a mini-lesson followed by time for students to work independently, or in groups, several classes were primarily teacher directed. The school is beginning to define rigor through Costa's Use of Questioning and Thinking, and many classrooms had posters of Costa's three levels of questioning. However, only half of the observed classes integrated higher-level questions into the student work, teacher, or student generated questions or discussion; limiting cognitive engagement. In addition, in three classrooms, entering after at least 10 minutes from its start, up to eight students did not have the materials on their desk to engage in the activity and/or were having side conversations not related to school while the teacher was speaking at the front of the class. During the student meeting, many students felt that it was not uncommon for unmotivated students to "take the level of learning down for everyone" and many students said they would like to see their classes be more challenging.
  
- Develop more consistent assessment practices across classrooms and teams of teachers that are aligned to key standards to better identify and address student needs and inform instructional and curricular decisions. (2.2)
  - o Within several department teams, teachers create common mid-term exams aligned to the State Regents' exams. Another teacher team has just decided to implement a grade-wide reading assessment to better identify the needs of their grade 9 students. In some individual classrooms, teachers create their own rubrics. While the administration states that they are working towards the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards by developing key standards around the use of non-fiction texts across disciplines, the assessments utilized and created at the school are only loosely aligned with this key standard, limiting the ability of the faculty to track student progress towards this goal.

- Some teachers rotate around the classroom during independent or group work time to check for student understanding, others use exit slips, and there are some examples of student self-assessment against checklists and/or rubrics. In several other classrooms, teachers made limited attempts to assess student understanding, or ask the class as a whole for questions, taking students' silence as an understanding of concepts and a sign to move on. Consequently, teachers are missing out on adequately adjusting the lesson to allow more students access to the material and a chance to engage in skill development.
- Create systems to track student progress towards learning goals to better provide feedback to the school community that promotes student achievement. (3.3)
  - The leadership, faculty, parents, and students are very focused on helping meet graduation requirements by tracking student progress, including relevant sub-groups, around both credit accumulation and Regents' passing scores. While the school provides feedback to students and families in a variety of written and personal formats, there is limited information given to students about the particular skills or concepts on which they need to work. When parents and students were asked to describe what they needed to learn more in school and how they could get help to achieve these learning goals, they struggled to come up with any examples aside from completing assignments or passing tests. Feedback written on student work was also inconsistent. There were either basic comments on what should be worked on and/or some rubrics completed with limited comments offered. Many students said they had completed major assignments with no opportunities for self-assessment, draft opportunities, or a final assessment of how they did, limiting their receiving adequate support necessary for on-going academic growth.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: High School of Arts and Technology	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
<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>	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		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		
<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>	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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
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?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			X	
<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>	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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		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>	<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>